Secrecy Redefined:
Print Culture and the Globalization of the Occult in the Long
Nineteenth Century

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Abstract

This thesis seeks to examine the relationship between occult religion and the global circulation of texts. For some time now, scholars have rejected the secularism thesis or the idea that there has been a decline of religion in the post-Enlightenment period. Today, we largely accept that religion did not actually decline or disappear but, rather, it has changed form. Religion shifted from traditional religious institutions to become an aspect of aesthetic culture, available through the commercial economy. My work explores how the relationship between the book and commercial religion emerged and evolved during the long nineteenth century.

Occultism has long been viewed as an aspect of the rise of secular society following the Enlightenment. This thesis proposes a new lens through which we can view the evolution of occultism, seeing it as a response to growth in global networks of empire and the commercialization of religion through the printed word. It explores how the nature of the transmission of occultism shifted, particularly during the final decades of the nineteenth century. Antoine Faivre’s foundational text Access to Western Esotericism (1994) put forward the concept of the transmission of occultism as something that occurs between a disciple and an initiate. My thesis, however, argues that the widening of print activity and literacy expanded the opportunities for initiation into magic to occur more broadly, changing the nature of who could become an initiate. As such, secrecy around magic became redefined. It shifted from being a pursuit of the literate elite to something that was widely available.

This analysis is delivered in four chapters. The introduction examines the relationship between literature and nineteenth-century occultism. It also discusses the influence of globalization. Chapter one discusses the occult in post-revolutionary France and the influence of Egyptian orientalism on French occultism. Chapter two addresses Victorian occultism and discusses the context of a growing Victorian literary industry. Chapter three addresses the Theosophical Society as an agent of globalized and commercialized religion. It also addresses the importance of British imperialism in India. Finally, chapter four discusses the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn and the resurgence of Egyptian orientalism and elitism in British occultism.
Acknowledgements

This project began in 2009 when I entered the M.Phil. (Humanities) program at Memorial University of Newfoundland. I had developed a fascination with the texts of what was being loosely called New Age religion. Many of the texts I was reading were New York Times best sellers including *Return to Love*, *The Power of Now*, and *Eat Pray Love*. A lot of these texts had gained popularity through Oprah Winfrey’s book club. I was curious about this fascination with religion that was manifesting itself in the private sector and on television. Discovering why this shift in religion had taken place became the work of my M.Phil. Degree. However, I felt far from done with the topic. I am extremely grateful that in 2012 the University of Exeter offered me an international doctoral studentship to pursue this research further. This enabled me to go back to the nineteenth-century roots of contemporary religion and start a broader examination of the trajectory of religion. As such, my debts are many and they exist on both sides of the Atlantic Ocean.

Beyond the generous funding provided at the University of Exeter, thanks are also extended to the Society for the Study of French History (SSFH) that awarded me a research grant to visit the *Bibliothèque National de France*. I also received conference bursaries from the North American Victorian Studies Association (NAVSA) and SSFH. I was fortunate to receive a scholarship to visit the Gladstone Library in 2014. I gratefully acknowledge the support of my supervision team, Professor Regenia Gagnier, Richard Noakes, Joseph Crawford, Catherine Rider, and Laura Sangha. There are not enough words to express how much I have learned from Regenia about globalization, the future of the humanities, and overall academic project management. It was Richard who had the vision and foresight to see that not only could a global and imperial history be done of the nineteenth-century occult but indeed one needed to be done. Joe provided much needed insight on European and literary history. Catherine and Laura provided excellent academic advice as mentors. It was Sean McGrath at Memorial University of Newfoundland who wisely introduced me to the literature of Western Esotericism and essentially put me on this path. I was also very fortunate to draw on the expertise of Seamus O’Neill, Jennifer Dyer, Jay Foster, Professor Kim Parker, Alison Butler, and Michelle Rebidoux during my time at Memorial. Thanks are also extended to my many colleagues at the Exeter Centre for Global and Imperial History and the Centre for Victorian Studies. My time at Exeter has been spent largely marveling at the quality of the other scholars in the room. Finally, thank you to my internal and external examiners, Paul Young and Professor Rohan McWilliam respectively.

I have attended many conferences during the time that I worked on this project. Thanks are extended for the feedback I received from the American Academy of Religion (regional meeting), Association for the Study of Esotericism, European Society for the Study of Western Esotericism (ESSWE), SSFH, NAVSA, Canadian Historical Association, Social History Society, Nineteenth-Century Postgraduate Seminar, and the Sophia Centre Conference on Celestial Magic. In particular, I wish to thank the committee members of SSFH and the board members of ESSWE. I would like to thank Jean-Pierre Brach at the Sorbonne for his support during my research trips to Paris. Also, I would like to thank Henrick Bogden at the University of Gothenburg for his advice at the ESSWE thesis workshop in 2014. I would be remiss if I did not mention *Ex Historia* and the participants in the Postgraduate Research Conferences at the University of Exeter. Thanks to my proofreader and long
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My final debt is also my oldest. That is to my family in Newfoundland, Canada. Two generations ago the Oates and O’Leary clans were families of fish harvesters on the southern shore of Newfoundland, which was a very honourable profession in that time and place. However, to them it would have seemed unlikely that anyone from my generation would end up in a fully funded PhD. program at a Russell Group university in Britain. I have no doubt that it was my parents’ belief in hard work and education that has brought me here. We have always been a family of avid readers and I was raised to believe books and reading are important. It is hardly a surprise then that I would become a historian of circulation of texts. Finally, it is my nephew Parker Simon that represents the future of our family. So it is to him that I dedicate this work.
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Introduction

The opening lines of Zanoni (1842) refer to an old bookstore in the neighbourhood of Covent Garden. Its author, Edward Bulwer-Lytton, stated that in this store ‘the curious might discover the most notable collection, ever amassed by an enthusiast of the works of alchemist, cabalist, and astrologer’.\(^1\)

Given the way that the introduction reads, it is almost as if the author was trying to explain the important role that literature has played in the growth, development, and transmission of occult philosophies, since the beginning of the long nineteenth century. Scholars such as Ronald Hutton and Joscelyn Godwin maintain that John Denley’s occult bookstore in Covent Garden was the site referred to in the opening lines of Zanoni.\(^2\) This true-to-life inspiration speaks to the growing importance of the occult or occult themed literature to nineteenth-century intellectual thought. It is also telling that the store was important enough for a well-published author such as Bulwer-Lytton to memorialize it in what became one of his most printed books.

It is not surprising that Bulwer-Lytton would recognize the importance of an occult bookstore in the middle of the nineteenth century. He was instrumental in the globalization of copyright protection for authors, at a time when the publishing industry was beginning to traverse national lines.\(^3\) In 1858 he served as Secretary of State for the Colonies in Lord Derby’s government. He

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exemplifies the nineteenth-century links between the growth in occultism, commercial society, globalization, and imperialism. As such, we come to discuss what will ultimately be the work of this thesis. Drawing on primary and secondary sources in both English and French, I will make the case that the commercial and communications links created by imperialism also facilitated the globalization of nineteenth-century religion. For the purposes of this thesis, religion will be defined broadly to include commercialized esoteric religion and Eastern religious traditions, in addition to traditional church religion (see section on definitions). This thesis will make the case that growth in print culture and literacy facilitated the democratization of religion more generally, and the philosophies of magic in particular, through the global circulation of religious texts. The growth in global connectivity during the nineteenth century had a critical influence on the development of religion in that it changed the nature of how the world was engaging with religion. Global networks and local factors combined to impact how occult texts were interpreted differently within British and French contexts.

The nineteenth-century occult is best remembered for its séances, magical grade systems, and ceremonial attire. However, I am providing a new lens through which we can examine the expansion of what is often thought of as heterodox religion. While occultism and occultists are generally viewed as fringe historical movements and actors, I propose viewing occultism as a global intellectual trend that had a profound impact on how we engage with religion in the contemporary world. As Owen Davies argues in his study *Grimoires: A History of Magic Books*, these texts ‘not only reflected the globalization of the world but helped to shape it’.4

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In the nineteenth century, there was a strong overlap between occultists and publishing activities. Gérard Encausse, MacGregor Mathers, and Henry Steele Olcott were well known for their translation and publishing activities as they moved about the globe. Other well-known occultists, such as Éliphas Lévi and Annie Besant, found their way to the occult through the radical left-wing politics of the day. Kenneth Mackenzie was editor of many Freemasonic and fringe Masonic publications including the *Royal Masonic Cyclopedia* (1877). He translated ancient texts for publication into English and was also involved in publishing activities with the politically conservative Benjamin Disraeli in London.

Demonstrating an overlap between politics, publishing, and occultism, the future Prime Minister Disraeli and Edward Bulwer-Lytton were both involved in publishing and also sat in spiritualistic séances salons. In *Blessington-D’Orsay: A Masquerade* (1933) Michael Sadleir, referring to séances at Gore House, stated that ‘a craze for occultism seized on the company. Headed by Bulwer and Disraeli they plunged into discussion and experiment’. Furthermore, ‘they debated the pros and cons of witchcraft and spiritualism; they even tried their hand at crystal-gazing with the help of a famous crystal given to their hostess by Nazim Pasha’.

In *Victorian Occultism and the Making of Modern Magic* (2011), Alison Butler argues for the existence of a link between ceremonial magic and literacy. She maintains that it is rare to find a story of a magician, in history or fiction,

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who does not have a book of magic. In the eighteenth century, gothic literature novels such as The Castle of Otranto (1764) began to appear. Charles Taylor argues in A Secular Age (2007) that there was a shift from an enchanted worldview of an animated universe to what Weber calls ‘the disenchantment of the world’. However, scholars now believe that as the power and importance of traditional religious institutions declined there was simultaneously a process of re-enchantment with the creation of popular occulture. In the words of Peter Berger, one of the early proponents of the secularism thesis, ‘the world today, with some exceptions… is as furiously religious as it ever was, and in some places more so than ever’. This thesis will address the processes that unfolded in the long nineteenth century that helped to enable the evolution of a secularized world in which many people now engage with religion outside of any church or traditional religious institution. In the spirit of the Protestant Reformation, religion has become something that we can engage with through the printed word.

In The Magical Imagination (2012), Karl Bell argues that the practice of engaging with the supernatural through literature emerged as a response to the insecurity around growing industrialization. He maintains that there was a

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8 Alison Butler, Victorian Occultism and the Making of Modern Magic: Invoking Tradition (London, 2011), p. 125. This is the case with magicians in Western history and fiction and is not necessarily true of Eastern magicians.
10 Christopher Partridge, The Re-Enchantment of the West, Volume II (London, 2005); Victoria Nelson, Gothicka: Vampire Heroes, Human Gods, and the New Supernatural (Cambridge, Massachusetts, 2012). This thesis refers to re-enchantment as growth in occult and New Age religious practices, outside of the confines of any traditional religious institution. For a definition of New Age see the definitions section of this chapter.
commercialization of magic through cheap literature in the period from 1780-1914. Indeed, many authors have recognized the growth in gothic literature in the late eighteenth century and the shifts that took place in the Victorian gothic, as the world became more secular and increasingly market-oriented. Victoria Nelson has argued that gothic literature shifted belief in witches and ghosts to imaginary fiction, for the reader’s guilt free enjoyment in a period of growing disbelief in the supernatural. This is a dynamic that cannot be ignored as the sale of books such as *Frankenstein* and *Dracula* soared, beginning in the nineteenth century. In 1801, Francis Barrett published *The Magus* as a compendium of earlier English translations of medieval and early modern grimoires, illustrated with a remarkable portrait gallery of demons. Arthur Conan Doyle and Victor Hugo have been placed at séance tables and their spiritualist beliefs were known to have an influence on their writings. Butler maintains that the magical libraries of occultists Fredrick Hockley and William Wynn Westcott were key sources of information for the magicians of the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn. The significance of the written word to the practice of magic and engagement with the supernatural in the post-Enlightenment world is undisputed.

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15 Nelson, *Gothicka*, p. 11.
16 The World Catalogue Library System lists over 1883 published editions of Bram Stoker’s *Dracula* and 2091 editions of *Frankenstein* (Last accessed 3 September 2015).
It has long been held that magic books were used to pass down the secrets of magic, dating back to the ancient world. Magicians have traditionally believed that the Rosicrucians of medieval Germany formed a group of mystic philosophers, assembling, studying and teaching esoteric doctrines, religion, philosophy and occult science, in private. According to esoteric lore, their founder, Christian Rosenkreuz, had learned this magic from Arabian sages, who were in their turn the inheritors of the culture of Alexandria.20 Esotericists have had an ongoing fascination with the Hermetic philosophies of Egypt. Rosicrucian philosophies and approaches would go on to influence the development of a variety of esoteric societies in the post-Reformation and post-Enlightenment era. Even in this early modern period, they were aided by growth in the printing press. However, their texts would not be as widely available as they would be in the nineteenth century.21 Their magic would not be for sale on the open market to the same extent as we see in the nineteenth century with the growth of the commercial economy. Yet the importance of the printing press to this early modern esoteric movement should not be underestimated:

The name Christian Rosencruze would meet with hardly any sign of recognition in the best social or literary circles; and yet the mere publication in 1614 of a little pamphlet in Germany, narrating the mode of foundation and the aims of the Rosicrucian Order, made such a stir throughout Europe, that even to-day there are extant six hundred tracts for and against the reality and the bonâ fides of the doctrines of the Order; which tracts were written and printed in Germany and France alone, within a hundred years of the issue of

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21 C. A. Bayly, *Empire and Information: Intelligence Gathering and Social Communication in India, 1780-1870* (Cambridge, 1997), p. 5. Bayly makes the case that in early modern societies the information order was decentralized, consisting of many overlapping groups of knowledge-rich communities. It was not as mediated as in contemporary industrial societies by a dominant state or the commercial communications sector. Schooling and literacy specialist resources open only to particular elites who used their learning as badges of status. Knowledge was only slowly becoming a public good, a citizen’s right, or an adjunct of state power.
the original *Fama Fraternitatis*, or narrative of the establishment of the society of C.R.\(^22\)

The other major manuscript associated with Rosenkreuz was the *Confessio Fraternitatis*. Nicholas Goodrick-Clarke maintained in *The Western Esoteric Traditions* (2008) that there was widespread interest in Rosicrucian manuscripts and they brought a massive response, both for and against the fictitious fraternity. While the *Fama* celebrated science, medicine, and philosophy under a hermetico-pansophic banner, the *Confessio*, as the title implies, offered a statement of faith. The fact that it was published at Cassel in 1615, in Latin, suggests a learned audience. It was preceded in the same volume by a work entitled *A Brief Consideration of the more Secret Philosophy* by Philip à Gabella.\(^23\) Gilbert maintains that ‘no book that has been printed within the last fifty years has created one tithe of the flutter, in the world of the learned, that was caused by, this thirty-three page Latin pamphlet, published in Germany in 1614’.\(^24\) Furthermore, ‘between 1614 and 1620, some two hundred books and tracts flew from the presses’.\(^25\) However, we do not know who would have had access to the text or who would have been literate enough to read it. There is also a lack of information on who would have published and reproduced it.

The key point for our analysis is that the manuscripts of early modern magic are distinguished from the nineteenth century books of magic in terms of the degree to which printing capabilities were available. Also, because of growth in literacy, there is a difference in terms of who would have had access to the manuscripts. The Rosicrucian Manifestoes demonstrate two things: That when people have access to a printing press they print the philosophies of both

heterodox and orthodox religion and when people gain access to the philosophies of esoteric religion (or the idea that there is divine power within me irrespective of God or church) they are actually quite intrigued by it. Westcott maintains that at the dawn of the printing press, this was startling knowledge indeed and had an important effect on the European mind:

…Its promulgation tended to widen men’s intellectual conceptions, to show that the prevailing standards and forms of religion were not the only possible forms of high spiritual thought and aspiration, and that even the time-expired formulations of Egyptian culture were susceptible of a later development not wholly unsuitable, and not worthy of the attention of a later age.  

This trajectory toward the heterodox would grow as printing activity and education grew. The interest in it would be taken to whole new levels in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries as Gothic literature contributed to the mysterious cult of Rosicrucianism. The novels of William Godwin, Percy and Mary Shelly, Charles Martin, and eventually Bulwer-Lytton elaborated the themes of a secret invisible order whose adepts had achieved immortality by means of the secret elixir of life.  

With the publication of the Rosicrucian Manifestos, the first volleys had been fired against the religious authority of traditional institutions such as churches. However, in the Victorian period we see growth in Freemasonry and fringe Masonry, the Theosophical Society, the Ordre Martiniste, and the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn. These occult societies emerged only decades after Bulwer-Lytton had published his fictional tales of esoteric lore in Zanoni, A Strange Story, and the Haunters and the Haunted. What distinguished Zanoni from previous tales of Rosicrucianism, as we shall see, was his level of access

27 Goodrick-Clarke, The Western Esoteric Traditions, p. 125.
to the printing press and his ability to reach global audiences through increasingly global publishing networks.

In *The Birth of the Modern World* (2004) Christopher Bayly argues that the nineteenth century actually saw the triumphal reemergence and expansion of religion.\(^{28}\) He maintains that during this period, traditional Christian religious authorities were making full use of the new world order that included technology, travel, bureaucracy, and education to transmit information about religion. However, Christianity had gradually been undermined by the application of logic to divinity and new discoveries brought into question many aspects of the religion. Enlightenment thinkers gave the impression that humanity could understand the world without recourse to God.\(^{29}\) For many, the new focus on science, education, and literacy meant that the Bible was no longer sufficient to explore the nature of the universe.

Antoine Faivre’s foundational text, *Access to Western Esotericism* (1994), effectively established the importance of transmission as a characteristic of the Western esoteric traditions, including as an aspect of the nineteenth-century occult. Faivre, however, sees transmission as occurring between disciple and initiate.\(^{30}\) Certainly, it had long been true that disciples were initiated as Rosicrucians, Freemasons, and into fringe masonic groups. It is also true that literature had long been used as part of this teaching process. However, in the nineteenth century, access to this information widened, changing the definition of who could become an initiate. In *The Triumph of the Moon* (1994), Ronald

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Hutton argues that during the Enlightenment phase of magic ‘the magi and grimoire were eclipsed by the proliferation of secret societies’. I would argue, however, that in many ways the Enlightenment, with its focus on education and literacy, was the beginning of the “Age of the Grimoire.” By the middle of the nineteenth century, books about magic and magical philosophies became quite common as the Victorian literary industry embarked on an expansion. Information on esoteric philosophies became so widely circulated that anyone who could read a text could be initiated to the philosophies of magic. This thesis will demonstrate that the nature of transmission changed. As the printing press became more cost effective, the distribution of literature globalized, and the public became more literate.

**Imperialism and Global Connectivity**

Connectivity is a term that is often associated with the Internet age. However, historians are increasingly writing the history of the growing global connectivity that was achieved in the final decades of the nineteenth century and early part of the twentieth century. Historians such as Tony Ballantyne, Antoinette Burton, Andrew Thompson, and Gary B. Magee have effectively documented the networks of empire that grew out of British imperialism in texts such as *Empires and the Reach of the Global* (2014), *Empire and Globalization* (2010), *The Empire Strikes Back?* (2005), and *Imperial Britain* (2000). John Merriman has also effectively detailed European connectivity in the period after the French Revolution in a *History of Modern Europe Volume II* (2009). These historians have examined the importance of the printing press, publishing networks, railroads, telegraphs, steamships, and global commerce to nineteenth-century globalization. As such, when this thesis refers to global

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connectivity it is referring to the growing global networks that were largely built
to facilitate imperialism in the nineteenth century. This includes global
publishing networks. It examines the importance of these networks to the
globalization of religion (broadly defined). I am moving the discourse from an
examination of individual occult masters to detail the influence of nineteenth-
century global networks on religion in a way that has not been done previously.

Not only were nineteenth-century publishers widening access to information
on heterodox religious philosophies; they were also opening access to
information about Eastern religious philosophies broadly to the public for the
first time. However, it should be noted that this ‘oriental renaissance’ of the
nineteenth century had its roots in the eighteenth century. In the middle of the
eighteenth century, Britain was expanding in India and its East India Company
was also expanded. Imperialism in India, in particular, opened up the study of
religion in new and powerful ways. The first meeting of the Asiatic Society took
place in Calcutta in 1774 and they published the influential *Asiatick
Researches*. In 1784 the first complete translation of the *Bhagavad Gita* was
accomplished. It was published in London a year later and retranslated into
French. In 1792 the *Gita Govinda* was published in the third volume of *Asiatic

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32 For the purpose of this thesis, Oriental Renaissance refers to a time when the
West was becoming aware of the philosophies of the East and as such, this
new access to Eastern literature was having a strong influence on Western
religion, philosophies, literature, and scholarship.
33 Lubelsky, *Celestial India*, p. 4.
34 Lubelsky, *Celestial India*, p. 9.
35 Raymond Schwab, *The Oriental Renaissance: Europe’s Rediscovery of India
and the East, 1680-1880* (New York, 1984), p. 51. The Bhagavad Gita is a 700
verse scripture that relates to a number of theological and philosophical issues
in Hindu religion.
36 Schwab, *The Oriental Renaissance*, p. 51. Translates to the Bhagavad Gita,
Precise Content of the Morality and Religion of Indians, from the English
version.
Researches and had a profound effect on the first German Romantics.\textsuperscript{37} There was a new desire on the part of practitioners of the Western esoteric traditions to uncover harmonies between the major world religions and meld them into a single tradition.\textsuperscript{38} Lubelsky argues in \textit{Celestial India} (2012) that ‘the East in general, and India in particular, would metamorphous in the European mind and become the Europeans’ lost home, indeed their ancestral homeland’.\textsuperscript{39}

In \textit{The Flight from Reason} (1971), James Webb argues that the nineteenth century was a time of establishing organizations related to the exploration of the culture of India and the Orient.\textsuperscript{40} This situation led to a new critique of Christianity.\textsuperscript{41} Bayly argues that from approximately 1850 onward those changes began to pick up speed.\textsuperscript{42} This was the period following the repeal of the Corn Laws in 1846 as the British world opened up to global trade. During this time, India was of paramount importance to Britain.\textsuperscript{43} This opening of relations with the East through imperialism continued to improve access to information about Hindu and Buddhist religious philosophies in the West throughout the nineteenth century and into the early decades of the twentieth century.

The French Revolution also had a profound impact on the growth in printing activities in France. Robert Darnton and Daniel Roche have effectively made the case that the printed word was an important ingredient in how the revolution

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\item \footnotesize\textsuperscript{37} Schwab, \textit{The Oriental Renaissance}, p. 51.
\item \footnotescript{38} Faivre, \textit{Access to Western Esotericism}, p. 14.
\item \footnotescript{39} Lubelsky, \textit{Celestial India}, p. 10.
\item \footnotescript{40} James Webb, \textit{The Occult Underground} (LaSalle, Illinois, 1974), p. 29.
\item \footnotescript{41} Wouter J. Hanegraaff, \textit{New Age Religion and Western Culture: Esotericism in the Mirror of Secular Thought}, Reprint (Albany, 1997), p. 443.
\item \footnotescript{42} Bayly, \textit{Birth of the Modern World}, p. 21.
\item \footnotescript{43} Bayly, \textit{Birth of the Modern World}, p. 21.
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unfolded.⁴⁴ Print culture was growing in France, even before the expansion of the Victorian literary industry in Britain. Upon the return of the Bourbons to power in May 1814, Louis XVII promulgated a Charter that in effect made France a constitutional monarchy. The Charter offered freedom of the press.⁴⁵ After the Congress of Vienna, Europe entered a period of the growth in communications infrastructure. Newspapers and political pamphlets sidestepped the heavy hand of censorship to challenge the restored prerogatives of the conservative regimes.⁴⁶ However, it must be remembered that this was also a period of resurgence in conservative values in the post-revolutionary period that is often associated with the birth of liberalism.

Merriman argues that the monarchs, diplomats, and nobles at the Congress of Vienna were guided by ‘conservative principles of monarchical legitimacy, with the right to the thrones of Europe to be determined by heredity succession, and by close ties to the prerogative of the established churches’.⁴⁷ The Bourbon monarchy restored nobles to political primacy and created an electoral system based on landed wealth that gave them a disproportionate advantage.⁴⁸ This was the beginning of the creation of an environment in which occultism, tied with Romantic socialism, could grow. Both became a somewhat passive revolt against the failure of liberalism to take hold in the ranks of the French government.

In the late seventeenth century, French culture had been in vogue throughout Europe and French had replaced Latin as the language of

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⁴⁶ Merriman, History of Modern Europe, p. 585.
⁴⁷ Merriman, History of Modern Europe, p. 576.
⁴⁸ Merriman, History of Modern Europe, p. 577.
diplomacy. This set the stage for the globalization of French culture in important ways. By the eighteenth century treaties were written in French across the globe, even by countries with no direct connection to France. France's popularity declined after Napoleon’s attempt to conquer Europe. However, French diplomatic dominance continued through treaty writing into the twentieth century.49

Speaking to the level of France’s diplomatic connectivity following the Napoleonic era, Paul Schroeder argues in The Transformation of European Politics, 1763-1848 that what emerged in 1814-15 was a wholly new system of international relations.50 This was the emergence of the Concert of Europe or the Vienna System. Schroeder maintains that this example of macro imperialism, or cooperation between great imperial powers, was a durable force for stability and peace.51 This was also a time of dismantling the influence of France across Europe and moving away from the conformity that Napoleon had demanded. In Europe after Napoleon: Revolution, reaction and romanticism, 1814-1848 (1996) Michael Broers argues that the very nature of the Napoleonic Empire left little room for diversity of any kind. Furthermore, ‘the reordering of Europe by the Congress of Vienna was exactly about recreating diversity by overturning an efficient, uniform political order’.52 It was a period when the major powers acted with the wider consent of the lesser states. Notably, Britain removed itself from the system in 1822, finding the limits too narrow.53 This speaks to the emergence of the imperial rivalries during that time as Britain was

52 Broers, Europe After Napoleon, pp. 9–10.
53 Broers, Europe After Napoleon, p. 11.
breaking away from cooperation with other imperial powers to step into its own period of global domination. However, even though France and Britain were global imperial rivals, they still engaged with literary and religious exchanges. The relationships necessary for the spread of ideas between the two countries was already set in place. Britain continued to look to France for cultural inspiration.

In *Representations of France in English Satirical Prints 1740-1832* (2015) John Richard Moores argues that, even though there was anti-Catholic sentiment in Britain that was tied to a perceived Jacobite threat, the British continued to send their children to France for educational purposes during the eighteenth century. This was done in order to ensure that they learned the all-important French language. Moores maintains that ‘it was feared that, were the Stuarts to restore themselves, they would enforce popish idolatry. Associating Jacobitism with Catholicism stemmed from English papists’. However, this threat of Catholicism was not strong enough to compete with the necessity of learning the French language:

> While suspicions were held that Catholics planned to convert or indoctrinate Protestants, many English parents remained eager to send their children to be educated in France by Catholic tutors. One reason why parents proved so enthusiastic to have their children taught on the Continent was to avoid the embarrassment experienced by the maligned Lord Suffolk: to adequately master the French tongue. Many visitors to France brought their families with them, leaving their daughters in convents or schools and collecting them on the return journey hoping that by that time they might have learned the language.

This also speaks to the different religious backgrounds in which British and French occultism evolved in. French occultism would be far more steeped in France’s Catholic history.

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Edmund Burke’s *Reflections on the Revolution in France* was published in November 1790. In *That Sweet Enemy: Britain and France* (2007), Robert and Isabelle Tombs argue that ‘this is the most important English book ever written about France, and one of the most important ever written about Britain’. They maintain that *Reflections* had an immediate impact: 7,000 copies were sold in a week in England, and 13,000 a year in France – a high proportion of the reading public. Following the end of the Napoleonic Wars a new wave of British tourists made their way to France. Léribault estimates that approximately 14,000 British citizens visited France in 1815 and made up 70-80% of all visitors. However, all was not well. In the aftermath of the Napoleonic Wars, British riflemen occupied the Louvre during the summer of 1815 in order to force the return of works of art that had been looted from Italy, Spain, Germany, and the low country. They removed 2,000 paintings, 8,000 ancient manuscripts, and hundreds of classical statues. This humiliated Louis XVIII and angered Parisians. Yet it did not put an end to the cultural exchange between the two countries. There were French pilgrimages to Britain because it was viewed as a source of Romanticism. It was felt in France that the Romantic current had been dammed by the neo-classical universalism of the Republic and Empire. The cultural exchange would continue growing during the nineteenth century:

During the 1820s, every area of French cultural novelty was saturated with British themes. The exoticism of Byron, the epics of Scott, and lurid episode from Shakespeare were transmuted into

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60 Tombs and Tombs, *That Sweet Enemy*, p. 320.
paintings, opera, music (such as Rosini’s *Othello*, a Parisian success in 1821, and Berlioz’s Byronic *Harold in Italy*). Artists crossed the Channel in both directions in search of subjects, customers, and contacts with other artists.  

As global print networks grew, it was not always Europe that was at the forefront of printing. In 1800 more printed titles were produced in Calcutta than in St. Petersburg or Vienna.  

In 1828 it was estimated that 3,168 newspaper titles were published around the world, nearly half of them in English speaking countries. By 1900 the number of newspaper titles had reached 31,026. This was largely related to the fact that production became more cost effective during the nineteenth century:

In 1800 Britain produced 11,000 tons of paper; in 1860 100,000 tons, of which 96,000 were mechanically made. Production costs per pound of paper halved; books became cheaper. In the late 1860s and early 1870s newspapers began to employ the rotary press which used continuous rolls of newsprint to produce quickly a large number of copies.

This growth in printing activity led to a standardization of information available across the globe.

In *Reporting the Raj: The British Press and India c. 1880-1922*, Chandrika Kaul argues that governments were dependent on processes of communications and their ability to receive, process, and disseminate information. She maintains that ‘communications played a crucial role in creating, mediating, and sustaining the evolution of the British imperial

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62 High levels of publication in India would have added in the transmission of information from East to West. The ‘Oriental Renaissance’ will be further discussed in the next chapter.
Similarly, Headrick argues that a new imperialism emerged in the middle of the nineteenth century that was swift, thorough, and cheap. Furthermore, the reason for this sudden success was the shift in technology, similar to the development of oceangoing ships four centuries earlier. Making all of this possible was the emergence of the railroad. Headrick maintains that India became home to the largest and most advanced colonial railroad system. By 1920 British India had higher rail density than South America, Africa, or the rest of Asia. It even had a higher density than the USSR, Australia, or Canada. Furthermore, ‘the prime concern of British railway policy in India was to make India useful to Britain, not to make Britain useful to India’.70

Conceptions of how the British Empire should be run were formulated to a large extent in London on the basis of the information, images, and ideas generated by communications out of the colonies. They were filtered through publishers and editors, largely in consultation with colonial administrators either in London or on the ground in the colonies. These communications created a constructed vision of colonies such as India and Africa, both within the European imagination and across the globe. Obviously, the imagined vision of colonies was seen through an imperial lens. The global connectivity would remain long after any colonists left and furthermore, the colonists decided that they liked these aspects of modern culture. In the words of Headrick, ‘in their brief domination, the Europeans passed on to the peoples of Asia and Africa

67 Kaul, Reporting the Raj, p. 3.
69 Headrick, Tentacles of Progress, p. 59.
70 Headrick, Tentacles of Progress, p. 91.
their own fascination with machinery and innovation. This has been the real legacy of imperialism’.\(^{71}\)

The importance of the telegraph in the globalization of religion should not be underestimated. It was one of the technologies that made it possible for the Theosophical Society to be headquartered in Adyar, India, because it made it possible for the international society to communicate with lodges across the globe. More importantly, it made it possible for Blavatsky to communicate internationally with publishers in London. Regular monthly communications between London and India (via Basra and Aleppo) were established as early as 1797. In 1825 mail from Calcutta to Falmouth, England, took nearly four months. Headrick maintains in in *The Tentacles of Progress* that the Indian uprising of 1857 ‘turned a strong interest in communications between Britain and India into something approaching panic’.\(^{72}\) This was a crystalizing event for British colonial administrators of the period. It raised important questions about the British presence in India and increased the desire for communications with British civil servants in the country. By 1868 the British government had nationalized all domestic telegraph companies. The compensation paid to their stockholders enabled them to invest in several new submarine cable ventures, including the Falmouth, Gibraltar, Malta, and British India Submarine telegraph companies. These came together in 1872 to form the Eastern Telegraph Company. The new firm quickly obtained almost half the telegraph traffic between India and Europe. The other half went via Germany, Russia, and Persia on landlines of the Indo-European Telegraph Company, or via the Indo-European Telegraph Department, which linked up with those of the Ottoman

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\(^{72}\) Headrick, *Tentacles of Progress*, p. 99.
and Austro-Hungarian empires. Headrick concludes that there is no doubt that the cables contributed mightily to the growth in world trade, to the division of labour within the empire, and to Britain’s economic position as the commercial center of its empire and the world. By the outbreak of the First World War, France was far from having a global network like Britain. However, it did have its own cables to North America, the Caribbean, and Brazil, and its colonies in North, West, and Equatorial Africa.

All of this made it possible for the Theosophical Society to operate on an international scale and conduct business globally. Olcott maintains that up to the close of the year 1894, as a result of but nineteen years of activity, charters had been granted for 394 branches of the Society, in almost all parts of the habitable globe. Furthermore, those issued in 1894 outnumbered the annual average in growth since the society’s foundation in 1875 by 29.9 per cent. If these numbers are even close to being accurate, they demonstrate how the Theosophical Society is an ideal exemplar for our investigation into how the globalization of the nineteenth-century occult actually occurred. While many scholars are aware that globalization of the occult occurred, particularly through Theosophy, the ways in which this occurred have not been sufficiently investigated. By the final decades of the nineteenth century, the Theosophical Society, Ordre Martiniste, and the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn had all been established. This growth in the final decades of the nineteenth century was aided by the growth in the networks of empire.

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74 Headrick, *Tentacles of Progress*, p. 110.
75 Headrick, *Tentacles of Progress*, p. 119.
In *Empire and Globalization* (2010) Gary B. Magee and Andrew S. Thompson argue that there was “quickening of economic relationships in the British world” that was a key feature of the late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century globalization. These communications networks facilitated the growth in economic networks across the globe:

By improving the quantity and quality of information flows, by bridging relations between producers and consumers, and by facilitating the adoption of new technologies, imperial networks contributed powerfully to growth in trade and the convergence of income levels that were such marked features of English-speaking society from 1850 to 1914.\(^\text{77}\)

It should be remembered, however, that co-ethnic webs of trade were also systems of power and domination that incorporated some parts of colonial society and not others. Between 1871 and 1913, the proportion of all British exports going to the empire rose from 26.8 per cent to 35 per cent. This was a rise in contrast to the shrinking share of British exports going to developed countries in Europe and the United States.\(^\text{78}\) Between 1871-75 and 1909-13, the average percentage of exports going to British India grew from 8.9 percent to 11.9 percent. India was second only to the total average percentage going to the totality of British settlement colonies.\(^\text{79}\)

The influence of the opening of the Suez Canal was not inconsiderable in the growth of trade and exchange with the East. Tony Ballantyne and Antoinette Burton argue in *Empires and the Reach of the Global* (2012) that the canal was both a symbol and foundation of the ‘reworking of imperial communications and

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\(^\text{78}\) Magee and Thompson, *Empire and Globalization*, p. 120.

transportation in an age when the reach of European power became truly
global'.\(^{80}\) It proved to be a great success after its opening in November 1869
and quickly became a vital commercial and strategic corridor, enabling ships to
move between Britain and Asia without circumnavigating Africa. Initially, the
building of the canal had been financed by French capital and relied heavily on
labour from Egypt, North Africa, and the Arab world. In 1875, the British
government, with funding from Rothschild bank purchased Egypt’s shares in the
channel. Britain’s expenditure of four million pounds sterling reflected its
awareness of the canal’s significance for both the British economy and the
empire. For some it was the embodiment of modernity – a monument to both
the power of engineering and capitalism. It effectively cut the distance between
London and Mumbai by 41 percent. British strategists also believed that the
canal was central to securing the “safety of empire” because it enabled the fast
deployment of military resources. The canal had a telegraph line running
alongside the waterway, and was central to communications between India and
Britain.\(^{81}\) By 1852 the average time for mail to reach England from Bombay
ranged between thirty-three and forty-four days. By 1869 the opening of the
Suez Canal had drastically reduced these times.\(^ {82}\) As such, ‘the canal was not
only central to recalibrating space and time with the French and British empires
but also pivotal in reshaping commerce and communication at a global level’.\(^ {83}\)

The capitalism of the nineteenth century was a more pervasive capitalism
than the world had previously witnessed. Cain and Hopkins have argued for the

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\(^{80}\) Kevin H. O’Rourke, *Globalization and History: The Evolution of a Nineteenth-
Century Atlantic Economy*, (Cambridge, 2001); Tony Ballantyne and Antoinette
Burton, *Empires and the Reach of the Global: 1870-1945* (Cambridge,
Massachusetts, 2014), p. 86.


\(^{82}\) Kaul, *Reporting the Raj*, p. 31.

\(^{83}\) Magee and Thompson, *Empire and Globalization*, p. 88.
emergence of a new kind of capitalism in the nineteenth century, which they have termed ‘gentlemanly capitalism’. As the Western world made the move from being primarily feudal to become increasingly capitalist, the owners of large estates found themselves in need of income, as their estates became more of a liability than a source of income.\textsuperscript{84} The new financially based economy (as opposed to land based) at the middle of the nineteenth century undermined the supremacy of the landed aristocracy. In the growing market economy the landed elite became the new men of the emerging service sector whose innovations in finance, distribution, and the professions generated wealth and eventually bestowed social recognition.\textsuperscript{85} Yet the line from feudalism to capitalism was far from a straight one and M.J. Daunton maintains there was much intermingling of the two after the beginning of the decline of feudalism.\textsuperscript{86} Of course, capitalism had long been present in the world and what we are talking about here is a matter of degree. Hobsbawm argues that in the decades that followed 1848, there was a ‘triumph of a society which believed that economic growth rested on competitive enterprise, on success in buying everything in the cheapest market (including labor) and selling it in the dearest’.\textsuperscript{87} We shall see that the occult was not immune to the competitive forces that were growing in the economy. The individualistic nature of nineteenth-century occultism became a good fit with the growing market economy and increasing urbanization.

\textsuperscript{85} Cain and Hopkins, ‘Gentlemanly Capitalism II’, 1.
These growing global networks of trade had implications for the nineteenth century literary industry. In the same vein as the *Dramatic Literary Property Act, 1833*, further measures were taken to protect British literary products in the international marketplace. A clause in the 1842 Copyright Act aimed to protect the imperial trade in books by forbidding colonial reprinting of texts copyrighted in Britain. Magee and Thompson maintain that ‘though difficult to police, it helped British publishers gain access to colonial markets, and a high proportion of the revenues of nineteenth century London booksellers came from supplying books, magazines, and other types of print to British expatriate and settlers.’

Series of books called “colonial editions” were published that sold cheaply in an attempt to guard against pirated publications. In essence, this was an attempt to control the English language market. They were commonplace by the early 1900s, with 17 London publishers issuing them. Macmillan launched a successful “Colonial Library” in 1896 and “Empire Library” in 1913. Ballantyne and Burton agree that print culture was exploding in the final quarter of the nineteenth century. They argue that this enabled the “apprehension of a variety of imagined communities at the doorstep of newspaper readers in Paris, Delhi, Shanghai, Cairo, Moscow, and Istanbul”. They describe a growing array of genres from “penny dreadfuls” to missionary tracts, travel narratives, to illustrated periodicals. Literature was reaching popular audiences and delivered imperial encounters to an expanding readership as literacy spread rapidly and became a ‘key element of modernity’. This helped to create a vision of colonial

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88 Magee and Thompson, *Empire and Globalization*, p. 128.
89 Magee and Thompson, *Empire and Globalization*, p. 128.
communities as distant and exotic lands, across empires, that was available widely to the public for the first time.\(^\text{92}\)

During the last quarter of the nineteenth century, the newspaper industry experienced rapid growth, propelled forward by the introduction of new technologies, improvements in railway and telegraph communications, and by the rise in literacy, which followed the spread of elementary education.\(^\text{93}\) By the 1890s, there was a greater quantity, quality, and diversity of papers than ever before in Britain. Approximately 150 daily newspapers were available to an expanding reading public. These were supplemented by weekly papers, monthly periodicals, and quarterly reviews.\(^\text{94}\) What the British public read about Empire was largely determined by one news agency, that being Reuters.\(^\text{95}\) Donald Read argues in *The Power of News: The History of Reuters* (1999) that it was Julius Reuter’s experience in Paris that showed him the way toward global news circulation. From 1832, Charles Havas had developed a lithographic news service in the French capital. At first, Havas had collected and translated items from the foreign press but within a few years he was employing his own correspondents and reporting the news directly. By the end of the decade, Havas was offering a range of targeted news services for government ministries, departmental prefects, bankers, and newspapers. Eventually he sold news stories in other countries.\(^\text{96}\) By the middle of the nineteenth-century, news from many parts of the world was made available daily through the news agency.

\(^{92}\) Ballantyne and Burton, *Empires and the Reach of the Global*, p. 146.  
\(^{94}\) Thompson, *Imperial Britain*, p. 62.  
\(^{95}\) Magee and Thompson, *Empire and Globalization*, p. 189.  
Reuter became a sub-editor for the Havas news agency in Paris, without any previous journalistic experience but with a command of German, French, and English. Reuter stayed with the agency long enough to learn about news agency work. In 1849 Reuter opened his own lithographic correspondence agency in Paris. This first effort failed and Reuter returned to his homeland of Germany. By 1 January 1850, Reuter had started the Institute for the Transmission of Telegraph Messages at Aachen, Germany. He knew that attempts were being made to lay undersea cables between Dover and Calais and he sensed that this would open up opportunities in Britain. In June 1851, Reuter and his wife landed in London. On 10 October, he opened an office at the Royal Exchange Buildings at the heart of the City of London, near the main telegraph offices. This was the beginning of a global news service that would become part of the global and imperial infrastructure. News services had already been started in Paris, New York, and Berlin by the time Reuter arrived in London. However, he was the first to sell his news to other London newspapers and that proved to be a fateful decision for the standardization across the globe of information that was received from the colonies.

In the 1870s Reuters had acquired a virtual news monopoly of the colonies and the Far East. Its own historian claimed that Reuters was a “semi-official institution of the British Empire.” The editor of The Nation stated that the agency “stood for British interests as the Foreign Office sees them.” It reflected the views of “official circles” at colonist clubs, the mercantile class, and

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governing class.\textsuperscript{102} It was Reuters that determined which news that would be telegraphed back to London.\textsuperscript{103} They also provided a private telegraph service that facilitated the spread of information within the empire. Established in 1871, the service was subsequently extended to include the Far East, Australasia, and South Africa. The most popular service was the Eastern Private Telegram, which linked Britain with India and the Far East. In 1875 approximately 4,000 telegrams were being sent on these lines. By 1912 this number rose to 276,195.\textsuperscript{104}

As we have already seen, the printing press was an important arm of British imperialism. At home in Britain, Alfred C. Harmsworth launched the halfpenny Daily Mail morning paper in 1896, which reached a readership of millions just five years later. Baumgart argues that the paper, not unlike Reuters, regarded itself as ‘the megaphone of the imperialist movement’.\textsuperscript{105} Upon its founding The Daily Mail declared itself to be

‘…for the power, the supremacy and the greatness of the British Empire. … The Daily Mail is the embodiment and mouthpiece of the imperial idea. Those who launched this journal had one definite aim and view… to be the articulate aim of British progress and domination. We believe in England. We know that the advance of the Union Jack means protection for weaker races, justice for the oppressed and liberty for the down-trodden. Our Empire has not exhausted itself’.\textsuperscript{106}

The relationship between occultists and the growing commercialization of the press of the nineteenth century world was not an easy one. Nor were the elite classes always at ease with this democratization of the philosophies of magic through the printing press. Despite literacy’s potential for encouraging

\begin{thebibliography}{100}
\bibitem{102} Magee and Thompson, Empire and Globalization, p. 189.
\bibitem{103} Magee and Thompson, Empire and Globalization, p. 189.
\bibitem{104} Magee and Thompson, Empire and Globalization, p. 190; Read, The Power of News, pp. 79–80.
\bibitem{106} Baumgart, Imperialism, p. 52.
\end{thebibliography}
rational and moral self-improvement, the creation of a literate public could neither be controlled nor directed. However, as will be shown, displaced aristocrats needed something to sell and one of the products they turned to was the philosophy of magic. Not all of the “gentlemanly capitalists” found their new careers in the financial sector of the City of London. This was the period when they allowed some of their secrets to become known through publishing. The secrecy was lessened but the published secrets were also veiled. For example, in Zanoni, Bulwer-Lytton refers to John Denley as D. In Dogme et Rituel de la Haute Magie, Éliphas Levi refers to Bulwer-Lytton as B_. L_. Emma Hardinge Britten claims that Ghost Land (1876) was written by Chavaler de B.

Like many things, printing activities took on a whole new character in nineteenth-century Britain, leading to the development of a massive literary industry. In A History of British Publishing (1988) Feather argues that this growing industry was an attempt to impose a middle-class culture on the working class. In the post-Enlightenment period, middle-class Victorians believed profoundly in the printed word as a path to improvement for the working class. However, in addition to the forces of decreased costs, this information age was spurred on by the availability of leisure time for all classes and the need to fill it with recreational activities before commercially available leisure sports, music halls, and spectator sports. Furthermore, Feather maintains that with ‘cheaper methods of production, cheaper materials, and cheaper and more efficient systems of distribution, it was possible to sell books in far greater numbers than at any previous time in human history’. In 1870, the British Education Act suddenly created vast new markets for elementary

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school textbooks for the newly established School Boards. The number of elementary schools increased by 50 percent with the first four years after the passage of the Act, and the number in attendance rose by half a million children.¹¹⁰

Not to be underestimated in the globalization of religion is the role of missionaries and Christian networks. In the words of Elisabeth Elbourne in ‘Religion and the British Empire’, ‘religion may have provided a means to help define membership in nascent colonial communities, but it also posed a dilemma to early modern colonial administrators of how to govern jurisdictions in which the religion of the majority was not a variant of Protestant Christianity’.¹¹¹ Governing non-Christian populations would have been an anomaly to early colonial administrators. The late eighteenth century arguably saw a shift away from a dominant emphasis on Christianity as a mark of civility, toward a greater stress on Christianity as a gateway to individual salvation that potentially was open to all. Three missionary societies were founded in Britain in the 1790s: the Baptist Missionary Society in 1792, the interdenominational London Missionary Society in 1795, and the evangelical Anglican Church Missionary Society in 1799. Elbourne argues that these societies were a precursor to the organized Protestant missionary movement that became a characteristic feature of British imperialism.¹¹² These global networks also became an important aspect of the globalization of religion as they brought Christian religion to the colonies and information back to the colonial homeland.

Elbourne argues that the Indian uprising of 1857 caused doubt about the wisdom of cultural universalism, in the sense that there were questions on the wisdom of imposing Christian religion within India. However, the missionary presence was so embedded as an aspect of imperial infrastructure that by the time of the Indian uprising it was no longer possible to reverse it. Missionary societies provided networks of education and medical facilities, ranging from small bush schools to large urban hospitals. At this stage many of the mission employees had duties that did not involve much proselytizing. By the late nineteenth century both married and single women found professional opportunities in missionary work that were less available to them at home. Working-class men had found similar outlets a century before. Missionary societies provided employment opportunities for those in the colonial homeland that would not have been otherwise available. They became integrated with the colonial economy, created important global networks, and contributed significantly to imperial infrastructure.

Missionaries also went to parts of the world on which there was little information available. They learned local language and sent back regular reports. They also kept diaries that were published through an active evangelical print culture. As such, they were important to the creation of science and the development of anthropology. Periodical publications, pamphlets, biographies, autobiographies, children’s books, and board games all streamed from the colonies through missionaries. In keeping with the growing commercial economy of the period, these products provided a source of fundraising for missions. Elbourne maintains that they also dealt in concepts of civilization and

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savagery often informed such material, which helped to build a popular conviction of the benefits of the British Empire.

In defiance of the global and imperial links that the nineteenth-century occult depended on for its growth, it became interrelated with both socialist politics and the growing “slow print” publishing of the day. Miller argues that by the end of the nineteenth century, ‘radical thinkers came to believe that print’s endless reproducibility made it especially subject, as a technology, to the expansive market ideology of industrial capitalism’. Miller defines slow print against this speed and profit oriented print marketplace, maintaining that radical writers sought to counter this commercialization of the printing press. She maintains that ‘socialists, anarchist, and other radical groups came to believe that large-scale mass-oriented print was no way to bring about revolutionary social change’. Urbanization was transforming life-styles and projecting class differences into the political arena as Marxism began to emerge through dissemination of left-wing newspapers. As such, the left wing of the day recognized the inherent contradiction in using the capitalist-driven mass press to address socialist concerns. So they developed their own slow print capabilities. However, as we shall see, this defiance against commercial networks did not stop occultists from widely circulating their texts across the globe. For example, occultists such as Bulwer-Lytton also recognized the capabilities of print to work within the growing commercial economy of the period. This demonstrates how truly complicated the occult engagement with print became.

115 Miller, *Slow Print*, p. 2.
The Nineteenth-Century Occult and Print

Slow print and the periodical press was a particularly good match with the occultism of the nineteenth century. Miller maintains that Theosophical socialism in particular was a reaction against enlightenment through the press. It was a reaction against the commercialization of the press:

The ideal of print as a transparent medium for the convenience of rational debate, only requiring freedom from governmental restriction to circulate enlightened thought among a literate populace no longer seemed a realistic goal as it had in decades past. Within this larger turn against print enlightenment, we can also see among radical thinkers a movement toward antirational systems of thought, such as theosophy and spiritualism.\(^{117}\)

As such, left-wing activists created their own in house printing capabilities to print their own periodicals separate from the influence of large commercial publishers. In this environment, the Theosophical Society established *The Theosophist, Path, and Lucifer* and established their own book printing presses in India, Britain, and the United States. Miller discusses Theosophical Socialism in particular and notes that Besant co-edited the ‘National Reformer’ with Charles Bradlaugh before converting to Fabian socialism. During the 1880s, she launched and edited two socialist journals, *Our Corner* and *The Link*. This was before she converted to Theosophy after reviewing *The Secret Doctrine* for the *Pall Mall Gazette*. After her conversion, she edited a number of theosophical and other counter cultural publications, including the Indian nationalist paper *Commonwealth: A Journal of Nationalist Reform*.\(^{118}\)

Freemasonry and fringe Masonry had already provided the model for growth in publishing within esoteric societies with periodicals like *Rosicrucian and the Red Cross*, started in London 1868, and *The Freemason*, started in 1869 in

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\(^{117}\) Miller, *Slow Print*, p. 221.

\(^{118}\) Miller, *Slow Print*, pp. 222–223.
London. The weekly *British Spiritual Telegraph* was started in 1857.\(^{119}\) Ralph Shirley founded the *Occult Review* in 1905. *The Quest* was started by George R.S. Mead, a former private secretary to Madame Blavatsky. It served as a quarterly publication of the Quest Society and was directed toward a general but educated audience. Frequent contributors during the early years were associated with the Theosophical Society and Golden Dawn. Famous occult author and translator A.E. Waite served as vice president of the Quest Society. He and Evelyn Underhill were both contributors to its quarterly, while Arthur Machen, W.B. Yeats, and Ezra Pound also wrote for the publication.\(^{120}\) Aleister Crowley started *Equinox* in London in 1909.\(^{121}\) These are just some of the many occult periodicals that were circulating in the nineteenth century.

Notably, this overlap was not unique to British occultism and socialism. During the Revolution of 1848 Lévi (writing as the abbé Constant) was editor of *Le Tribune de la Peuple*. In the 1850s he became a regular contributor to the *Revue progressive* and also published in *Testament de la Liberté*.\(^{122}\) The *Revue Spirite: Journal D’Études Psychologiques* enjoyed a steady level of subscriptions – approximately 1800 throughout the century. Sharp claims it reached as many people as the *Message de Paris* and its circulation remained


\(^{120}\) Alex Owen, *The Place of Enchantment: British Occultism and the Culture of the Modern* (Chicago, Illinois, 2004), p. 49.


significantly higher than similarly specialized monthly journals such as the *Annuaire philosophique* and the *Alliance religieuse*, each of which drew 1,000 subscribers. M. Brady Bower argues in *Unruly Spirits* (2010) that *Revue Spirite* ‘would similarly help in solidifying the foundations of the new religion, which would continue to benefit throughout the 1860s from the expansion of literacy and the appearance of dozens of new books and periodicals on the subject’. In the opening pages of the first edition of *Revue Spirite* Kardec argues that ‘we are amazed with reason that, while in America, the United States alone possesses seventeen journals devoted to such materials, not to mention a host of non-recurrent writings. France, compared to Europe, where these ideas were most readily acclimated, does not own one’. This quote demonstrates that French spiritists were aware of and monitoring the activities of American spiritualists through their print activities. As we shall see, occult periodicals were both a key means for the transmission philosophies and a key means of generating revenue for occult societies.

Leslie Howsam has effectively argued in *Kegan Paul: A Victorian Imprint* (1998) that the history of the book can benefit from a focus on publishers whose purpose it was to bring together the demands of readers with the preoccupations of authors. She details the evolution of the publishing house that became known as Kegan Paul, Trench, Trübner and Co. Ltd. in 1889. Well-

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known occult publishers Alfred Percy Sinnett, George Redway, and Trübner and Co. were all involved in some way with this new publishing house. Charles Kegan Paul had established his literary reputation by 1877. Nicolas Trübner was a prestigious international publisher and bookseller. Trübner was known as a specialist in Indian and Asian literature. He died in 1884 but Trübner and Company was carried on by his wife Marie Trübner. In 1878 he launched Trübner’s Oriental Series. Howsam maintains that the series was encouraged and supported by the India Office Library. Trübner was also known for publishing Edwin Arnold’s *The Light of Asia* in 1879. Esoteric publisher George Redway brought his small writers list to the company to be merged with the list of Kegan Paul Trench, and Trübner. Redway was to share the management of the company with Paul. By 1888 Redway was established in York Street, specializing in esoteric books such as Hargrave Jenning’s *Phallicism: Celestial and Territorial, Heathen and Christian*. Redway became the London agent for the *Theosophist* in 1884. He was so much associated with the spiritualist movement that a contemporary described his encounter with Theosophy as ‘going in for a course of Redway’. Howsam maintains that Redway had some knowledge of international publishing because of his connection with Theosophy. This speaks to the importance of Theosophy as an international publishing network in the period. Alfred Percy Sinnett joined the firm as a partner after the death of Charles Redway. Sinnett had begun his career as a journalist, reporting on Indian and Asian affairs for various London papers. He had also served as editor of the colonial journal *The Pioneer of*

The history of publishing engaged in by these men demonstrates the overlap between publishing on esotericism and publishing on the East in the period. The firm moved to Paternoster House, Charing Cross Road in 1891. In 1895 Kegan Paul's profits fell and its directors resigned, whereupon Arthur Waugh took over management of the firm. Charles Kegan Paul retired in 1899 and died in 1902. Kegan Paul, Trench, Trübner and Company was incorporated with Routledge and Sons to form Routledge and Kegan Paul Ltd. Sir William Crookes was among the directors in 1912. Crookes and Sinnett had also been appointed to the original board of Kegan, Paul, Trench, Trübner, and Company when it was formed in 1889. Crookes was a chemist and long known for his involvement in the Society for Psychical Research (SPR), the Theosophical Society, and the Golden Dawn. These board appointments speak to the strong ties between the publishing house and the occult community.

Owen notes that 'by the first decade of the twentieth century, occult organizations proliferated, a vibrant occult press was in operation, books and periodicals devoted to the topic were appearing in even greater numbers, and ordinary people as well as the famous and lettered were involved with occultism in all its variations'. Occultism was democratized through the printing press. It represented the syncretistic religion extraordinaire. Its practitioners could pick and choose from ancient and Renaissance philosophies, Christianity, and combine it with the principles of Hinduism and Buddhism to develop their own particular brand of magic. In an environment of growing individualism, this

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135 Owen, *The Place of Enchantment*, p. 6
desire to pick and choose one’s own religious beliefs was an excellent match with the service-oriented culture of the growing market economy of the mid-to-late nineteenth century. The global networks of print, established by growth in empire, created an environment that fostered the globalization of religion through the printed word. Of course it should always be remembered that this was a very colonial interpretation of global religions. Individualism and the commercial economy were concepts that were largely brought from imperial powers to the Eastern world. The commercialization of religion is largely an imperial approach to religion.

**Re-Conceptualizing the Globalization of the Occult**

Most of the narratives on how the occult was globalized to date have focused on meetings between British and French occultists. The analysis has focused on individual occult masters and their stories rather than the structures and systems in which they operated. Godwin, Hutton, Wouter Hanegraaff, and Christopher McIntosh have all noted the meetings that took place between Bulwer-Lytton, Kenneth Mackenzie, and Éliphas Lévi as important turning points in the transmission of occultism between these two countries. While such scholars have examined the existence of occult texts, they have not essentially examined the movement or translations of such texts. However, this thesis will make the case that while the meetings between British and French occultists were important, those events can actually pale in comparison to the greater global and imperial context. I am paying closer attention to how occult texts moved around the globe and essentially re-conceptualizing the nature of

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the transmission of esoteric philosophies as something that occurs largely through texts, after the growth in literacy during the long nineteenth century. This thesis will move the discourse to a discussion of the larger global framework in which occultism globalized.

In *The Theosophical Enlightenment* (1994), Joscelyn Godwin made the case for the role of Bulwer-Lytton’s *Zanoni* in the transmission of occultism between France and Britain. Godwin argues that it is ‘an encyclopedia of ideas about occult sciences’.\(^{137}\) He maintains that for esotericism in Victorian Britain, there was no more important work of literature than *Zanoni*. Furthermore, Godwin notes that it was widely read in France and Germany – countries in which Bulwer-Lytton’s works were translated into the national language.\(^{138}\) Indeed, *Zanoni* was translated into French and published in English in Paris, in the same year it was first published as an English language novel in London.\(^{139}\) Up to 305 editions of the book are listed on the World Catalogue Library System with 250 of those are from before 1915.\(^{140}\) *Zanoni* was translated into multiple languages including French, German, Dutch, Spanish, Italian, Russian, Vietnamese, Czech, Danish, Croatian, Portuguese, and Sindhi.\(^{141}\) This thesis, however, will argue that the spread of occultism through literature went well beyond the global circulation of *Zanoni*. Godwin is quite correct that *Zanoni* was a means of transmission. However, there are similar stories for many other occult texts in the nineteenth century.

Ronald Hutton disagrees with Godwin on the importance of *Zanoni*. Hutton argues that not even *Zanoni* was sufficient to spark the revival of learned magic

\(^{139}\) World Catalogue Library System (Last accessed 3 September 2015).
\(^{140}\) World Catalogue Library System (Last assessed 3 September 2015).
\(^{141}\) World Catalogue Library System (Last accessed 3 September 2015).
in Britain. Hutton maintains that this revival took place in France and spilled over into Europe. For proof of this, he refers to Éliphas Lévi. This thesis, however, will reject the argument that it was primarily Lévi’s occultism that sparked the occult revival. Indeed, there were many occult activities being pursued in both Britain and France in terms of its engagement with spiritualism, mesmerism, masonry, and fringe masonry at the time of Lévi’s rise to prominence as an occultist. Lévi was a writer in socialist circles who had the skills and the understanding the printing press to use it as a means of transmitting his occult philosophies. A.E. Waite later translated Lévi’s works at a time when the global circulation of texts was possible due to growing networks of transport and commerce. Lévi was operating in a climate that was conducive to the growth in occultism and he was already making use of the printing press.

While most societies throughout human history have believed in some form of communication with spirits of the dead, what was new about the spiritualism of the middle of the nineteenth century was the promotion that it received in the proliferating media of the day and the opportunities it provided to make money in such a context. Godwin argues that the only thing that was novel about the spiritualism that began in 1848 was the publicity that brought crowds to Hydesville, New York, to see the infamous Fox sisters. Godwin argues that, ‘the new religion could have been designed by Madison Avenue,’ making an allusion to the sensational nature of it and the dependence of modern spiritualism on the mass press and advertising for its rapid growth. Mediumship was a product that could be sold and indeed it spread quickly from

143 Godwin, *Theosophical Enlightenment*, p. 188. It is widely regarded that modern spiritualism began with the Fox Sisters in Hydesville in 1848. For a full account of this story see Godwin pp. 187-204.
144 Godwin, *Theosophical Enlightenment*, p. 188.
America to both Britain and France in an age of transatlantic communication.\textsuperscript{145} However, what is missing from this discussion about the commercialization of esotericism is the influence of imperialism on the growth of international print culture and its importance for the global circulation of religious texts. Furthermore, not only did the networks of empire enable the circulation of texts but imperialism also facilitated and encourage the exchange of East-West religious philosophies. This became important as the nineteenth-century occult started to incorporate oriental religious beliefs for the first time.

Scholars such as Wouter Hanegraaff have effectively made the argument that nineteenth-century occultism was an important influence on how many people practice religion today, in terms of the development of contemporary New Age religion in a secularized world.\textsuperscript{146} Hanegraaff has argued that the foundations of contemporary New Age were created in the course of a process that he calls the secularization of esotericism.\textsuperscript{147} This important work on contemporary religion argues that there are mirrors of secular thought which include the Enlightenment and Counter-Enlightenment, the impact of Eastern religions, the evolution of Theosophy, and the psychologization of esotericism.\textsuperscript{148} He addresses Weber’s theory of the disenchantment of the world but neglects the other major aspect of Weber’s theory -- the growth in capitalism in the post-Enlightenment world.\textsuperscript{149} While the work of Hanegraaff gave us a new understanding of New Age religion as the emergence of a new esotericism in a secularized world, a more contextual analysis is needed to fully

\textsuperscript{146} Hanegraaff, \textit{New Age Religion and Western Culture}, p. 520.
\textsuperscript{147} Hanegraaff, \textit{New Age Religion and Western Culture}, p. 517.
\textsuperscript{148} Hanegraaff, \textit{New Age Religion and Western Culture}, pp. 411–513.
\textsuperscript{149} Hanegraaff, \textit{New Age Religion and Western Culture}, p. 409.
explain the changes that took place in esotericism in the nineteenth-century. While Hanegraaff argues that the theosophical synthesis of Eastern and Western religion was an important aspect of the nineteenth-century occult, he does not address the global and imperial networks that enabled Helena Blavatsky and the members of the Theosophical Society to travel from America, to Britain, France, and India. While the meeting of Western occultism with oriental religion has been discussed, the missing piece of the narrative has long been the growth and development of nineteenth-century global and imperial networks that enabled the incorporation of Eastern religious philosophies into Western esotericism. While Hanegraaff argues for the importance of New Age texts as a critical aspect of contemporary religion, he largely misses the point that the processes that made the commercialization of religion possible began to unfold in the nineteenth century. These processes include growth in commercial culture, growth in literacy and education, and growth in printing and publishing networks.

In many ways, what Hanegraaff refers to as esotericism in the mirror of secular thought is perhaps best referred to as commercialized esotericism, as esotericism has moved largely to the private sector. While it has been effectively established that esotericism was commercialized at the end of the twentieth century, much less work has been done of the commercialization of nineteenth century occultism. Furthermore, this thesis addresses how commercial culture has been globalized as a legacy of imperialism and the global networks that were created largely in the final decades of the nineteenth century, after the opening of the Suez Canal. While much work has been done on Christian missionaries, as an aspect of imperialism, this thesis examines the impact of imperialism on religion that is much more broadly defined. It provides
much needed analysis on the influence of imperialism and globalization on the
religion that is practiced outside of any church or traditional religious institution.
It examines the very nature of religion and how it has evolved in the last two
centuries. For it is this liberal, individualistic, and commercial approach to life
that is truly the culture of the modern.

Definitions
There are certain key concepts that must be explained in terms of how they
will be used in this thesis. Concepts such as occultism, esotericism,
materialism, religion, and New Age have had many and varied meanings when
interpreted by different people.

Occultism
The Oxford English Dictionary defines occult as ‘not disclosed or
divulged, secret; kept secret; communicated only to the initiated’.\textsuperscript{150} Essentially,
the essence of this is hidden or secret knowledge. Faivre credits Lévi with
coining the term occult, in its most modern sense. He maintains that Lévi
‘derives it from philosophia occulta in the sense promulgated by Henricus
Cornelius Agrippa in De Occulta philosophia (1533), to designate a group of
investigations and practices having to do with such “sciences” as astrology,
magic, alchemy, and Kabbalah’.\textsuperscript{151} However, while occult refers to hidden
principles, occultism generally refers to the engagement with those principles.

The Dictionary of Gnosis and Western Esotericism (2006) argues that
occultism has its pioneers in eighteenth century authors such Emanuel
Swedenborg and Franz Anton Mesmer, and covers the great majority of

\textsuperscript{150} In Oxford English Dictionary online (Last accessed 24 February 2014).
\textsuperscript{151} Faivre, Access to Western Esotericism, p. 34.
esoteric currents from at least the mid-nineteenth century onward.\textsuperscript{152} This is a very broad definition of occultism that essentially refers to heterodox religion more generally. While the concept of the occult existed before the eighteenth century, it came to take on a new meaning in the nineteenth century as esoteric religion began to incorporate the principles of the scientific method. Hanegraaff has defined occultism as ‘all attempts by esotericists to come to terms with this disenchanted world or, alternatively, by people in general to make sense of esotericism from the perspective of a disenchanted secular world’.\textsuperscript{153} For him, occultism reflects a desire to make sense of magical traditions in an environment of growing rationalism and specifically refers to post-Enlightenment esotericism. In a situation of increasing disbelief in the supernatural, the principles of the scientific method began to be adopted by some of those practicing esotericism. Therefore, occultism refers to the type of esotericism that emerged in the nineteenth century that incorporates principles of the natural sciences. Egil Asprem, for example, has tied figures such as Besant, Blavatsky, Olcott, Sinnett, Rudolf Steiner, Alice Bailey, and Charles Leadbeater to discourses in spiritualism and psychical research.\textsuperscript{154} In particular, he argues that in the late nineteenth century, the physics of ether provided an invaluable resource for esoteric spokespersons.\textsuperscript{155}

In defining occultism for \textit{The Place of Enchantment}, Owen distinguishes between occultism and spiritualism.\textsuperscript{156} For Owen, spiritualism is a less ceremonial form of magic than occultism. This distinction is often drawn, 

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\textsuperscript{152} Wouter Hanegraaff (ed.) with Antoine Faivre, Roelof van den Broek, and Jeanne Pierre Brach, \textit{Dictionary of Gnosis and Western Esotericism} (Leiden, 2006).
\textsuperscript{153} Hanegraaff, \textit{New Age Religion and Western Culture}, p. 422.
\textsuperscript{154} Egil Asprem, ‘Pondering Imponderables: Occultism in the Mirror of Late Classical Physics’ \textit{Aries} 11 (2011) 129.
\textsuperscript{155} Asprem, ‘Pondering Imponderables’, p. 159.
\textsuperscript{156} Owen, \textit{Place of Enchantment}, p. 7. 

sometimes pejoratively, between learned occultism and the more accessible spiritualism that was available to anyone with a medium and a séance table. Golden Dawn magic was a particularly learned and ceremonial form of magic in the nineteenth century. In keeping with the idea of Victorian progress and education, the Golden Dawn is noted for its creation of a magical college to instruct its members.\textsuperscript{157} It was a very developed form of ceremonial occultism. However, the occultism of the Golden Dawn was far from the only engagement with the esoteric in the nineteenth century. Narratives of spiritualism, mesmerism, and Rosicrucianism pervaded nineteenth century culture in fictional and non-fictional genres, and in books and periodicals. It is my contention that if we are to achieve a full picture of the complicated nature of the transmission of nineteen-century occult philosophies, it is necessary to examine occultism in its wide variety of nineteenth century manifestations. My definition of occultism incorporates spiritualism, mesmerism, theosophy, Masonry, fringe Masonry, Martinism, and ceremonial magic like that of the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn.

**Esotericism**

Occultism and esotericism are words that are often used interchangeably. However, for the purposes of this thesis they will not be. In the 1990s, Faivre developed the characteristics of what he called the Western esoteric traditions.\textsuperscript{158} According to his foundational text *Access to Western Esotericism* (1994) there are certain characteristics that the Western esoteric traditions have in common: belief in correspondences, living nature, belief in imagination and mediations, experiences of transmutation (or the achievement

\textsuperscript{157} Butler, *Victorian Occultism*, p. 2.

\textsuperscript{158} Goodrick-Clarke, *Western Esoteric Traditions*, p. 5.
of gnosis), concordance of all religions, and transmission from initiate to disciple. Essentially, the Western esoteric traditions hold that all of nature is divine and interconnected, drawing on ancient traditions such as the Platonic layers of existence as outlined in Republic. As the name suggests, this is a very Eurocentric approach to the study of esotericism as it mostly looks at examples of esotericism that come out of the occidental tradition. It is a typology that does not work terribly well in a global context. It is frequently disputed and the concept of esotericism is increasingly seen as difficult to define.

In Western Esotericism: A Guide for the Perplexed Wouter Hanegraaff recognizes the dominance of the Western worldview and states that ‘Faivre’s definition looks like a radical alternative to the disenchanted worldviews that came to dominate Western culture in the wake of the scientific revolution, the Enlightenment and positivist science.' However, Hanegraaff also recognizes that the religionist approach of early scholars of Western esotericism held that it was but ‘one part of a much larger domain: the esoteric teachings of all non-Western religion and cultures, such as Hinduism, Buddhism, Shamanism, and so on, must ultimately point towards the same esoteric reality underneath surface appearances.’ The religionist approach necessarily entails seeking this esoteric reality. Hanegraaff maintains that this approach largely went out of vogue within the academy in the 1990s because it was considered to lack the empiricism of more historical approaches.

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159 Faivre, Access to Western Esotericism, pp. 10-14.
162 Hanegraaff, Western Esotericism, p. 11.
163 Hanegraaff, Western Esotericism, p. 11.
Supporting the concept that the Western esoteric traditions mostly come out of the ancient occidental philosophies, A.P. Sinnett stated in *The Occult World* (1881) that ‘occult philosophers of old – Egyptian priests, Chaldean Magi, Essenes, Gnostics theurgic Neo-Platonists, and the rest – who kept their knowledge secret, must have adopted that policy to conceal the fact that they knew very little’. For the most part, ancient philosophers had not tried to conceal their beliefs. It was merely a matter of requiring literacy to engage with the texts of magical philosophy. This challenges the conception of esotericism as hidden, arcane, or secret knowledge. However, in the increasingly globalized environment of the nineteenth century, the esoteric traditions started to both become widely available and incorporate the philosophies of the East.

Recognizing this, Hanegraaff maintains that:

> It remains true that the very term “Western esotericism” could be seen as reflecting an unfortunate hegemonizing perspective, which against the evidence that religious pluralism has been the rule of Western culture, marginalizes Judaism and Islam in Europe in order to promote an ideological “Christendom narrative”.

After consulting with Hanegraaff, I have come to the conclusion that by and large it is now generally accepted that it is difficult to define esotericism and the concept of “Western” esotericism is considered too exclusionary of Eastern esoteric traditions. In Western culture, the defining feature of esotericism has been that it exists without any recourse to a church or sacraments. Drawing on the esoteric traditions, one does not need a church to access these other esoteric levels of existence. The divine can be found within all living things and accessed by all human beings. However, institutionalized religion is a very Western concept and institutions such as the Vatican have not existed to the same extent in Eastern cultures. In many ways, the very idea of esotericism, or

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165 Hanegraaff, *Western Esotericism*, p. 17.
needing to define a form of religion against traditional institutionalized religion is a very Western concept. Arguably the reason Hinduism and Buddhism were easily accepted into the esoteric traditions of the nineteenth century is that, like esotericism, Eastern religions lacked formal institutions such as a Vatican. Both Eastern religions and esotericism depended on the printing and publishing networks in the West, rather than church networks. In fact, the practitioners of the esoteric traditions began the process of trying to bring together all the world’s religious traditions in the nineteenth century.

The concepts of concordance and transmission are generally applied to esotericism from the late nineteenth-century onward, which is obviously important for my purposes. Concordance refers to the idea of a coming together of all world religions (as with Blavatsky’s theosophy) and transmission refers to the concept that one must be initiated into a secret tradition. However, a key argument of this thesis will be that the concept of transmission must be widened. In an environment of occult publishing, transmission can occur more broadly. An initiate can reach many disciples through books and in many ways gives up control of who will be initiated once the book is put into the marketplace. Therefore, this thesis will hold a broader conception of transmission than has traditionally been the case in defining esotericism. The occultism of the Golden Dawn and Theosophical Society of the mid to-late nineteenth century would fall into the category of the esoteric traditions.

Another important text in defining esotericism is recent years has been Egil Asprem’s The Problem of Disenchantment (2014). In it, Asprem makes the case that we need to reconceptualize disenchantment. The book seeks to demonstrate the usefulness of a reorientation toward interdisciplinary research

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on the intersections between religious studies, esotericism, and the history of science. Asprem maintains that his work provides an alternative to monolithic narratives of the development of Western culture, science, and philosophy. Asprem challenges the view of Western history that sees science and religion as fields that have developed independent of each other. His work explores examples of how they are actually quite integrated. Asprem sees disenchantment (in the Weberian sense) as something other than disappearance of ghosts and goblins from the world, but rather a reorientation of enchantment to other locations such as occult sciences. This explains why discussions of science appear so readily in occult texts. However, the relationship between occultism and science will not be the focus of this thesis.

**Religion**

This thesis accepts the Clifford Geertz definition of religion from 'Religion as a Cultural System': (1) a system of symbols which acts to (2) establish powerful, pervasive, and long-standing moods and motivation in men by (3) formulating conceptions of a general order of existence and (4) clothing these conceptions in such an aura of factuality that (5) the moods and motivations seem uniquely realistic. It is not the purpose of this thesis to debate the definition of religion or whether nineteenth-century occultism was a form of religion. This is a definition drawn on by both Monroe and Hanegraaff in their respective works about nineteenth-century occultism and its influence on New Age religion. Using this definition of religion, certainly the nineteenth-century occult and New Age can be seen as contemporary manifestations of religion.

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that are separate from any traditional religious institution such as a church. This definition enables us to examine how religion has shifted since the beginning of the long-nineteenth century.

Religion has long been seen as an anti-materialist quest in the sense that most of the major world religions largely require their practitioners to let go of worldly goods and focus on the spiritual rather than earthly pursuits. For example, priests and nuns take vows of poverty. However, in the nineteenth century the lines between religion, science, and the commercial economy began to blur. Occultists (and members of the Theosophical Society in particular) often spoke out against materialism. In volume one of *The Secret Doctrine* Blavatsky stated ‘materialism and skepticism are evils that must remain in the world as long as man has not quitted his present gross form to don the one he had during the first and second races of this Round’.\(^\text{170}\)

Similarly, in his memoirs *Old Diary Leaves*, Henry S. Olcott stated that Annie Besant spoke on the “Insufficiency of Materialism” in Madura, India, in 1893. He argued that ‘the very prevalence of materialistic tendencies which she found spreading in India under the prevailing system of collegiate education, seemed to stimulate her more to do her best to stem the tide’.\(^\text{171}\)

According to the Oxford English Dictionary, materialism is the belief that nothing exists except matter and its movements and modifications. More narrowly it is the belief that mental phenomena are nothing more than, or wholly caused by the operation of material or physical agency.\(^\text{172}\) However, the important point to remember about occult religion is that it rejected religious

\(^{170}\) Helena Blavatsky, *The Secret Doctrine*, Volume I (Wheaton, 1978), p. 480. This quote also refers to her views on the evolution of the five Root races that evolved out of India.


\(^{172}\) Oxford English Dictionary online (Last accessed March 6, 2016).
dualism and believes modern science needed to be raised up to the level of analysis engaged with by esotericism. Spiritualists took a materialist approach to the problem of apprehending spiritual manifestations. They used voices and table rappings as indicators of the presence of spirit. These indicators were seen as material in nature. However, the intelligence behind these tools was seen as psychological or perhaps spiritual (not material) in nature.\textsuperscript{173} This was a natural evolution of science and religion in a period when the Western world was increasingly embracing an empirical approach to science. In the words of Owen, ‘the assumed concordat between science and religion was irretrievably breaking down, with science increasingly staking its claim to the high ground of rationality’.\textsuperscript{174} Occultists worked to bring science and religion back together by simultaneously adopting the methods of modern science, while rejecting its empiricism or the notion that we should only measure that which we can see, smell, taste, touch, or hear. The evolving approach toward religion and science demonstrates the debates over materialism that existed during the Victorian period.

**New Age**

In the article “New Age Religion and Secularization” (2000), Hanegraaff describes New Age religion in the following way:

All New Agers object to *dualism* in its various forms: therapeutic (i.e. assuming a sharp separation between body and spirit, as well as between healing and spiritual development), religious (i.e. opposing God as Creator against creating beings), ecological (i.e. opposing man against nature), and so on. Such various forms of dualism should be replaced by “holistic” alternatives: God and man are one in

\textsuperscript{173} For a discussion of the overlap between science and spiritualism in nineteenth-century Britain and France see Owen, *The Darkened Room*; Sofie Lachapelle, *Investigating the Supernatural: From Spiritism and Occultism to Psychical Research and Metapsychics in France, 1853-1931*; Monroe, *Laboratories of Faith*.

\textsuperscript{174} Owen, *The Place of Enchantment*, p. 8.
their deepest essence, therapies must treat “the whole person” and the healing process is a process of spiritual development at one and the same time, humanity must rediscover its lost connection with nature, and so on. In addition, New Age thinking is generally opposed to reductionism in its various forms: the universe does not resemble a dead mechanism but a living organism permeated by a spiritual force and the dimensions of the spiritual itself cannot be reduced to purely material processes.  

For Hanegraaff, New Age religion is a holistic view of humanity, nature and the divine that sees no necessary need for a savoiur (mediator) or sacraments to experience the divine, although some mediation may be used within the esoteric traditions. An oracle would be a good example of this. Furthermore, he argues that ‘most of the beliefs that characterize New Age were already present by the end of the nineteenth century, even to the extent that one may legitimately wonder whether New Age brings anything new at all’. While many often assume that New Age is drawn from Hinduism and Buddhism (as per the belief in karma and reincarnation), Hanegraaff maintains that its main tenets are drawn largely from the Western traditions:

...the basic structures of New Age have emerged, practically without exception, from long-standing occidental traditions which either belong to, or are closely connected with Western esotericism (sensu Faivre). The foundations of New Age religion were created during the late eighteenth and nineteenth century, in the course of the process which I have referred to as the secularization of esotericism.

This will be further demonstrated in my chapter on theosophy. While this thesis accepts Hanegraaff’s view that New Age emerged largely from the Western esoteric traditions and that the foundations of contemporary New Age were created in the eighteenth and nineteenth century, I do not believe that the process can be explained exclusively through an understanding of secularization. This thesis will show that we must also address other nineteenth

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176 Hanegraaff, New Age Religion and Western Culture, pp. 482–483.
177 Hanegraaff, New Age Religion and Western Culture, p. 517.
century processes such as growing commercialism, changing technology, and imperialism.

Hanegraaff draws on Geertz’s definition of religion to develop his own definition of religion which he maintains can be defined as ‘any symbolic system which influences human action by providing possibilities for ritually maintaining contact between the everyday world and a more general meta-empirical framework of meaning’.\(^{178}\) Hanegraaff claims that New Age serves the same spiritual function for its practitioners that traditional religion has historically served for its followers. However, he is also clear to point out that, while New Age is religion, it is not a religion. Rather, it is religion as spirituality, as opposed to a religion through an institution. He concludes that religion might take the form of spirituality rather than the form of an organized religious institution; for Hanegraaff there is no necessary connection between spirituality and traditional religious institutions such as churches. However, he fails to make the point that religion as spirituality is now largely found and purchased through commercial institutions. This thesis will show that the shifting of religion from traditional religious institutions to commercial institutions is a process that began in the mid-to-late nineteenth century.

**New Capitalism**

Cain and Hopkins are best known for putting forward the concept of gentlemanly capitalism. They have effectively argued that, after 1815, London’s influence as the main source of long-term international finance was poised to increase dramatically as the age of steamship and railway began.\(^{179}\) They maintain that ‘service and finance had a greater impact than industry on


\(^{179}\) Cain and Hopkins, ‘Gentlemanly Capitalism I’, p.525.
Britain’s presence overseas between 1850 and 1945. As such they see a new form of capitalism emerging in the second half of the nineteenth century. The global economy was becoming more service oriented in the new age of transportation and the importance of landed estates was declining. The gentlemanly capitalism concept largely sees the British Empire as being run out of London’s financial sector as displaced aristocrats in need of money went to work in the City. Cain and Hopkins maintain that:

Two thirds of the £6 billion raised on the London markets between 1865 and 1912 went into enterprises in foreign countries or the empire. The majority of the investors who placed money abroad came from London and its environs, and had predominantly aristocratic, landed, or service (chiefly financial) backgrounds.

This has long been an important explanation for the shifts in the nineteenth-century economy toward the financial service sector, increased transport, and growth in communications. However, while this perspective gives us important information on imperialism and globalization, it is also limited in that it views the British Empire as largely being run out of the City of London’s financial service sector. Certainly, there were broader influences on the creation of the contemporary world beyond the City of London. The concept of gentlemanly capitalism does not sufficiently explain the growth in the commercial economy, particularly in the final decades of the nineteenth century.

This thesis takes the perspective that in the 1870s there was a key transformational moment in both aesthetics and economics, and further that this shift has had an important impact on the commercialization of religion through literature. Consumers became increasingly interested in the purchase of products that reflected art, beauty, and good taste. In this environment we see increased interest in purchasing certain types of products such as books by

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181 Cain and Hopkins, ‘Gentlemanly Capitalism II’, p. 3.
certain authors, art by certain artists, or products by certain producers as a reflection of one’s tastes. Notably, the 1870s was the period that saw the emergence of the Theosophical Society. These were manifestations of the growing individualism that was a feature of the increasing liberalism of the age. This became a period when, because of growing literacy and print, it became widely possible for individuals to choose their own religion by engaging with it through texts. Both aesthetics and economics underwent a shift in focus from production to consumption. In an environment of a growing middle class, the consumer had increasing power.

In her landmark work *The Insatiability of Human Wants* (2000) Regenia Gagnier makes the case that in the 1870s an emphasis on the theory of value and social relations between land, labour, and capital gave way to more individualistic models of consumerism. In aesthetics, theories of artistic production or creativity bowed to models of taste, pleasure and reception. Western thought moved from models of production to models of consumption. Gagnier argues that both nineteenth-century economics and aesthetics derived from broad and practical perceptions of people as producers, creators, labourers, and consumers, or creatures of taste and pleasure. She maintains that:

…the function of aesthetics, then, was to provide aesthetic feeling, to soothe the mind and to harmonize humankind’s multiform needs and capacities as they became increasingly subjected to the demands of the marketplace. Further, the shift in economics actually privileged subjective psychological factors on the part of the consumer that a science of aesthetics was best placed to explain.

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The new focus on the aesthetic and individualism in the final decades of the nineteenth century was certainly an important factor in the process of beginning the commercialization of religion. This is also reflected in the growth of practices such as mesmerism and spiritualism of the nineteenth century in which the individual has more control over the spiritual experience.

Importantly, Gagnier also makes the case that the centrality of modern economic thought to the self-representation, aesthetic, and culture that emerged in the 1980s is actually rooted in the commercialization of the aesthetics that began in the final decades of the nineteenth century:

> The competitive individuals who were the imaginative centres of the popular culture of the 1980s, whether wearing the face of wealth and glamour or the face of poverty and crime, have been sanctioned in economic and aesthetic theory since the second half of the nineteenth century. Competitive individualism and aesthetic individualism through taste, choice, and preference have certainly liberated us, but they have also served as the justification of our indifference toward others and as an ideological cover for institutional manipulations of power.

This link between late nineteenth century and late twentieth century economics demonstrates the link between nineteenth-century occultism and the New Age religion that emerged in the 1980s. Indeed, in 1894 the periodical *The New Age: A Weekly Review of Politics, Literature, and Art* emerged and later reached great heights under the leadership of Alfred Orange and Holbrook Jackson, with financial support from George Bernard Shaw. The periodical is credited with shaping modernism, art, and literature from 1907 to 1922. This relationship between the economics of the two periods helps to explain why New Age religion emerges as an increasingly commercialized form of religion in the last two decades of the twentieth century. The final decades of the twentieth

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186 Brown University news release, 19 April 2007
http://www.brown.edu/Administration/News_Bureau/2006-07/06-143.html
century were a period when television and the Internet brought commercial culture to whole new levels, on a global scale. While many New Age authors and texts emerged during the 1980s, nineteenth-century occultists such as Crowley, Mathers, Lévi, and Blavatsky also achieved new levels of fame. Notably, many of their books achieve higher levels of sales in the final decades of the twentieth century than they did in the nineteenth century, and continue to do so today.

Finally, this thesis takes the position that it was not only the texts of occultism that were globalized. Rather, through the networks of empire (railroads, telegraphs, printing presses, publishing houses, and global networks of commerce) the commercialization of the aesthetic was also globalized. These networks and their products created the environment in which individualized religion, as accessed through the text, could thrive. Drawing on the work of sociologist J. Urry and the philosophies of Hegel, Gagnier maintains that there is now a global aesthetic in which many cultures represent themselves to themselves and thereby construct their identities in a global market. She argues that ‘while the ideology of individualism has grown stronger, the culture that informs individuals has grown more diverse, more global, and more commodified’.  

Methodology

My methodology pairs global and imperial history with cultural history. It will view nineteenth-century occultism through the lens of global and imperial networks and the global circulation of occult texts for the first time. It draws on the methodology of Tony Ballantyne entitled Orientalism and Race (2002), who

conducted his analysis of imperialism through the lens of “webs of empire” as opposed to simply nation states. Ballantyne rejects the methodology of examining exchanges across national boundaries, as ideas moved along lines of personal correspondences, circulation of the printed word, institutional exchanges, exhibitions, and because of the mobility of travellers, missionaries, and administrators.¹⁸⁸ He maintains that ‘the web captures the integrative nature of this cultural traffic, the ways in which imperial institutions and structures connected disparate points in space into a complex mesh of networks’.¹⁸⁹ While Ballantyne is referring here to an imperial system, it is appropriate to draw on his methodology because the networks that enabled Britain and France to maintain empires were the same networks that changed the transmission of occultism in the nineteenth century. The steamships, telegraphs, and printing presses, which enabled the high levels of imperialism that were reached in the nineteenth century, also enabled the Theosophical Society to become headquartered in Adyar, India, and set up lodges all across the globe. These networks of empire enabled the sharing of information about religion between the colonizer and the colonized. No longer was the transmission of occultism limited to a few key members of occult societies. It spread throughout British and French society, while simultaneously crossing many international lines. This thesis examines how these networks of empire facilitated the globalization of religion, broadly defined to include commercialized religion and Eastern religious philosophies.

While nineteenth-century occultism largely evolved in France and Britain, this is not to say that other countries did not have an influence on its

development. I analyze the impact of British imperialism in India and Napoleon’s expedition to Egypt on the evolution of occult philosophies. These were important events in the evolution of religion in nineteenth-century society in terms of bringing the philosophies, symbols, and practices of Eastern religion to the West.

However, these were countries that actively developed global networks to facilitate the process of imperialism. I will demonstrate that this is the major reason that nineteenth-century occultists could become known on a global scale as the publishing industry, particularly from 1850 onwards. While occultists such as Lévi, Besant, Blavatsky, and Crowley knew how to effectively use the printing press to spread their ideas, they might have been less remembered by history if they had been operating in a different context.

In carrying out this analysis, I will borrow the term metahistory from historian Hayden White. However, I use it in the same way as historian of French esotericism David Allen Harvey. White uses the concept of metahistory to refer to the major figures in nineteenth-century historical writing and the philosophy of history. However, the concept itself can be applied much more broadly. White maintains that:

It is sometimes said that the aim of the historian is to explain the past by ‘finding’, ‘identifying,’ or ‘uncovering’ the ‘stories’ that lie buried in chronicles; and that the difference between ‘history’ and ‘fiction’ resides in the fact that the historian ‘finds’ his stories, whereas the fiction writer ‘invents’ his. This conception of the historian’s task, however, obscures the extent to which ‘invention’ also plays a part in the historian’s operations. The same event can serve as a different kind of element of many different historical stories, depending on the role it is assigned in a specific motific characterization of the set to which it belongs.\textsuperscript{190}

For White, there is always an element of interpretation of events on the part of the historian. As we shall see, this is particularly important in the study of magic, as magicians often like to create particular interpretations of events or people to build credibility for their particular brand of magic or their esoteric society. This thesis will uncover invented histories while at the same time putting the history of nineteenth-century occultism in its broader global context. My work analyzes existing legends and presents the history of how occultism was transmitted through literature, thereby demonstrating how heterodox religious texts came to be reified as religious symbols since the beginning of the long nineteenth century.

Finally, I would like to make a note on the data that are drawn from the World Catalogue Library System. That particular system tells us the number of copies of the various editions that are in circulation at present. Obviously, this is important information toward understanding how many editions have been printed and which ones have been deemed worthy of placement in a library. The system also tells us, in most cases, what year the books were published and by whom. It tells us what language and year they were published in. This is extremely important information but it should not be considered an exhaustive list and the data should not be confused with the number of editions in print. I have also drawn on information in the catalogues for the Bibliothèque Nationale de France and the British Library.

This analysis will be delivered in four chapters. Chapter one will address the roots of post-Enlightenment esotericism in France coming out of the French Revolution and mesmerism, including the growth of liberalism and print culture. It will show how the Hermetic approach to French occultism grew out of Napoleon’s expedition to Egypt, the deciphering of the Rosetta Stone, and the
continuing influence of Catholicism in French culture. Chapter two will cover the growth in Victorian occult literature and how fringe masonry overlapped with orientalism in the period. I explore how the literature of Edward Bulwer-Lytton was used to globalize occult philosophies through fiction as texts were circulating across the globe. Chapter three will address the role of the Theosophical Society in Great Britain, France, India, and America, with a review of the various aspects of the Theosophical press and how it acted as a globalizing force for nineteenth-century occultism. As well, it will review the influence of the British presence in India on occultism, as Eastern philosophies began to be adopted by the practitioners of the Western esoteric traditions in Britain. Chapter five will analyze the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn, which operated in both France and Britain. It will demonstrate how the Golden Dawn represented a resurgence of Hermetic philosophies in British occultism and a growth in Egyptian orientalism on the English side of the channel.
1.0 The Occult in Post-Revolutionary France

In the preface of his English translation of *The Mysteries of Magic: A Digest of the Writings of Éliphas Lévi* (1897) Arthur Edward Waite argues that the work of the infamous French magus was largely responsible for the growth in occultism in France throughout the nineteenth century. He makes the claim that:

> While dwelling upon the extended character of Éliphas Lévi’s influence, it would be impossible to overlook the esoteric groups which have sprung up in France within recent years, for these, in a direct manner, may be regarded as deriving from the magus. I refer to the various schools of which Dr. Encausse, better known under the pseudonym of Papus, is the most active representative, and Stanislaus de Guaita perhaps the most inspired expositor. Much of the literature which has been produced by these schools may be regarded as voluminous commentary upon Lévi’s writing.¹⁹¹

Certainly, it has been well documented by scholars such as Alison Butler, Ronald Hutton, and Christopher McIntosh that Lévi’s work was extremely influential on the doctrine of nineteenth-century occultism, and twentieth century magic.¹⁹² However, in explaining the influence of Lévi, Waite misses the point that largely contextual factors led to the globalization of occult philosophies through the international distribution of literature. The growth of the nineteenth-century printing press was largely a response to growth of the commercial economy and the globalization of publishing. These factors were far more responsible for the global growth in occultism than any single translator such as Waite. It should also not be ignored that the reign of Napoleon and his expedition to Egypt were important factors in the evolution of French occultism.

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¹⁹² Butler, *Victorian Occultism*, p. 112; Hutton, *Triumph of the Moon*, pp. 70–71; McIntosh, *Eliphas Lévi*, p. 141. It is misleading to assume that there was a cohesive occult doctrine in an environment in which magic was being distributed commercially. However, if there was a standard set of beliefs within nineteenth-century occultism, certainly it was Lévi who created it by bringing together the Jewish Kabbalah with the Tarot.
This chapter will demonstrate that these factors not only had an impact on the evolution of French occultism but they also had an impact on occultism more generally across the globe as texts written by key French occultists moved around the world.

As argued in the introduction, it has long been held by scholars that Lévi, Bulwer-Lytton, and Mackenzie exchanged occult philosophies between France and Britain. However, in an effort to demonstrate the importance of the global movement of occult texts, this chapter will examine the movement of texts written by Kardec, Lévi, and Encausse. This paints a different picture of the evolution of French occultism when we see the context in which these men were operating. This chapter will also demonstrate that Encausse and the *Ordre Martiniste* were actively engaging with the commercialization of occultism through the periodical *L'Initiation* long before the emergence of mail order magic as described by T.M. Luhrmann in *Persuasion of the Witch’s Craft* (1989).\(^{193}\)

### 1.1 French Imperialism

In the eighteenth century, Britain and France were competing imperial powers. By 1778, Britain had largely thrown France out of India.\(^{194}\) In 1798 Napoleon invaded Egypt and gathered many artifacts, until French imperial

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\(^{194}\) G. B. Malleson, *History of the French in India* (Silma, 1867). Malleson attributes the British victory in India to the greater wealth of the British East India Company and the fact that the Directors of the East India Company were often members of the British parliament, giving them considerable sway with the minister responsible for colonialism in India. The French East India Company on the other hand was left to defend itself with its ships alone. Malleson also claims that there were circumstances that were dependent on the character of the agents on the ground that contributed to the same result. See chapter XII.
interests were again cut off by Britain in 1801. However, this was far from the end of the French-Egyptian engagement. France continued to have a relationship with Egypt that existed long beyond the period when Napoleon was expelled from the country.

With the decline of aristocracy in France during the French Revolution, the power of the French state grew. Napoleon’s accession to power followed quickly after the decline of the French monarchy. The Napoleonic Empire dominated almost all of continental Europe between 1804 and 1814. His rule of French colonies usually involved the introduction of the uniform highly centralized system of administration and justice that had evolved in France after the Revolution. Paul Strathern argues in *Napoleon in Egypt* (2007) that ‘the invasion of Egypt by Napoleon in the summer of 1798 was the first great seaborne invasion of the modern era’. This speaks to the French desire to open up the East, with Napoleon’s flagship aptly named *L’Orient*. After the well-documented capture of Egypt from the French by the British, French scholars were allowed to return home with their specimens and notebooks mostly intact. The British, however, had helped themselves to the biggest prize, which would become the most famous of all -- the Rosetta Stone. It sits in the British Museum to this day. In an age of fascination with Egypt, word of the stone’s discovery reached Europe before the French scholars had even

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returned home. After being surrendered to the British, the stone arrived in England in February 1802. Two decades after the stone’s discovery, French linguist Jean-François Champollion beat British scholars to deciphering the hieroglyphic script. His discovery was not universally accepted immediately but it is the translation that is largely accepted to this day.

Relationships between France and Egypt were not to be destroyed as quickly as the Rosetta Stone was taken. Lesley and Roy Adkins argue in The Keys of Egypt (2001) that ‘the French affinity for Egypt, the colony France never had, has continued to the present day’. Given the importance of the French language and culture in the eighteenth century, the artifacts delivered to France from Napoleon’s Egyptian campaign, and the relative proximity of the two countries, France and Egypt continued to have a cultural fascination with each other into the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Nina Burleigh argues in Mirage: Napoleon’s Scientists and the Unveiling of Egypt (2007) that the French left Egyptians with a lasting love of the French language. Champollion himself pushed for the idea of transporting an obelisk from Egypt to Paris. The obelisk was erected in Paris in 1833 as a gift from Egypt. Previously it had stood outside the Luxor Temple in Egypt and is decorated with Egyptian hieroglyphs. In 1836, the Egyptian Luxor obelisk was moved to the centre of La Place de la Concorde in Paris where it still stands today. This is the site where Marie Antoinette and a number of other French aristocrats were

201 Burleigh, Mirage, p. 215.
202 Burleigh, Mirage, p. 217.
204 Burleigh, Mirage, p. 247.
guillotined during the French Revolution. It is also the site of Bastille Day celebrations. This shows how strongly French and Egyptian culture continued to be linked throughout the nineteenth century and how the symbols of that relationship continue to influence French culture.

Ostler maintains that the general popularity of France declined after Napoleon's attempts to conquer the whole of Europe. However, there had been a French cultural renaissance across Europe in the late seventeenth century. As such, the French language continued to be so prominent in the nineteenth century that it gave France a role as global intermediary in peace processes.\textsuperscript{207} The language survived as a lingua franca for the elite.\textsuperscript{208} Undoubtedly, this global knowledge of the French language assisted with the spread of French occult philosophies throughout Europe and across the globe, particularly among French-speaking elites.

\subsection*{1.2 The Globalization of Freemasonry}

Freemasonry had an important role to play in the globalization of occult philosophies. It had a large presence in France by the time of the 1789 Revolution and is generally considered to have been part of the Enlightenment stream of thought. Butler attributes this to the cultural changes that were taking place in France leading up to the French Revolution:

If we are to take the argument that the belief in magic flourishes in a society undergoing great cultural change then the growing number of occult societies and writings make sense in eighteenth century France, a place of political and social upheaval. By the time the Revolution broke out, the ever-present companion of occultism, Freemasonry, had also made its presence felt in every corner of the country. More than 30,000 belonged to the 600 or 700 lodges that were operating throughout France.\textsuperscript{209}

\begin{footnotes}
\item[209] Butler, \textit{Victorian Occultism}, p.175, McIntosh, \textit{Eliphas Lévi}, p.19
\end{footnotes}
However, this parent of nineteenth-century occultism, Freemasonry (or the Craft as it is sometimes called) was founded in England in 1717. It quickly spread to Europe and North America. In 1743 the first lodge was opened in Paris. In 1756, the Grand Lodge of France was founded, but split into factions and was later reassembled by the Grand Duke of Luxemburg. A year later it was reconstituted as the Grand Orient of France.\(^\text{210}\) In this we see the beginning of the globalization of esoteric philosophies as early as the eighteenth century. Of course, this would pick up speed in the nineteenth century.

In *The Craft* (1886) John Hamill maintains that craft Masonry was introduced to Belgium, Denmark, France, Germany, Gibraltar, Holland, Italy, Malta, Minorca, Russia, Switzerland, and Turkey.\(^\text{211}\) Some of the lodges were transitory in nature and short lived. There were flourishing Provincial Grand Lodges in Hamburg 1737-1811; Frankfurt 1767-1823; Hanover 1746-1828; and Holland 1756-70. In Russia the first provincial Grand Master was appointed in 1731 and a Provincial Grand Lodge came into existence in 1772. It lasted until 1794 when Freemasonry was banned in Russia. English Freemasonry was introduced into North America with the appointment of Daniel Cox as Provincial Grand Master for New York, New Jersey, and Pennsylvania in 1730. This was followed by the appointment of Henry Price as Provincial Grand Master for New England in 1733. In all, the Provincial Grand Lodge appointed 23 Provincial Grand Masters for the various parts of what are now the United States of America between 1730 and the American War of Independence.\(^\text{212}\) France invaded Indochina in 1859 and again in 1887. Davis maintains that after this point France began to see itself as a power that could make a difference in the

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\(^{210}\) McIntosh, *Eliphas Lévi*, p. 19.

\(^{211}\) Hamill, *The Craft*, p. 87.

world, for the better, by spreading not just Catholic Christianity and respect for the law but also Freemasonry. Of course, it continued to be largely an elite pursuit in this period.

Eventually the global spread of Freemasonry would have implications for the spread of Egyptian orientalism. Freemasonry initially represented the resurgence of the spread of Hermetic philosophies, building on legends of Rosicrucians. However, Davies argues that the eighteenth century was a period of mystical interpretation of Egyptian hieroglyphs and the search for their link with Hermeticism was reinvigorated during the second half of the eighteenth century by the flourishing interest in Freemasonry. Up to this period Freemasonry had been inspired mostly by the symbolism and mythology of Solomon’s Temple, the Kabbalah, and the Knights Templar. In the second half of the eighteenth century, increasing antiquarian interest in Egypt entered the mix. In The Origins of Freemasonry: Facts and Fictions (2007), Margaret Jacob maintains that ‘the myth and lore associated with the lodges tied the geographical skills of the masters with ancient learning supposedly inherited from the legendary Egyptian priest Hermes Trismegistus’. It must be remembered, however, that all of this was occurring before the discovery and deciphering of the Rosetta Stone. It was before Napoleon’s exploration of Egypt. As such, it was an imagined Egypt that Freemasonry was engaging with.

Demonstrating how important Freemasonry was to the engagement with an imagined Egypt, in The Secret Lore of Egypt (2002) Hornung maintains that ‘by 1728, the seal of the Perfetta Unione lodge in Naples already displayed a

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213 Ostler, Empires of the Word, p. 417.
214 Davies, Grimoires, p. 169.
215 Davies, Grimoires, p. 169.
pyramid and sphinx’. In 1766, Antoine-Joseph Pernety (1716-1801) founded the “Rite hermétique” in Avignon, France. Two year later he was summoned to Potsdam, Germany, to be the librarian of Frederick the Great. Hornung maintains that the actual founder of “Egyptian” Masonry was the Italian and controversial Count Cagliostro (Giuseppe Balsamo from Palermo, 1743-1795), who founded various “Egyptian” lodges and the “Rite de la Haute Maçonnerie Égyptienne” in the lodge La Sagesse Triomphante on 24 December 1784. As Master of the order he gave himself the title of Grand Copht. Copht generally refers to a native Egyptian who claims descent from ancient Egyptians or a member of the Coptic Church. “Egyptian” Masonry was introduced to Paris in the following year. The ideal of Egypt had an important influence on the evolution of French esotericism. Freemasonry absolutely assisted with a growth of interest in Egypt that reached across the Western world. It became a place where religion, culture, and politics met in a powerful way that would transform religion in the nineteenth century as increasing literacy came to provide access, across classes, to the philosophies of the heterodox.

### 1.3 The Enlightenment and Literacy

During the Enlightenment, literacy increased across much of Western and Northern Europe. The defining feature of the Enlightenment publishing industry was the newspaper. Davies argues that the ‘authoritarian impulse to restrict knowledge, was alive and well but increasingly difficult to maintain’. Religious censorship was fighting a losing battle in France where the

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220 Davies, *Grimoires*, p. 93.
221 Davies, *Grimoires*, pp. 94–95.
*bibliothèque blue* emerged. Not unlike the Victorian ‘penny dreadful’, during the first half of the eighteenth century approximately one million copies of these cheap publications were being produced a year in France.\(^{222}\) However, the levels of print that occurred during the beginning of the Enlightenment were nowhere near the levels of publishing and circulation of texts that would be reached by the final decades of the nineteenth century.

In *Revolutionary Ideas* (2014), Jonathan Israel argues that literacy rates in France had risen gradually since the seventeenth century and at a basic level were relatively high in cities by the 1780s. Furthermore, female literacy rates were almost as high as those of men. However, in the villages, literacy rates were markedly lower.\(^{223}\) Before 1789, French towns and villages had an elaborate and long-established network of schools, supported by donations, endowments, and municipal grants. By 1791 French education had become a ferocious battleground of the revolution.\(^{224}\) Between 1794 and 1797 the ideological basis for the Revolution’s écoles centrales shifted to an uncompromising secularism and scientific academicism of the Radical Enlightenment.\(^{225}\) The output of schoolbooks supplied from Paris formed a new dimension of publishing. It consisted of abridgements of Buffon, Daubenton, Bonnet, Linnaeus, Rousseau, Mably, Raynal, d’Alembert, and d’Holbach. Israel maintains that there were no less than 59 of these establishments functioning across Europe in Ajaccio, Cologne, Mainz, Maastricht, Antwerp, Liège, and

\(^{222}\) Davies, *Grimoires*, p. 95.
\(^{224}\) Israel, *Revolutionary Ideas*, pp. 375–376.
Brussels, including within all the French departmental capitals.\footnote{Merriman, \textit{A History of Modern Europe}, pp. 542–543.} By 1802, Napoleon had suppressed the entire system of écoles centrales for being too emphatically revolutionary, democratic, and secular in character.\footnote{Israel, \textit{Revolutionary Ideas}, p. 395.} This is important because it challenges traditional views on education in France as being something that emerged from the first revolution alone and something that emphatically separated the educational system from the Catholic Church. In fact, it demonstrates a return to engagement with religion in the French education system after the first revolution.

Similarly, across Europe educational systems provided many more people than ever before with basic reading and writing skills. By the early nineteenth century, literacy rates were well above 50 percent.\footnote{Israel, \textit{Revolutionary Ideas}, pp. 394–395.} During the reign of Napoleon, he believed that schools could create patriotic and obedient citizens by teaching secular values that would ultimately link education to nationalism. In 1802 he established state secondary schools (lycées), thirty-seven of which were operating six years later. Students read only textbooks that were approved by the Emperor. In 1808 Napoleon also created France’s first public university system.\footnote{Merriman, \textit{A History of Modern Europe}, p. 495.} By 1833, the Chamber of Deputies approved the Guizot Law (named after the politician who sponsored it), specifying that each village was to have a primary school. Yet even after the advent of these laws, private schools operated by clergy continued to exist in many places. However, state education staffed by teachers gradually eroded ecclesiastical control of education. Eventually, both Liberals and Republicans opposed a pronounced role for the church in public life. They demanded that public schools teach national and
secular values. Secularized education, sponsored by states, slowly undermined the role of religion in public life.\textsuperscript{230}

An expanding readership during the first half of the nineteenth century encouraged the proliferation of novels, histories, poetry, literary reviews, newspapers, and political pamphlets. This reflected the diversity of middle-class interests. Reading clubs and bookshops flourished. In France, in particular, Balzac’s novels were first published as installments that were part of lengthy serials, which appeared at the bottom of the front page of newspapers. Balzac is best remembered for \textit{Le Comédie Humaine} that presented French life in the years following the fall of Napoleon in 1815. Authors were often paid by the word.\textsuperscript{231}

\textbf{1.4 French Catholicism in the Post-Revolution Age}

If there is one thing that we can be sure of as historians, it is the fact that Catholicism continued in France well beyond the first revolution. After the return of the Bourbon monarchy to power, the Catholic Church was still subject to Napoleon’s Concordat but the church was returned to its privileged position. After the turmoil of the 1789 revolution and the reign of Napoleon, Catholicism again became the official state religion.\textsuperscript{232} The Napoleonic Code had also guaranteed the free practice of religion to Protestants and Jews. With the return of the Bourbon monarchy, religious orders also returned to France and the observance of church holidays became obligatory.\textsuperscript{233} This diverse religious environment set the stage for the growth in French occultism, in a period that is

\textsuperscript{230} Merriman, \textit{A History of Modern Europe}, pp. 542–543.
\textsuperscript{231} Merriman, \textit{A History of Modern Europe}, p. 541.
\textsuperscript{232} Merriman, \textit{A History of Modern Europe}, p. 593.
\textsuperscript{233} Merriman, \textit{A History of Modern Europe}, pp. 593–594.
often associated with rationality. As we shall see, it would be a unique occultism that often overlapped with French Catholicism.

Yet with the decline in the power of traditional religious institutions and in the growth of personal liberty, religion in France was also emerging in a secularized form. Sharp maintains that ‘religion was a topic of central importance during the 1820s, and not only in terms of the attempt by conservative Catholics to regain influence and control in government’.234 Chateaubriand’s *On Christianity* (1801) drew great attention and helped to redeem the value of religion as an emotional experience. Saint-Simon himself called for a “new religion” to express his new philosophy. He published his *Nouveau Christianisme* in 1825, shortly before his death.235

As the impact of the industrial revolution increased through advancements such as railroads, cheap printing, and manufacturing, religion found a new home in the institutions of the private sector. Monroe argues that:

> This was the era of mass pilgrimages; of popular journals describing communications with souls in purgatory; of devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus; of Marian visions, stigmatics, and miraculous cures. While these phenomena are deeply rooted in Catholic tradition, their expression in the nineteenth century also had elements of novelty. First they relied on innovations; Pilgrimage sites like Lourdes thrived because of the railway; statues of the Virgin proliferated thanks to advances in mass production; and popular books and images became cheaper with improvements in printing technology. Second, the nationwide expansion of education, and the consequent growth in literacy, allowed believers to become engaged in religious life in a very different way than they had in the past; the devout were now also avid readers of a new Catholic mass press.236

Whole industries continue to exist around Catholic pilgrimages to Lourdes to this day. While pilgrimages had long existed, in the nineteenth century the number of people engaging in them reached whole new levels because of the

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growing middle class and the availability of railroad transportation. There was
growth in the engagement with the supernatural through material culture. ‘Tales
of visionaries, stigmatics, demonics, and other believers experiencing physical
manifestations of their faith inspired sensational books and pamphlets,
pilgrimages, and claims of miracle cures in believers’. French urban centres
witnessed a spiritual revival, apparent in the construction of new sites of
worship, the most important of which was the Basilique du Sacré-Coeur at
Montmartre in Paris. The basilica was built following the Franco-Prussian war
at the request of the Archbishop of Paris, in response to the moral decline of the
decades following the revolution of 1789, and in response to the uprising of the
Paris commune.

It is obvious when we examine French occultists such as Lévi or Lady
Marie Caithness that Catholic influence was not completely removed from
religion in France, despite the importance of the Enlightenment to French
society. Lévi studied at the seminary at Saint Sulpice and Caithness was the
descendant of a Spanish Catholic family. The titles of nineteenth-century texts
by famous French occultists throughout the century demonstrate their
continuing engagement with Catholicism.

<table>
<thead>
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<th>Title</th>
<th>Author</th>
<th>Year</th>
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<tr>
<td>Le Cathéchisme de la paix, suivi de quatrains sur la Bible et de la liberté</td>
<td>Éliphas Lévi</td>
<td>1896</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doctrines religieuses et sociales</td>
<td>Éliphas Lévi</td>
<td>1841</td>
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<tr>
<td>Le Mère de Dieu epupee religieuse et humanitarian</td>
<td>Éliphas Lévi</td>
<td>1844</td>
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<tr>
<td>La Rosier de mai, ou la Gurlande de Marie</td>
<td>Éliphas Lévi</td>
<td>1839</td>
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<tr>
<td>Le Secret du Noveau-Testment</td>
<td>Lady Caithness</td>
<td>1896</td>
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<tr>
<td>Le Spiritualism dans la Bible</td>
<td>Lady Caithness</td>
<td>1894</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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238 Lachapelle, *Investigating the Supernatural*, p. 2
In this chart we see reference to Cathéchisme, the Virgin Mary, the New Testament, and the Bible. These all represent principles that have been adopted by Catholicism and that is especially true of the Virgin Mary.

Lévi demonstrates the overlap between occultism, socialism, and Catholicism in nineteenth-century France. In this environment, religious literature was used to make arguments that could not be stated outright in a strictly controlled political environment. In Socialism’s Muse (2006) Naomi J. Andrews maintains that there was a significant confluence of mystical religious, socialist, republican, and feminist sentiment in educated circles in the Paris of 1830s and 1840s France. During this period there was nearly a complete shutdown in public outlets for socialist and republican ideas. As such, many writers were turning to what we might consider more apolitical themes or modes of articulation to continue to voice their opposition in society, if not to government. Andrews argues that Lévi used metaphorical and allusive language to voice his protest during this period. This was a way for the French to cope with an oppressive regime indirectly, if not directly. As such, socialism and Catholicism became important cultural influences that played a role in the development of the unique brand of occultism that emerged out of France during the second half of the nineteenth century.

Although attempts to communicate with the dead can be found in most cultures, in 1848 this activity took a distinctly modern turn in Hydesville, New York. The Fox sisters reported hearing rapping in their new home. When bones were discovered in the home, news of the contact with spirits spread rapidly across the Atlantic and became the practice of spiritism in France. One of the

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most striking aspects of French spiritism is the fact that the concept of reincarnation emerged earlier in France than it did in Britain. Believers in reincarnation in France imagined an evolutionary, perfectible soul, improving as it moved through a series of lives. French occultists maintained that as humans progressed toward perfection, they would also become less selfish, more able to create a society that recognized the needs, rights, and interests of all, including the working classes and especially women. This vision of a better society would combine with French spiritism to provide a potent ideology in Second Republic France.²⁴² The period witnessed tensions between social democracy and a more liberal republic as the Second Republic adopted the motto *Liberté, Égalité, Fraternité*. It was a time when modern liberalism was being established within the context of a vision of a better life for all. The concept of a new life after death was powerful in an age of revolution.

Most works on spiritism argue that it was “consoling” in that it put participants in touch with many lost family members. Sharp argues that ‘this important facet cannot be ignored’.²⁴³ Of course, in a Catholic nation most people had grown up believing in life after death. However, what was completely distinctive about spiritist reincarnation was the belief that all of our human imperfections would eventually be overcome. This was a very Hindu view that was undoubtedly a product of the Romantic engagement with India. This will be discussed further in the chapter on Theosophy.

### 1.5 French Spiritism

The French fascination with *table tournates* began in earnest on 20 April 1853 when the *Constitutionnel* published a story of describing how people in

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Bremen had discovered that they could cause tables to move without visible impulsion. Soon French newspapers began publishing letters from readers who described similar instances. Pamphlets on how to hold séances appeared shortly thereafter. Playwrights, humourists, columnists, and science journalists were quick to comment on these phenomena. The daily *La Patrie* even instituted the regular “Occult Science Bulletin.” In this we see the influence of mass communications on the growth of occultism reaching entirely new levels as narratives of esotericism spread through popular culture. The development of French mesmerism and spiritualism were crucial forerunners to the development of the more philosophical occultisms that would later make Lévi and Encausse famous.

It was within this climate that Hippolyte Léon Denizard Rivail published his first book in 1857 entitled *Le Livres des Esprites* which was a best seller in the Second Empire. Later changing his name to Allan Kardec, Rivail became a tireless supporter of these ideas, editing a successful journal and founding an influential society devoted to the holding of séances. Notably, Kardec had published many books previously under his real name and maintained the pseudonym within the spiritualist community. This provided him with anonymity outside the spiritist community. A second edition of *Le Livres des Esprites* appeared three years later in 1860. There were significant changes between the first and second edition. An examination of the second edition of *Le Livre des Esprites* (1860) Kardec maintains that:

> In the first edition of this book, we announced an additional part. It was to consist of all the questions that we could not find space for in the first edition, from which later circumstances and new studies were to be born; but as they are all related, someone has already

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dealt with parts that they are developing for their isolated publication. As such, it would have provided no further results. We preferred to wait for the reprint of the book to base it all together, and we have the opportunity to put the distribution of materials in a much more methodical order. At the same time we have pruned all that was redundant. This reprint can be considered a new book, although not all principles have undergone change. With a very small number of exceptions, they are complements and clarifications rather than real changes. This conformity in the principles, despite the variety of sources from which we have drawn, is an important fact for the establishment of spirit science. Our correspondent maintains, to the contrary, that all communications indicate otherwise, in pure form at least in the background, that we were obtuse in different places, and even before the publication of our book, who came to confirm them and give them regular body. The history of that side shows that the greater part of these principles were professed by the most eminent men of ancient or modern times, and came just to sanction it.

This demonstrates the mediation that would have occurred with various versions of occult texts, as occultists disputed the content. This passage gives a sense of occultists racing to get various ideas and materials into print in an age when printing presses would have operated without the bureaucracy of

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247 Allan Kardec. *Le Livre des Esprits: Les Principes de la Doctrine Spirite sur l’immortalité de l’ame la nature des esprits et leurs rapports avec les homes; les lois morales, la vie présente, la vie future et L’avenir de l’humanité* (Paris, 1860). pp. I-II. Original: Dans la première édition de cet ouvrage, nous avons announce une partie supplementaire. Elle devait se composer de toutes les questions qui n’avaient pu y trouver place, on que les circonstances ultérieures et de nouvelle etudes devaient faire naître; mais comme elles sont toutes relatives à quelqu’un des parties déjà traitées et don’t ells sont le development, leur publication isolée n’eût présenté aucune suite. Nous avons préféré attendre la réimpression du livre pour fonder le tout ensemble, et nous en avons profité pour apporter tout ensemble, et nous en avons profité pour apporter dans la distribution des matières un ordre beaucoup plus méthodique, en même temps que nous en avons élagué tout ce qui faisait double emploi. Cette réimpression peut donc être considérée comme un ouvrage ouveau, quoique les principes n’aient subi aucun changement, à un très petit nombre d’exceptions près, qui son plutôt des compléments et des éclaircissements que de véritables modifications. Cette conformité dans les principes émis, malgré la diversité des sources où nous avons puisé, est un fait important pour l’établissement de la science spirite. Notre correspondence nous accuse, au contraire, que des communications de tout point indentiques, sinon pur la forme du moins pour le fond, ont été obteues en différentes localités, et cela avant même la publication de notre livre, qui est venu les confirmer et leur donner un corps régulier. L’histoire, de son côte, prouve que la pluspart de ces principes ont été professés par les homes les plus éminents des temps ancien et modernes, et vient y apporter sa sanction.
contemporary publishing. He seems to have a lot of agency in terms of the changes that he made between the first and the second edition. This second edition is the book that has been reprinted over time in various editions.

Notably, Kardec is invoking ancient wisdom to support his views. This is in keeping with the occult tradition of creating narratives to tie itself to a particular discourse, to gain credibility. The reality, of course, is that nineteenth-century French occultism was very much a product of its time. As already discussed, French spiritism drew on concepts such as mesmerism, telegraphy, Romanticism, and orientalism.

An examination of the 1857 and 1860 deluxe edition demonstrates that significant changes have been made between the original and second edition of the text. Both start out with roughly the same introduction. While it is the same length in both books, the introduction in the 1860 edition is broken up into 17 numbered sections. Also there are sub sections in each of the chapters that are numbered throughout the book, much like in a translation of an ancient text. However, there are differences in the content. This is obvious from an examination of the table of contents. Given the importance of Kardec's view on reincarnation, two of the more interesting sections that appears in the earlier edition and not the 1860 edition are entitled ‘Retour de la vie Corporelle a la Vie Spirituelle’ and ‘Différentes Incarnations’. In the early edition Kardec argues that 'yes, we all have several lives. Those who believe otherwise want to stay in ignorance or the same; that is their desire'.

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It has long been held that the French reincarnation doctrine was introduced to Britain by Lady Caithness in *Old Truths in a New Light* (1876). Reincarnation has long been believed to have been fully transmitted to British by Theosophists Anna Kingsford and Edward Maitland in *The Perfect Way; or The Finding of Christ* in 1882. However, Trübner & Co. published Kardec’s *Le Livres des Esprits* in London in 1875, before Caithness or Kingsford and Maitland were published. The book was published in French as early as 1857 and includes an entire chapter on reincarnation in the second edition.

It is also noteworthy that Louis Alphonse Cahagnet had published *Magnétisme* in 1848 and *Magie magnétique* in 1854. As early as 1848 he was already reporting cases, going back years, of somnambulists communicating with the spirits of the dead while in mesmeric trances. Unlike Kardec, however, Cahagnet was not discussing reincarnation. Again reflecting the overlap between spiritism and telegraphy, Cahagnet work was translated into English as *The Spiritual Telegraph* in 1851 in America, reflecting the speed with which spiritualism had established an American audience for literature on mesmerism. This also demonstrates that Anglophone spiritualists were drawing on French sources as early as 1851. As such, many of them may have been aware of Kardec’s *Le Livre des Esprits* well before it was translated into English in 1875. Finally, this tells us that there was a turn-around time of just three years between initial publication in French and translation into English. Occult texts

252 Nicholas Trübner started his business in 1851. Trübner died in 1884 and in 1889 Trübner and Company joined George Redway and Kegan Paul, Trench & Co, amalgamated and converted by Horatio Bottomley into Kegan Paul, Trench, Trübner & Co Ltd. For more information on Routledge or Trübner see [http://archives.ucl.ac.uk/DServe/dserve.exe?dsqIni=Dserve.ini&dsqApp=Archive&dsqCmd=Show.tcl&dsqSearch=RefNo=='ROUTLEDGE'&dsqDb=Catalog](http://archives.ucl.ac.uk/DServe/dserve.exe?dsqIni=Dserve.ini&dsqApp=Archive&dsqCmd=Show.tcl&dsqSearch=RefNo=='ROUTLEDGE'&dsqDb=Catalog)
were experiencing a rather swift move into new languages in the middle of the nineteenth century.

The 1860 edition of Kardec’s *Le Livre des Esprits* includes important information on reincarnation. This information can be found mostly in chapter IV, entitled ‘Pluralité des Existences’. Of reincarnation, the book states that ‘all spirits tend to perfection, and God provided them the means through trials of corporeal life; but in his justice he has provided them an opportunity to accomplish, in new existences, that which they could not do or achieve in a first test’. It goes on to state that:

…the doctrine of reincarnation, that is to say the one that exists to admit man to more successive existences, is the only one that responds to the idea that we have of the justice of God against men placed in a lower moral condition, the only one that can offer us the means of redeeming our errors through new trials. Reason tells us and the spirits teach us.

So it is clear from these passages that Kardec’s early view of reincarnation was that we pass from life to life. We evolve in ways in the next life that we were unable to achieve in our current life. He views reincarnation as something that is given to us by the Christian God. For Kardec reincarnation was not completely an Eastern concept. The important point, however, is that he is discussing reincarnation sixteen years before the publication of Lady Caithness’ *Old Truths, New Light*, which has long been given the credit for bringing the French views on reincarnation into Britain. This is an indication that the Anglo-

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253 Kardec, *Le Livre des Esprits*, p.75. Original: ‘tous les Esprits tendent à la perfection, et Dieu leur on fournit les moyens par les épreuves de las vie corporelle; mais dans sa justice’ il leur reserve d’accomplir, dans de nouvelles existences, ce qu’ils n’ont pu faire ou achever dans une première épreuve’.

254 Kardec, *Le Livres des Esprits*, p. 76. ‘la doctrine de la réincarnation, c’est-à-dire celle qui consiste à admettre pour l’homme plusieurs existences successive, est la seule qui répond à l’idée que nous nous faisons de la justice de Dieu à l’égard des hommes places dans un condition moral inférieure, la seule qui puisse nous offre le moyen de racheter nos erreurs par de nouvelles épreuves. La raison nous l’indique et les Esprits nous l’enseignent.'
French literary exchange around occultism was accelerating in the 1875 period. That is not at all surprising given the general increase in global connectivity that was occurring in the 1870s.

In 1860, 1861, and 1862, Kardec made journeys throughout France to visit budding spiritist groups. In 1862 the journey lasted seven weeks and included some twenty stops, where he attended over fifty meetings.\textsuperscript{255} This use of modern travel technologies to promote his book is what really set Kardec apart from previous esoteric authors in France. This was the age of the dawn of the book tour and Kardec made full use of the promotional opportunities that it offered. By 1862, Kardec had followers throughout Paris, Lyon, and Bordeaux.\textsuperscript{256} \textit{Le Livre des Esprits} would benefit greatly from Kardec’s promotional prowess. Anna Blackwell, English translator of the 1972 edition of \textit{Le Livre des Esprits}, maintains that ‘the book thus produced and published sold with great rapidity, making converts not in France only, but all over the continent, and rendering the name of Allan Kardec “a household word” with readers who knew him only in connection with it’.\textsuperscript{257}

As already noted, Kardec himself had always planned to publish a second edition with more information. In the preface to the revised edition, Kardec describes how he had intended to publish a supplement which would address new points which he did not have space for in the first edition. However, ‘the new matter proved to be so closely connected with what had been previously published as to render its publication in a separate volume inexpedient’.\textsuperscript{258} He and his team therefore awaited the reprinting of the book and fused the old and new materials together to avoid redundancies. He said

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{255} Sharp, \textit{Secular Spiritualities}, pp. 55-56.
\item \textsuperscript{256} Monroe, \textit{Laboratories of Faith}, p. 96.
\item \textsuperscript{257} Allan Kardec, \textit{The Spirits’ Book}, Anna Blackwell (trans.), (Lake, 1972), p. 12
\item \textsuperscript{258} Kardec, \textit{Spirits’ Book}, p. 19.
\end{itemize}
this made for ‘a more methodological arrangement of its contents’.\textsuperscript{259} The new edition ‘may consequently be considered as a new work, although the principles originally laid down have undergone no change, excepting a very few instances which will be found to constitute complements and explanations rather than modifications’.\textsuperscript{260} This demonstrates the liberties that were taken with new editions of early occult texts in the nineteenth century.

\textit{Le Livre des Esprits} was easily digestible and uniquely appealing. Monroe describes it as ‘between the new literature of self-help and an older tradition of devotional texts’.\textsuperscript{261} This was the beginning of a new genre, which today we would probably refer to as New Age literature. \textit{Le Livre des Esprits} essentially became the Bible of the spiritist movement.\textsuperscript{262} The World Catalogue Library System lists 199 editions (known as the Book of Spirits in English). It also lists 79 editions in French, 51 in Spanish, 27 in English, 9 in German, 14 in Portuguese, 7 in Italian, and also editions in Esperanto, Russian, Hungarian, and Polish. The earliest edition is listed as 1857 and 54 of these were published by 1922. It was published into English by 1875 in London.\textsuperscript{263} In 1880, Colby and Rich published the book in Boston as Spiritualist Philosophy. Anna Blackwell who published on a number of other spiritualist topics edited this version. The same version was republished in Boston in 1893. In 1898 G. Redway published it in London.\textsuperscript{264}

This is clearly a text that was in wide circulation in the nineteenth century and it continued to be published after Kardec died in 1869. Many of the editions are listed as published by E. Dentu, the Librarie des Science Psychologique,
Librarie des Science Psychique, and Librarie des Spirites. This is important because it demonstrates the strong links between nineteenth-century spiritualism and the scientific organizations of the period. It is interesting that *Le Livre des Esprits* was translated into the Esperanto, which was an artificial language, fashioned by a Polish person with European roots in the late nineteenth century. The language was very much in vogue in the early twentieth century, particularly in China. After China’s experiences at the hands of Western powers in the nineteenth century, the country abolished the imperial monarchy in 1911. There was a general idea that the country needed to be brought up to date, in a more European fashion. At the time, it was even suggested that the Chinese abolish their language in favour of Esperanto. In many ways, Esperanto was the great hope of a cosmopolitan, egalitarian world. It was often contiguous with international socialism. Chinese interest in the language was mostly during the Republican period. However, what is even more interesting is that all of the editions that were published in Esperanto were published in Rio de Janeiro, which is far from its Polish roots. Four versions of the first edition were published in 1946 and a second edition was published in 1989. All of the first editions were published by the Livraria de Editoria de Federoçao. The second edition was published by the Spiritisma Federocio.

Janet Duncan, who translated the 1866 edition of *L’Évangile Selon le Spiritisme* into English in 1987, maintains that Kardec spoke fluent Italian and Spanish, and had a profound knowledge of German, English, and Dutch. She maintains that he also had some knowledge of Latin, Greek, and Gallic and

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267 World Catalogue Library System (Last accessed 1 August 2015).
translated a number of books.\textsuperscript{268} This is important because Kardec's multilingual status put him into a position to serve as the head of a continent-wide network of corresponding spiritualists. \textit{Le Livre de Esprits} was translated into Spanish, Portuguese, German, Polish, Russian, and Hungarian. \textit{L'Évangile Selon le Spiritisme} was translated into Portuguese, German, Russian, Swedish, Polish, and Spanish. All the early editions of \textit{Le Livre des Esprits} were published in French in Paris, mostly by publishers E. Dentu and Didler. It was published in Spanish in Paris by a publisher called Bourdier in 1861. It was published in Russian in St. Petersburg in 1889, German in 1903, and Portuguese in 1904. An important question, of course, is whether readers outside of France were reading Kardec in the original French before he was translated. This was also a period when the French language was spoken by the elite across Europe and in many parts of the world, making it possible for this doctrine to spread easily.

Kardec founded the “Société des etudes spirites” and began to publish \textit{Revue Spirite} in 1858.\textsuperscript{269} Blackwell maintains that the second edition of \textit{Le Livre des Esprits} was possible with its additional information precisely because Kardec was receiving so much information about spiritualism from all over the world:

\textit{…similar associations were speedily formed all over the world. Many of these published periodicals of more or less importance in support of the new doctrine; and all of them transmitted to the Parisian Society the most remarkable of the spirit-communications received by them. An enormous mass of spirit-teaching, unique both in quantity and in the variety of sources from which it was obtained, thus found its way into the hands of Allan Kardec, by whom it was studied, collated, coordinated, with unwearied zeal and devotion,}\textsuperscript{268, 269}

\textsuperscript{268} Allan Kardec, \textit{The Gospel According to Spiritism}, J.A. Duncan (trans.), (London, 1993) p. X. The publisher's foreword notes that Allan Kardec Publishing Ltd. has been set up for the purpose of enabling a wider dissemination of the works contained within the Spiritist Doctrine.

\textsuperscript{269} Sharp, \textit{Secular Spirituality}, p. 51.
during a period of fifteen years. From the materials thus furnished to him from every quarter of the globe the enlarged and completed The Spirits' Book, under the direction of the spirits by whom it was originally dictated; the “Revised Edition” of which work, brought out by him 1857 (vide “Preface to the Revised Edition,” p. 19) has become the recognized text-book of the school of Spiritualist Philosophy so intimately associated with his name.  

Certainly it is possible that Kardec was receiving information from across the globe by the 1860s. After all, spiritualism had spread to France from America by this time. However, much of his popularity seems to have been on the continent with his books mostly being translated into Spanish, Portuguese, German, Italian, and Esperanto.

**Publications by Allan Kardec**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Editions</th>
<th>Editions before 1914</th>
<th>Translations</th>
<th>First Published</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>Le Genèse: les miracles et les predictions selon la spiritisme</em></td>
<td>35</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>French (29) Spanish (3) Italian (2) Esperanto (1)</td>
<td>1868</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Les Livres des Esprits: Contenant les principes de la doctrine spirite</em></td>
<td>199</td>
<td>54 (before 1922)</td>
<td>French (79) Spanish (51) English (27) Portuguese (14) German (9) Esperanto (5) Polish (3) Russian (2) Hungarian (1) Undetermined (1)</td>
<td>1857</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Qu’est que le spiritisme: introduction à la connaissance du monde invisible par les</em></td>
<td>47</td>
<td>31 (before 1922)</td>
<td>French (36) German (4) Esperanto (3) Portuguese (3) Spanish (1)</td>
<td>1859</td>
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<table>
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<th>Editions</th>
<th>Year</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The Spirit Books</td>
<td>English (7)</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1972</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Experimental Spiritism: Book on Mediums or, guide for mediums and invocators</td>
<td>English (4) Undetermined (1)</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1874</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Experimental Spiritism: Book on Mediums or, guide for mediums and invocators: containing the special instruction of the spirits on the theory of all kinds of manifestations; the means of communicating with the invisible world; the development of Mediumship; the difficulties and the dangers that are to be encountered in the practice of spiritism</td>
<td>English (6)*</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1884</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Gospel According to Spiritism: continuing the explanation for the moral maximums of Christ, their concordance with spiritism and the application in various circumstances</td>
<td>French (37) Portuguese (14) English (13) German (4) Russian (2) Swedish (2) Polish (1) Spanish (1)</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>1865</td>
</tr>
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</table>
Kardec’s work was far more translated on the continent than it is into English. It is the 1875 edition of *Le Livre des Esprits* that is most translated into English with 27 editions. The translation into English at this time calls into question the idea that British were not reading about reincarnation before the publication of Lady Caithness’ *Old Truths, New Light* in 1876 or Anna Kingsford’s *The Perfect Way, or the Finding of Christ* in 1882, as has been suggested by Godwin. While 1875 is only one year before 1876, there was at least one other text in circulation that discussed reincarnation by 1875. This was his most published text and it went to various incarnations and changes. *Le Genèse* is also in wide circulation with 35 editions. However, it does not seem to have been translated into English but was translated into Spanish, Italian, and Esperanto. *Qu’est que le spiritisme* was also popular with 47 editions, 31 before 1922. It seems to only have been translated into European languages including German, Esperanto, Portuguese, and Spanish. Clearly Kardec had a major following on the continent and in many ways was able to act as a hub for European writings on spiritualism.

Kardec followed *Le Livre des Esprits* with the companion volume *Le Livre des Médiums* in 1861. In the introduction of the 1862 edition Kardec maintains ‘having outlined in the *Le Livre des Esprits*, the philosophical part of spirit

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science, we provide in this work the practical part for the use of those who care for demonstrations, either by themselves, or to render account of phenomena they may be called to view’.\textsuperscript{272} He goes on to state that ‘both books, though following from one another are until a certain point independent from one another; but whoever wants to deal seriously with the matter, will want to read the \textit{Le Livre des Esprits} first, because it contains fundamental principles, without which certain parts of it might be difficult to understand.\textsuperscript{273} \textit{Le Livre des Médiums} was clearly meant to be a complementary to the \textit{Le Livre des Esprits} rather than a replacement or new and improved version. The texts demonstrate Kardec’s ongoing position as a knowledgeable voice within nineteenth-century European spiritualism. \textit{Le Livre des Médiums} was translated into Spanish, Portuguese, German, Polish, and Russian.

From the 1850s, through to the turn of the century, the popular presses carried articles regarding the spiritist movement. In the vein of there is no such thing as bad publicity, even though many of the articles were unfavourable, Sharp argues that they nonetheless helped with the spread of spiritism.\textsuperscript{274} Spiritism was featured in most of the major publications of the period including \textit{Revue des deux Mondes, L’Illustration}, the \textit{Journal des débats}, \textit{Le Siècle}, and the Abbé Moigno’s \textit{Cosmos}. Sharp maintains that although painted as marginal


\textsuperscript{273} Kardec, \textit{Le Livre des Médiums}, pp. vii-viii. Original text: ‘Ces deux ouvrages, quoique faisant suite l’un à l’autre, sont jusqu’à un certain point indépendants l’un de l’autre; mais à quiconque voudra s’occuper sérieusement de la chose, nous dirons de lire d’abord le Livre des Esprits, parce qu’il contient des principes fondamentaux, sans lesquels certaines parties de celui-ci seraient peut-être difficilement comprises’.

in many of these journals, spiritism was far from ignored.\textsuperscript{275} Similarly, Alexandre Erdan stated in \textit{La France Mistique} (1855) that ‘bookstores were inundated with publications on the subject’.\textsuperscript{276} In 1867, the general catalogue for French libraries listed 123 titles under the topic heading \textit{spiritisme}. Simultaneously it listed only 107 titled under the heading \textit{socialisme}.\textsuperscript{277} This gives us a sense of how important spiritism was to the culture of France during the period.

Until his death in 1869 Kardec had distanced his spiritism doctrine from esotericism (as defined in the introduction) presenting spiritism in a more scientific light and aligning it with the mesmerism of the period. By the 1880s, however, Kardec had been dead for more than a decade. Léon Denis, a spiritist with an interest in occultism had come to the forefront.\textsuperscript{278} He became a significant contributor to \textit{Revue spirite} and a central figure in the movement. In 1885 he was elected president of the \textit{Union spirite français}. In 1889 he played an important role in the \textit{Congrès spirite et spiritualiste international}.\textsuperscript{279} During the 1880s, under his leadership, the \textit{Revue spirite} adopted a more mystical flavour. The journal began to be filled with references to witchcraft and occultism, haunted houses, and occult forces.\textsuperscript{280}

Kardec was the central figure in French spiritism, during a period when it was beginning to spread across the globe. What is less clear is his relationship with his publishers and how much agency he had within publishing companies. We do know that his early works set the tone for an approach that was strongly

\textsuperscript{276} Alexander Erdan, \textit{Le France Mistique} (Paris, 1855), p. 71 Original text: ‘les librairies furent inondées de publications sur la matièr’; This publication also includes chapters on magnetism (p. 40), esotericist Emmanuel Swedenborg (p. 20) and table turning (p. 64).
\textsuperscript{277} Brower, \textit{Independent Spirits}, p. 13.
\textsuperscript{278} Lachapelle, \textit{Investigating the Supernatural}, p. 46.
\textsuperscript{279} Lachapelle, \textit{Investigating the Supernatural}, p. 46.
\textsuperscript{280} Lachapelle, \textit{Investigating the Supernatural}, p. 47.
influenced by the ideals of the later nineteenth-century occult. They were translated largely into languages that he spoke. He made full use of the technologies of the period to spread his message, including trains to travel around France, and especially print technologies. The *Bibliothèque Nationale de France catalogue général* lists no fewer than 303 entries associated with his name today. Approximately 200 of those entries are works that he authored. What set him apart from previous esoteric authors was his ability to use both his prowess in languages and the technologies of the period. His greatest philosophical contribution was a concept of reincarnation that maintained all of humanity’s imperfections would eventually be overcome. However, his greatest contribution overall was in establishing himself as the European hub on knowledge on spiritism, with texts that were translated throughout the continent in the final decades of the nineteenth century.

### 1.6 Éliphas Lévi

Éliphas Lévi has long been held up as the most important of the French occult authors. Born Alphonse Louis Constant in Paris (1810-1875), Lévi was one of the first French occultists to have his work circulated and translated internationally and continues to be revered in esoteric circles and societies to this day. More importantly, however, he is also an ideal exemplar of how French Romantic *socialisme*, spiritualism, mesmerism, Jewish Kabbalah, and Catholicism came together to forge the unique brand of French occultism that had a seminal influence on post-Enlightenment magic. His connections between the Kabbalah and the Tarot would be adopted by the Golden Dawn, making its magic more comprehensive. Drawing on Mesmer’s concept of Astral

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Fluid, he developed the concept of Astral Light that would go on to influence later occultists such as Blavatsky and the Astral Travel of the Golden Dawn.

Christopher McIntosh maintains that:

...until the appearance of Lévi the occult movement in France was diffuse and its influence was felt only in isolated pockets. Lévi gave it an entirely new coherence and thrust. Drawing together many occult treads, he wove them skillfully into a sophisticated pattern which he proceeded to present in public in a series of books such as The Doctrine and Ritual of High Magic, The History of Magic, The Key of the Mysteries, and The Book of Splendors. These are a curious mixture of learning, rhetoric, and what one might call “occultist’s licence” but they all have the stamp of a lively, original, and forceful mind. Through them Lévi brought occultism to a wider public than it had reached before and helped to give it a new vitality.282

The translation of Lévi’s texts in the nineteenth century has long been recognized as a crucial aspect of globalizing these occult philosophies. Furthermore, it has been thought that Lévi’s work was in circulation in the English-speaking world primarily because of the translation work done by Arthur Edward Waite. However, Waite’s translations were only able to achieve this because of growth in and globalization of the nineteenth-century publishing industry.

In the opening pages of The Mysteries of Magic (1886) Waite details the conditions of Lévi’s upbringing. Waite claims that Lévi ‘was born in an obscure street of Paris, and was the son of a shoemaker’.283 He maintained that there was a lack of biographical information available on Lévi and that the information was ‘meager in the extreme’.284 Certainly very little has been left of Lévi’s personal letters and papers, other than the letters to Baron Spedalieri, published as Letters to a Disciple (1980). This collection details his approaches to magic. The exact date of Lévi’s birth is not known, although Waite posits it at

283 Waite, Mysteries of Magic 1897, p. xviii.
284 Waite, Mysteries of Magic 1897, p. xviii.
approximately 1809. He also maintains that Lévi received no regular education.\textsuperscript{285} However, his intelligence was such that his neighbours would refer to him as “the clever lad”.\textsuperscript{286}

Lévi studied for the Catholic priesthood at Saint Sulpice seminary in Paris. Waite claims that Lévi had proficiency in the ancient languages that would have been expected of an ecclesiastics student. Importantly, Lévi also became “a first rate Hebrew scholar.”\textsuperscript{287} He was also said to be well versed in Latin and Greek.\textsuperscript{288} This made him an ideal candidate for dealing with ancient religious texts and translations of magical manuscripts. As such, this would become a critical part of Lévi’s contribution of nineteenth-century occultism. However, Lévi found himself at odds with the strict doctrinal approach of the Catholic Church and was drawn to the French Romantic Socialist movements of the period. Waite quotes a story from Lévi’s friend and pupil Madame Gebhard that demonstrates Lévi was always something of a rebel. She maintained that Lévi was punished by being sent to an out-of-the-way monastery for preaching, in some country villages, opinions that were not considered consistent with the Catholic faith.\textsuperscript{289} These realities made his break with the Catholic Church inevitable.

Lévi was influenced by the eighteenth-century growth in rationalism in France. Waite maintained that the real influence behind Lévi’s teachings was Voltaire rather than ancient Hermetic lore. Referring to \textit{Dogme et Rituel} Waite argued:

\textsuperscript{285} Waite, \textit{Mysteries of Magic} 1897, p. xviii.  
\textsuperscript{286} Mary Gebhard, ‘Personal Reflections on Eliphas Levi’, \textit{The Theosophist} 7 (January, 1886) 241.  
\textsuperscript{287} Waite, \textit{Mysteries of Magic} 1886, p. xviii.  
\textsuperscript{288} Gebhard, ‘Personal Reflections’ , p. 241  
\textsuperscript{289} Waite, \textit{Mysteries of Magic} 1886, p. xii
The basis of Éliphas Lévi’s philosophy and of all magic is declared to be the single assumption which is contained in the greatest Hermetic axiom: That which is above is equivalent to that which is below, and that which is below is equivalent to that which is above. This is the introductory statement of the celebrated “Table of Emerald,” which claims to be the work of Hermes Trismegistus, but which cannot be traced in history to a more considerable antiquity than the seventeenth century of the Christian era. The ultimate basis of Éliphas Lévi’s teaching is not, however, to be found in any single dogma, but in Voltairean free-thought, and he has read Voltairean principles into the theurgic and theosophic obscurities of Kabbalistic writings. He is a pure rationalist who has adopted the hypothesis of the Kabbalah as the most trustworthy calculus of probabilities concerning an unseen world with which there is no real communication from either side in life.

Certainly, it is possible that Lévi too was subject to the influence of Voltaire as most people would have been in nineteenth-century French society. Indeed Lévi mentioned Voltaire in his 26 December 1862 Christmas letter to Baron Spedalieri where he stated ‘the star, says a legend, fell into a well near Bethlehem; “one should search in the well,” adds Voltaire, “for assuredly the truth is there.” Never has the great mocker said a truer thing without knowing it’. Presumably the “great mocker” is Voltaire. While this does not present a picture of Lévi as someone who was respectful of the philosophies of Voltaire, it is certainly possible that he was influenced by Voltaire’s rationalism or the broader Enlightenment ideal of rationalism. In La Clef des Grands Mystères (1861) Lévi discusses Hallucinations by Dr. Brière de Boismont and Magie by M. le baron Dupotet, the celebrated magnétiste. He also mentions the journal Estafette ‘on the wonders of the American medium Home’. Since Lévi was reading such material, it would have been impossible for him to miss the influence of growing scientific rationalism of the period. Clearly there was a tension between Voltaire’s rationalism and religious mysticism. However, the

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290 Waite, Mysteries of Magic 1886, pp. xxx-xxxi
291 Lévi, Letters to a Disciple, p. 118.
293 Lévi, Les Clef, p. 138.
two found a home in Lévi who set spiritism and mesmerism along-side the Tarot and kabbalah.

Waite maintained that *Dogma de la Haute Magie* appeared in 1855 and the *Rituel de la Haute Magie* in 1856. From that point onward Alphonse Louis Constant would be known as an occult author under the pseudonym of Éliphas Lévi. It has been argued that Lévi became a European celebrity and known only as an exponent of occult science.\(^{294}\) However, the dates of the early translations of his texts do not really support the idea that he was well-known during his lifetime. Yet given the popularity of the French language, it is quite possible that the French editions of his texts were being read across Europe. We know that Waite published the English version *Transcendental Magic* as early as 1896 and that *Dogme et Rituel* was translated into Russian as early as 1910.\(^{295}\) However, the notion that Lévi was popular, even within France, in his lifetime is an assumption not grounded in any evidence.

In the world of French *socialisme*, Lévi published under a different name. It is true that Lévi is best remembered in the English-speaking world by his occult name and persona. This is due to the fact that it is only his occult texts that have been translated into English. When one commences the process of researching Alphonse Louis Constant or the Abbé Alphonse-Louis in the French language, a portrait of a different sort of person emerges. This provides a new understanding of the context in which Lévi’s occultism emerged. Until scholars started examining this side of Lévi, his socialist influences and the full extent of his Catholicism were not understood by those who studied the English translations of his occult texts. His occultism was viewed in a very one-

\(^{295}\) World Catalogue Library System (Last accessed 4 September 2015).
dimensional way. Without this understanding of who he was, the global transmission of his ideas was incomplete.

Lévi had a history of aligning himself with the radical politics of the day through the printing press. In 1840, writing as Alphone Louis Constant, he published a series of texts that combined radical socialism with a militant apocalyptic Christianity. He was twice imprisoned for subversive writings under the July Monarchy. During the Revolution of 1848, the Abbé Constant edited Le Tribun du Peuple and ran unsuccessfully for election to the Constituent Assembly in the spring of 1848. In the 1850s he became a regular contributor to the Revue progressive. There he met Bonapartist Hoenë Wronski, who became his intellectual mentor for a time. The evidence of the influence of Wronski’s Bonapartism can be seen later in Lévi’s La clef des grands mystères in 1861. Lévi here refers to Napoleon as ‘the second savior of the world’. Later in the Testament de la Liberté, he referred to the emperor as “a crowned soldier” who tied “Liberty to his saddle “and dragged her into captivity.” Harvey postulates that the Franco-Prussian War probably dampened Lévi’s enthusiasm for Bonapartism. This is a reasonable conclusion given the perceived threat to France following the rise of German nationalism coming out of that war. However, the more important point is that Lévi had a history of using the printing press to express his political views. This was true in all his various incarnations and all of the names and personas that he published under. Without a doubt, Lévi made full use of the printing press in his various political activities.

296 Harvey, Beyond Enlightenment, p. 199.  
297 Harvey, Beyond Enlightenment, p. 199.  
300 Harvey, Beyond Enlightenment, p. 200.
It has also long been held that Lévi’s *Dogme et Rituel* was the seminal text influencing British occultists by connecting the Jewish Kabbalah with the Tarot.\(^{301}\) Certainly, the text covers the Kabbalah in chapter X. However, Lévi’s *Histoire de la Magie* (1860) was published in a similar number of editions as *Dogme et Rituel*, at roughly the same time. *Histoire de la Magie* also included important information on things like Magnetic Mystics and Materialists (chapter I), Mesmerists and Somnambulists (chapter III), and the Occult Sciences (chapter VI). It was first published in 1856, at a time when interest in mesmerism in Britain was still high.\(^{302}\) This is an important point because it demonstrates Lévi’s potential influence on mesmerism in Britain, at the height of debates over the topic in the British medical community. Lévi’s background in Catholicism and his time spent studying in the seminary enabled him to bring the occult currents of the period together with Jewish influences because of his knowledge of Hebrew. This would also not have been possible without his knowledge of the Tarot.

*Dogme et Rituel* was first published in Paris in 1854 by Guiraudet Jouaust. It was published again in 1856 in Paris by Baillière, a company with offices in London, New York, and Madrid. The same company published a second edition in 1861. In 1894 Felix Alcan published the book in Paris. They published it again in French in 1903 as a fourth edition and in 1910 as a fifth edition. In 1910 it was also published in Russian in St. Petersburg by Izd. Stolichnago t’sentral’nago knizhnego sklada dlia inogorodnikh. In 1920 the newly named Librarie Felix Alcan published it again in Paris. It was published in Paris in 1930 by Chacornac frère, which is interesting because in 1926

\(^{301}\) McIntosh, *Eliphas Lévi*, p. 148.

Chacornac frère published *Eliphas Lévi, Rénovateur d’Occultisme en France*, 1810-1875, by Paul Chacornac. This indicates an interest in the publications of Lévi if not occult publications generally. In 1938 and again in 1948 Niclaus published it in Paris. In 1951 it was published in Buenos Aries in Spanish by Editorial Kier.\(^{303}\) Similarly, the *Bibliothèque Nationale* catalogue lists French editions of the book from N. Bussière in 1967. In 1976, the book was put on microfilm in the *Bibliothèque Nationale* and published again by Bussière in 1992.\(^{304}\)

Perhaps more important, however, was the publications of the Waite translation known as *Transcendental Magic*, which was first published in English in London in 1896 by well-known Theosophical publisher George Redway. In 1910 it was published again in Chicago at the Occult Publishing House. However, it is also listed as being published in Chicago in 1910 by Scott and Co. In 1923 a second edition was published in London by Rider and Co. that is also sometimes referred to as William Rider and Son. In 1923 it was published in English in Philadelphia by D. M’Kay Co. Rider and Co. published it again in London in 1937. This would indicate that they might have gone through a merger. In 1938 it was published in New York by E.P. Dutton and also in Chicago by Red Star Publishing Co.\(^{305}\)

There is no reason to dispute the narrative that Lévi tied the Kabbalah to the Tarot and developed the concept of Astral Light while building on concepts of mesmerism such as the Astral Fluid. Waite, as his major translator, was an important figure in creating that narrative. As Lévi’s main translator Waite could embellish on his own importance to the field of occultism. Waite presented

\(^{303}\) World Catalogue Library System (Last accessed 2 September 2015).
\(^{304}\) World Catalogue Library System (Last accessed 4 September 2015).
\(^{305}\) World Catalogue Library System (Last accessed 2 September 2015).
himself as the purveyor of occult knowledge from France into the English-speaking world. Furthermore, both Waite and Lévi had unprecedented access to the printing press that simply would not have been possible for previous generations of esotericists. The printing industry reached new heights of globalization by the early twentieth century, as discussed in the introduction, when Waite was translating Lévi’s work. As such, Waite drew on the benefits of globalization.

In the biographical and critical essay, at the opening of the 1886 translated edition of the *Mystères de la Magie*, Waite stated:

> The author of *Dogme et Rituel de la Haute Magie* comes before us as one speaking with authority on the existence of elementary spirits, fluidic phantoms, the survival of the astral body after the decease of the physical organism, and after the departure of the divine spirit; he comes before us as one who has personally practiced white or permissible necromancy, as one who has evoked, seen, and touched has beheld clearly and distinctly, an apparition in the Astral Light, and has thus proved the terrible efficacy of magical ceremonies. He comes before us as one who is in possession of “the first book of humanity,” the keystone of all revelations, and “the inspiring instrument of all revelations and “the most perfect divination,” one indeed which “may be employed with complete confidence.” This is the marvelous Tarot.  

This speaks to an important point about what has long been considered one of Lévi’s greatest contributions to magic. In 1766, Antoine Mesmer had theorized that there exists within the human body a fluid that is tied to the motions of the planets, tides, and atmosphere. This became known as the Astral Fluid. When the ebb and flow of this fluid was out of line with universal rhythms, nervous or mental disorders would result. This assisted Lévi in developing the concept of the Astral Light.

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306 Waite, *Mysteries of Magic* 1886, p. xxv.
307 McIntosh, *Eliphas Lévi*, p. 31.
Demonstrating the importance of *Dogme et Rituel*, in chapter V Lévi describes the relationship between the Astral Light, the will, terrestrial fluid, and Animal Magnetism:

We affirm now that a lucid will can act upon the mass of the Astral Light, and in concurrence with other wills, which it absorbs and draws along, can determine great and irresistible currents. We say also that the Astral Light condenses or rarefies in proportion as currents accumulate, more or less, at certain centres. When it is deficient in the energy required for the support of life, diseases accompanied by sudden decomposition follow, of a kind which baffle physicians. There is no other cause, for example, in the case of cholera-morbus, and the swarms of animalculae observed or supposed by some specialists may be the effect rather than the cause. Cholera should be treated therefore by insufflation, if not the operator thereby run the chance of an exchange with the patient which would be very formidable for himself. Every intelligent effort of will is a projection of the human fluid or light, and here it is needful to distinguish the human from the Astral Light, and Animal from Universal Magnetism.\(^\text{308}\)

This is the first mention of the Astral Light in a nineteenth-century occult text. In *The Western Esoteric Traditions* (2008) Nicholas Goodrick-Clarke similarly argues Lévi mixed the ideas of mesmerism with his philosophy of magic, explaining all sympathetic magic in terms of the “Astral Light” or “Great Magical Agent” described as a subtle fluid that pervades the universe with four physical manifestations in heat, light, electricity, and magnetism. For occultists, the Astral Light can be affected by the human will and can act upon the human imagination. Magical operations can provide access to the energies and impressions of the Astral Light, thus producing magical phenomena and clairvoyance.\(^\text{309}\)

The Astral Light is one of the most important concepts in post-Enlightenment Western magic. As we shall see it made its way into British magic and had an important influence on the Hermetic Order of the Golden


Dawn who would also engage with Astral Travel. It was also an important aspect of the doctrine of Helena Blavatsky and the French occultists who would follow Lévi. Demonstrating its entry into the Anglophone world, the Astral Light makes an appearance in chapter VIII of Blavatsky’s *Isis Unveiled*. She quotes Lévi:

“When the initiate” says Levi, in his turn “has become quite lucide, he communicates and directs at will the magnetic vibration in the mass of the astral light...Transformed in human light at the moment of conception, it (the light) becomes the first envelope of the soul; by combination with the subtle fluids it forms an ethereal body, or sidereal phantom, which is entirely disengaged only at the moment of death.” To project this ethereal body, at no matter what distance; to render it more objective and tangible by condensing over its fluidic form the waves of the parent essence, is the greatest secret of the adept-magician.\(^{310}\) [italics in original].

In the occult periodical *L’Initiation* we see the continued influence of Lévi on French occultism after his death. As the title suggests, the periodical was designed to bring new occultists into the fold. The July 1895 edition of *L’Initiation* includes an article entitled ‘L’Origine du Tarot’ by D. Gurairon (a generally unknown occultist) the author also raises the question, ‘So assuming that the origin of Tarot dates back to the ancient highest, we are still obliged to admit that it has undergone a complete transformation in the late Middle Ages and the figures of the old Tarot disappeared completely. So our current tarot has a modern age origin’.\(^{311}\) This supports the concept that Lévi developed a substantially new Tarot for the modern age but we can also see the idea that French want to keep their occultism attached to the ancient world. In denying that the influence was completely Egyptian, the author refers to Plato stating:

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\(^{311}\) ‘L’Origine du Tarot’, p. 54. Original Text: ‘Ainsi en supposant que l’origine du tarot remonte à la plus haute antique, nous sommes toujours obligés d’admettre qu’il a subi une transformation complète à la fin du moyen âge et que les figures de l’ancien tarot ont totalement disparu. Donc notre tarot actuel a une origine moyen âge’.
'Plato, in his Phædre, said the Egyptian god Thoth, who had learned in his men mathematics and astrology, invented the game of the ossicles (tali or calculi) and the game of dice (alea).\textsuperscript{312} It is also noteworthy that \textit{La Clef des Grands Mystères} includes sections on \textit{les mystères magnétiques} in the first chapter of the first book and a \textit{supplément} on the \textit{articles sur la Kabbale}.\textsuperscript{313} Lévi's particular brand of Tarot has long been remembered for its influence on the Golden Dawn and it is the Tarot that is used by many magical societies to the present day. Arguably, these are the reasons that so many copies of Lévi's books were published after his death in 1875 as nineteenth-century occultism entered its heyday with the establishment of the Theosophical Society in 1875, to be followed by Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn in 1888. In the Theosophical Society and Golden Dawn, we also see the continuation of the concept of the Astral Light, particularly as the members of the Golden Dawn begin to engage with Astral Travel.

Despite Lévi's major contribution, his occultism was not known for its consistency. Waite demonstrates the inconsistencies between \textit{Dogme et Rituel} and Lévi's other works. For example, Waite uses pages xxv to page xxxi of \textit{Mysteries of Magic} to argue that there are inconsistencies between \textit{Dogme et Rituel} and Lévi's other books such as \textit{La Science des Esprits}, \textit{Histoire de Magie}, and \textit{La Clef des Grands Mystères}. In the preface of the third edition of Waite's English translation of the \textit{Histoire de la Magie} he claims that 'certain later volumes which followed from his pen in somewhat rapid succession, are very curious when compared with the \textit{Doctrine and Ritual} for their apparent

\textsuperscript{312} ‘L’Origine du Tarot’, pp. 54-55. Original Text: ‘Platon, dans son Phædre, dit que le dieu égyptien Thot, qui avait appris aux hommes les mathématiques et l’astrologie, inventa le jeu des osselets (tali ou calculi) et le jeu des dés (alea)’.

\textsuperscript{313} Lévi, \textit{La Clef}, pp. 119-127, pp. 315-377
submission to church authority and their parade of sincere orthodoxy.\(^3^{14}\) This was likely due to the fact that Lévi was steeped in church lore as a former student of the priesthood.

In the preface to the second edition of The Mysteries of Magic: A Digest of the Writings of Éliphas Lévi (1897) Waite argues that Lévi was not a “full initiate,” a fact which might naturally account for his inconsistencies. However, this did not stop him from being remembered as a master occultist. Certainly, the task of synthesizing major world religious traditions is an impossible task because of the many inconsistencies across religions. In the end, Lévi’s most enduring legacies were the development of the concept of the Astral Light and bringing together the concept of the Kabbalah with the Tarot. The concept of the Astral Light has notably been used in the books of Blavatsky and the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn.\(^3^{15}\) Certainly it became the most globalized of all concepts that were introduced by French occultists. More will be said about that in the chapter on the Golden Dawn.

What is often less talked about is its influence on the Ordre Martiniste and French occultism in general. This influence seems to have been particularly important by 1895. In the January 1895 edition of L’Initiation one can find an article entitled ‘L’Amour en Astral’ by Gérard Encausse, writing as Papus.\(^3^{16}\) A similar article by Papus, entitled ‘La Science actuelle et la plan astral,’ appears in the February edition.\(^3^{17}\) The April edition in the same year includes an article entitled ‘Révelations Astrales’, also by Papus.\(^3^{18}\) The August 1895 edition

\(^3^{15}\) Owen, The Place of Enchantment, p. 150, 286 fn.39. See also footnote 126.
\(^3^{16}\) Papus, ‘L’Amour en Astral’, L’Initiation 26 (January, 1895) 3-13. The article discusses such topics as the astral and the astral passage.
\(^3^{17}\) Papus, ‘La Science actuelle et la plan astral,’ L’Initiation 26 (February 1895) 97-101.
includes a short article by Papus entitled ‘Représentation du corps astral’. It is noteworthy that all of these articles are in the prominent *Partie Initiatique* section at the beginning of the periodical and written by the editor. The Astral played a prominent role in fin de siècle occultism, long after the death of Lévi. His doctrines were transmitted to the future in books. His worked lived to become part of the golden age of nineteenth-century occultism and the Astral Travel of the Golden Dawn. Mathers had founded the Golden Dawn’s Ahathoor Temple in Paris in 1893.

Waite maintains that knowledge of Lévi and the sphere of his influence increased greatly between the publication of the first and second editions of *The Mysteries of Magic* in 1886 and 1897. He argues that this advance took place as much outside Lévi’s own country of France as within it. Furthermore, Waite maintains that this growth in knowledge of Lévi was particularly the case in England and America and that ‘this digest has presumably been one of the instruments’. Lévi’s was translated into English, Spanish, German, Russian, Italian, Polish, Dutch, and Portuguese. Certainly it is true that there was a growth in occultism in the final decades of the nineteenth century, as can be seen with the global growth of the Theosophical Society and the formation of the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn. Lévi experienced a resurgence in popularity in this period as new editions of *Dogme et Rituel* were published in 1894, 1904, and again in 1910. This growth can very much be attributed to growth in the printing press and commercial economy during those decades, as described in chapter one. However, this author does not attribute it to a single

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volume of translations of Lévi’s writings into English. One volume could not
have possibly have had the kinds of global influence that Waite is attributing to
himself.

Waite claims that in 1853 Lévi went to London where his reputation as an
occultist had preceded him. Waite argues that while there Lévi performed his
celebrated ceremonial evocation of the Apollonius of Tyana:

Some passages in the writings of Éliphas Lévi suggest that he made
the acquaintance of the late Lord Lytton, and the absolute identity
between the mysterious *vril* of “The Coming Race” and the universal
force of the Astral Light, is conclusive as to the great novelist’s
acquaintances with the works of his Kabbalistic contemporary. I,
therefore, addressed an inquiry to the present Earl of Lytton, and I
am indebted to his courtesy for the information which follows. His
lordship is almost certain that his father was personally acquainted
with M. Constant, of whose works there is a copy at Knebworth,
presented, he thinks, by the author. He is under the impression that
Éliphas Lévi made the acquaintance of the late Lord Lytton either at
Paris or Nice. Among the papers at Knebworth there is a letter from
M. Constant on the existence of a universal force, and the requisite
conditions of its employment for the evocation of spiritual visions and
presences. The letter is only dated “Sunday, 10 April,” the date of the
year is wanting, and from the style it would appear to be addressed
either to a stranger, or to a very distant acquaintance.322

Waite is correct that the letter presents an image of two men who barely know
each other. Furthermore, no primary source can be found which prove
unequivocally that the two men met in either Paris or Nice. More will be said
about this letter and Lévi’s visits to London in the chapter on Victorian
occultism.

*Dogme et Rituel* was originally published in two separate volumes in 1854
and 1856. However, Waite argues that there is internal evidence to show that
they had existed originally as a whole, and were afterwards separated in an
arbitrary manner, and not without detriment to their coherence.323 Waite argues

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that these volumes ‘set Lévi in the foremost rank of occultists’.\textsuperscript{324} Certainly this is the text that sets out Lévi’s doctrine on the Kabbalah and Tarot, which exists to this day and undoubtedly forever tied his name to the evolution of Western magic. These texts were followed by the \textit{Histoire de la Magie} (1860). Waite sees this book as ‘a work of the first interest, written on a philosophical plane, but manifesting already a wide divergence in the views of the author’.\textsuperscript{325}

In 1861 a second edition of \textit{Dogme et Rituel} appeared with a new preface. In the opening of this edition, the focus is on the growth in spiritism. Lévi maintains that ‘since the first edition of this book was published, big events have been accomplished in the world, and others perhaps bigger again are about to be accomplished’.\textsuperscript{326} Lévi argues that the attention which spiritism has received since the publishing of the original edition was an important event. He states that ‘these events have been announced by prodigies: the tables have spoken, the voices have left the walls, the hands without bodies have written the words mysterious, like the feast of Balthasar’.\textsuperscript{327} Lévi presents a familiar narrative for occult texts in that he is claiming that the world is exploring these ideas now because it has reached a time of great change and these changes are the reason that magic is coming to the foreground in society at this time. He sees that there is a openness to the esoteric that exists across society. As such, he sees the world as being on the verge of a “New Age” of evolution in its spiritual consciousness – a familiar claim for occult texts. Notably, the publisher for this volume, Germer Baillière, also had the affiliates in London and New York, Hippolyte Baillière and Hipp. Baillière brothers respectively. \textit{La Clef des

\textsuperscript{324} Waite, \textit{Mysteries of Magic} 1886, p. xv.
\textsuperscript{325} Waite, \textit{Mysteries of Magic} 1886, p. xv-xvi.
\textsuperscript{327} Lévi, \textit{Dogme et Rituel} 1861, p. 1.
Grands Mystères was published in the same year as the second edition of Dogme et Rituel and noted for the appearance of the Sorcier de Mendon.\textsuperscript{328}

### Publications of Éliphas Lévi

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<td>22</td>
<td>14</td>
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\textsuperscript{328} Waite Mysteries of Magic 1886, p. xvi.
Although Lévi is best remembered for *Dogme et Rituel*, the number of editions in circulation for *Histoire de la Magie* were almost equal. Thirty-four editions of *Dogme et Rituel* can be found that were published up to 1914. Almost equally, 32 editions of the *Histoire de la Magie* can be found that were published in the same period. Similarly, Waite claims that *Histoire de la Magie* is at least as interesting as *Dogme et Rituel*:

> I have put on record an opinion that the History of Magic by Alphonse Louis Constant…is the most arresting, entertaining and brilliant of all studies on the subject which I am acquainted. So far back as 1896 I said that it was admirable as a philosophic survey, its historical inaccuracies notwithstanding, and that there is nothing in occult literature which can suffer comparison therewith. Moreover, there is nothing so comprehensive in the French language, while as regards ourselves it must be said that we have depended so far on a history by Joseph Ennemoser, translated from the German and explaining everything, within the domain included under the denomination of Magic, the phenomena Animal Magnetism. Other texts than this are available in that language, but they have not been put into English; while none of them has so great an appeal as that which is here rendered into our tongue.\(^{329}\)

It is true that Lévi’s occultism engaged with the philosophies of mesmerism and nowhere is this more obvious than in *Histoire de la Magie*. Waite is arguing that Lévi provides this information in a way that is more engaging than what has been provided previously and that this was very appealing to the English-speaking world when Lévi was translated. Certainly it is true that Lévi’s discussions of ancient wisdom, mesmerism, and Astral Fluids were very engaging topics with which to sell books. Lévi’s knowledge of ancient languages and religion gave his work a certain authentic flair. His information on esoteric lore, combined with his experience as a writer and publisher, would have been very captivating in a period of growth in global publishing. He used

esoteric symbolism to add an air of authenticity to his work. Illustrations of the Sabbatic Goat and the Great Symbol of Solomon created the sense that Lévi held the secrets of ancient arcane knowledge. *Transcendental Magic* in particular had illustrations of various occult concepts scattered throughout. There were whole sections explaining the occult significance of the Triangle of Solomon, the Tetragram, and the Pentagram. There are explanations of necromancy, transmutations, black magic, bewitchments, astrology, and divination. In chapter X he states:

…the five books of Moses, the Prophecy of Ezekiel and the Apocalypse of St. John are the three kabalistic keys of the whole Biblical edifice. The sphinxes of Ezekiel are identical with those of the sanctuary and the ark, being a fourfold reproduction of the Egyptian Tetrad; the wheels revolving in one another are the harmonious spheres of Pythagoras; the new temple, the plan of which is given according to the exact kabalistic measures is the type of labours of primitive Masonry.330

Lévi drew on his experience in publishing his left-wing political ideologies to tap into the current of discontent that existed in the Third Republic around Napoleon III’s censorship and the repeal of previously won liberties. Harvey argues that Lévi was the first writer of the French occult tradition to articulate the ideal of government by an elite brotherhood of initiates that would later be almost universally embraced by the neo-Martinists of the *fin de siècle*.331 Lévi effectively blended the occult and politics in his writings in a way that had not been seen previously. For example, he regularly mentions Napoleon in his writings. In *La Clef des Grands Mystères* he states ‘Voltaire and Napoleon died Catholics. And do you know what should be the future of Catholicism. This will be the evangelical dogma, such as gold tested by dissolving criticism of

Voltaire, and realized in the government of the world by the genius of a Christian Napoleon'.

In *The History of Magic* there is an entire chapter on the French Revolution (Chapter IV). He takes the perspective that ‘it was the nobility of the eighteenth century which corrupted the people; the aristocracy of that period were seized with a mania for equality, which took its rise in the Regency’. He takes the perspective that ‘the archives of the Order of the Temple testify that the Regent was its Grand Master, that he had as his successor the Duc de Maine, the princes of Bourbon-Condé and Bourbon-Conti, and the Duc de Cossé-Brissac’. As such he is arguing that the Regent was the Grand Master of the Knights Templar and they essentially had a plot to assassinate Louis XVI.

He states:

> Louis XVI was led by his worst enemies, who at once prearranged and stultified the paltry project of evasion which brought about the catastrophe of Varennes, just as they had done with the orgie at Versailles and the massacre of August 10. On every side they compromised the king; at every turn they saved him from the fury of the people, to foment that fury and ensure the dire event which had been in preparation for centuries. A scaffold was essential to complete the revenge of the Templars.

This combination of politics and occultism would have been very appealing to a society in which many would have been ill at ease with the growing liberalism of the period. The French Revolution represented a major shift in values and created a lot of instability. It led to a lot of internal political crisis for the country, including issues of how to deal with a displaced aristocracy.

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Eventually, Lévi’s occultism would be translated to appeal much more globally. In the preface of the 1939 edition of *The History of Magic* Waite best describes what was actually Lévi’s biggest contribution to occult philosophy. He stated ‘that it is he who, in a sense, restored and placed them under a new and more attractive vesture, before public notice at the middle period of the nineteenth century’. Without a doubt, the lore of Lévi’s blend of Hermeticism, Catholicism, Judaism, romanticism, socialism, and mesmerism provided an attractive combination for a nineteenth-century audience – both inside and outside of France.

It has long been held that Lévi had an important influence on British occultism, and the Golden Dawn in particular. It is true that Lévi made a major contribution to nineteenth-century occultism by tying together the Hebrew Kabbalah and Tarot, and also through his development of the concept of Astral Light. It is also true that these concepts reached British occultists through literature such as Mackenzie’s story in *The Rosicrucian and the Red Cross* after meetings with Lévi in Paris (see section 2.2 on Mackenzie). However, we need to look beyond the translations of Waite to understand why these books were so influential. Waite was but one man acting within a web of international publishing. We know that Lévi’s texts were translated into English, Spanish, German, Russian, Dutch, Portuguese, Italian, and Polish. Approximately one hundred and twenty-five editions of these texts were in circulation globally in libraries before the beginning of the First World War. This is a feat that Waite could not have accomplished without the support of the global publishing industry.

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Waite has often been critiqued for being a poor translator of Lévi. For example, in the introduction to *Eliphas Lévi: Letters to a Disciple* (1980), Christopher McIntosh states that ‘many people read Lévi with a feeling of disappointment and find his work vague, muddled and less revealing than it at first promises to be. This is partly the fault of his main English translator A.E. Waite, whose musty turgid style does not do justice to the original’. However, it was perhaps Aleister Crowley who delivered the greatest challenge against Waite in the introduction to the 1939 edition of *The Key of the Mysteries*. The edition was translated from the French with introduction and notes by Crowley. He states:

This volume represents the high-water mark of the thought of Éliphas Lévi. He is no longer talking of things as if their sense was fixed and universal. He is beginning to see something of the contradiction inherent in the nature of things, or, at any rate, he constantly illustrates the fact that the planes are to be kept separate for practical purposes, although in the final analysis they turn out to be one. This and the extraordinary subtle and delicate irony of which Éliphas Lévi is one of the greatest masters that has ever lived, have baffled the pedantry and stupidity of such commentators as Waite. English has hardly a word to express the mental condition of such unfortunates. Dummheit, in its strongest German sense is about the nearest thing to it. It is as if a geographer should criticize Gulliver's Travels from his own particular standpoint.

Dummheit translates roughly to stupidity, although this does not capture the extent of Crowley’s vitriol. Waite was obtuse or a blockheaded is more likely what Crowley was trying to express. In Crowley’s characteristic arrogance, he clearly sees himself as a superior translator to Waite. He also seems to be disagreeing with Waite’s interpretations of the various occult planes of existence. Crowley is not the first to critique the Waite translations. However, he seems to be going further by complaining that Waite does not understand

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Waite’s irony. Certainly Lévi’s writing is full of subtleties that Waite may not have understood.

Lévi’s engagement with irony helps to explain why his texts are difficult to comprehend for a translator. In reality, it was not unusual for Waite to accuse Lévi of irony, inconsistency, or factual errors in his footnotes. Lévi’s lack of clarity was fed by the fact that he was unclear himself about what he was saying. However, this in no way diminishes the contribution of Lévi who, to this day, is the most widely translated of the French occultists on a global scale. The politics of the day had influenced spiritism, making it something of a revolt against the subversive Second Empire. Lévi took that revolt to new and inspired levels through his publishing activities. This proved to be an appealing combination for the growing literate middle class in France and would eventually inspire a new magic in Britain’s Golden Dawn.

1.7 Gérard Encausse

Print and communications networks in France were having an important influence on how occultism was evolving. The development of the occult periodical brought it into the homes of practically anyone who wanted to engage with occultism through the mail. In *Victorian Occultism and the Making of Modern Magic* (2011) Butler argues that there were two important shifts that were accomplished in nineteenth-century British occultism. She maintains that there was a shift to group magic and, secondly, that the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn developed the first large-scale magical school. As will be further discussed in the final chapter, the Golden Dawn had a grade system of orders and initiates would have to work their way through the grades to be

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admitted to the inner order. It was by invitation only. Butler argues that ‘magic continues to be transmitted in this institutionalized format’.  

In making her argument, Butler draws on the work of Ronald Hutton and Tanya Luhrmann. In *Persuasion of the Witches Craft* Luhrmann describes the kind of mail order training that contemporary magicians can draw on in the contemporary world:

Home study courses, advertised in books and magazines, offer the most structured forum for the training which most magicians assume a neophyte needs. Most of these courses are quite similar. They provide a series of fortnightly and monthly lessons for which the student does daily exercises, and writes short essays on assigned themes. Courses explain magical theory, and the nature and purpose of magical practice. They then teach the student to meditate and to visualize, guide him through the rudiments of ritual technique, and encourage him to develop and elaborate personalized symbolism.  

Although Encausse was initiated as a member of the Golden Dawn in Paris, the magical college system described by Butler and Luhrmann was not unique to the Golden Dawn. As such, the nature of transmission was changing and widening through the use of periodicals in the nineteenth century. In fact, the model established by Encausse through the *Ordre Martiniste*, more closely resembles the commercialized esotericism described by Luhrmann above than anything the Golden Dawn has done. This section will discuss the role of Gerard Encausse (or Papus as he was known in magical circles) in commercializing the *fin de siècle* occult in France through the *Ordre Martiniste* and French occult periodical *L’Initiation*.

Gérard Encausse was at least as important to *fin de siècle* French occultism as Lévi was to the earlier decades in the century. In many ways, as a doctor he presented a much more respectable image for the occult community.

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In the preface of the 1977 edition of *The Qabalah*, W.N. Schors details the accomplishments of Encausse as a nineteenth-century French occultist maintaining that Encausse’s ‘zeal can be judged by the simple fact that even when fulfilling his military service he could not stop working’. In 1888, when Encausse was only 23 years old, he was elected a member of the General Council of the Theosophical Society, on the instigation of Colonel Henry Steele Olcott. Encausse received his doctorate in medicine in 1894. By this time the bulk of his written work had already been published and his efforts had already been acknowledged by the esoteric world. Encausse also became a frequent contributor to all the major occult journals including *Le Lotus, L’Initiation*, and *Voile d’Isis*. He was awarded many high distinctions by the governments of France, Portugal, Russia, Turkey and held many important Masonic and Rosicrucian functions. Encausse’s books and brochures were translated into many languages and reprinted in multiple editions and versions (see chart). In him, the nineteenth-century French occult community had clearly attracted a proverbial mover and shaker.

As already demonstrated, French occultism was strongly influenced by imperialism in Egypt in particular. This section will show that Theosophy and the British presence in India never had the same influence on French occultism as it did in Britain. The French rejected the Eastern religious philosophies that were spreading into occultism. While the international Theosophical Society headquartered in Adyar created a synthesis of Western esotericism and Eastern religion, French occultists continued to draw on their Catholic history, the traditions of Freemasonry and the works of Éliphas Lévi. This section will

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also demonstrate the growing influence of the commercial economy on occultism through the use of the occult periodical *L’Initiation* in particular. It will show that esotericism was already being commercialized in nineteenth-century France as occult periodicals were delivered directly into the homes of an increasingly literate public. The *Ordre Martiniste* and its periodical publication, *L’Initiation*, were a nineteenth-century example of mail order magic that is often characteristic of occult and New Age groups in contemporary society.

Encausse discovered Theosophy around the same time that he enrolled at the Paris *Faculté de medicine*, which Monroe has dated to approximately 1886. At the *Bibliothèque Nationale* Encausse first encountered the volumes of Saint-Martin, Lévi, Louis Lucas, Fabre d’Olivet, Saint Yves, and others. Increasingly, he moved from the study of medicine to the works of alchemists and magic spells:

Possessed by the idea that I came to bring to light that which was important to me, I resolved to do my best to ponder my discovery and I spent my days at the Bibliothèque Nationale. I was outside hospitals working for a year and both had enabled me to become a successful medical intern. I devoted myself to the study of the works of alchemists, old magical texts, and elements of the Hebrew language. Those years my colleagues passed studying the works of examiners. From that moment my future took shape.

Following the rise of spiritualism and Theosophy in earlier decades, the *Ordre Martiniste* would try to return to a more ceremonial magic. Encausse himself pursued an initiation through the Isis Lodge of the Theosophical

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347 Papus, ’Comment Je Devins Mystique’, *L’Initiation* 29 (December, 1895) 198. Original Text: ’Possédé par cette idée que je venais de mettre au jour et qui me tenait à coeur, je résolus d’approfondir de mon mieux ma découverte et je passai mes journées à la Bibliothèque nationale. J’étais externe des hôpitaux; un an de travail, deux au plus m’auraient permis de devenir interne et d’accomplir un carrier médicale peut-être fructueuse. J’ai consacre à l’étude des ouvrages des alchimistes, de vieux grimoires magique et des éléments de la langues hébraique, ces années que mes collègues on passes à étudier les oeuvres des examinateurs, et dès ce moment, s’est dessiné mon avenir’.
Society. However, he also went on to deliver lectures on the topics he had researched in the Bibliothèque Nationale rather than on the teachings of Blavatsky.\textsuperscript{348} This was an early clue to the splinters that would occur in the French occult community. It also speaks to the different traditions out of which French occultism and Theosophy evolved.

The Theosophical presence in the country began to grow in the second half of the 1880’s as small periodicals began to discuss Blavatsky’s ideas. Yet not all French occultists accepted the ideals of Theosophy. For example, Godwin maintains that French Theosophists were appalled that the doctrines coming out of India denied reincarnation, and worse, asserted that the spiritual ego of the Higher Self of the human being is annihilated after death – whereas in Theosophical doctrine it was believed that it is the personal ego that is annihilated. This ensured a controversy that lasted until 1883.\textsuperscript{349} Indian religion differentiated between the personal ego and spiritual ego. This was in contrast to the occidental Neoplatonic tradition that separated the physical self from the Higher Self. The doctrine of wisdom from India would become a dividing point between the Theosophical Society lodges of the Anglo-French worlds. France did not have the same relationship with India as the British world where Victoria was Empress of India and the East India Company was a British crown corporation with a considerable amount of power.

In 1887 Felix-Krishna Gaboriau (an ambitious student of Blavatsky’s) had published a French translation of A.P. Sinnett’s \textit{Occult World}. This was the first book on the teachings of the Mahatmas to appear in French. He also used his

\textsuperscript{348} Monroe, \textit{Laboratories of Faith}, p. 238.
own money to establish the Theosophical periodical, *Le Lotus*.\textsuperscript{350} Gaboriau assisted in founding the Isis Lodge. Both would prove to be inordinately conflict ridden, mostly in response to Blavatsky’s distaste for Western religion and culture.\textsuperscript{351} The split between Theosophy and Martinism came about in 1888 when the president of the Isis Lodge of Paris, Louis Dramard, died leaving Encausse and Felix Gaboriau as rivals for success. Gaboriau was editor of *Le Lotus*, the French Theosophical periodical. The majority of French disciples would elect Encausse. Yet Blavatsky tapped Gaboriau to be her hand picked leader.\textsuperscript{352} Olcott sought to repair the damage by creating a new Theosophical lodge in France called Hermes, of which Encausse would be the president. The move backfired as nearly half the members followed Encausse outside the Theosophical mainstream.\textsuperscript{353} In 1888 Encausse, writing as Papus, became editor in chief of the *Revue d’Hypnologie* and head of the *laboratoire d’hypnologie* at the *Hôpital de la Charité*.\textsuperscript{354} He became friends with Stanislas de Guaita and Joséph Péladan who had founded the *Ordre Kabbalistique de la Rose-Croix*, which had been inspired by the German mystical tradition of the Rosicrucians.\textsuperscript{355} 

After the decline of the Theosophical Society in France, Encausse moved toward creating the *Ordre Martiniste* and establishing its periodical *L’Initiation*. The readership would quickly grow to 8,000 subscribers. By February of 1890, 

\textsuperscript{350} Monroe, *Laboratories of Faith*, p. 236.  
\textsuperscript{351} Monroe, *Laboratories of Faith*, p. 237.  
\textsuperscript{352} Harvey, *Beyond Enlightenment*, p. 93.  
\textsuperscript{353} Harvey, *Beyond Enlightenment*, p. 93.  
\textsuperscript{354} Monroe, *Laboratories of Faith*, p. 239. There Encausse had been working with Jules-Bernard Luys who had developed an alternative approach to hypnosis.  
\textsuperscript{355} Monroe, *Laboratories of Faith*, p. 239.
the group had 360 members including Paris, the province, and abroad. The publication was originally presented as an independent review of the philosophies of high magic including hypnotism, Theosophy, French Masonry, and occult sciences and the first page noted that its director was Papus. George Montière was listed as Editor in Chief. C. Barlet and J. Lejay were listed as secretaries to the editor. This speaks to the extent of the organizational structure that the publication had in place. *L'Initiation* ran from 1888 to 1912. Encausse believed that everyone should be instructed in occult teachings and he divided the publication into three distinct sections:

1. A section that introduced occultism and provided a guide to those interested in understanding esoteric revelations buried under religious and spiritual symbols;
2. A section devoted to the philosophies and knowledge associated with occultism;
3. A section dedicated to the literature and poetry of occultism.

An 1890 edition heralds the success of the journal and demonstrates some approaches to managing the publication that were useful for growing its following:

It is with joy that we find the material success of *L’Initiation*. The services have been reduced from 150 when Mr. Carré, editor, became the owner of the *Revue*. Despite this, the number of readers have increased so much, that from this month it increases by 100 copies, the draw of *L’Initiation* already high. Two hundred and five new subscribers came in the last quarter months.

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356 This is based on numbers that were published in ‘Groupe Indépendent d’études ésotérique’, *L’Initiation* 6 (February, 1890) 187; ‘Nouvelle Diverses: Notre Prime Gratuite’, *L’Initiation* 7 (June, 1890) 280.
357 *L’Initiation* 2 (November, 1888), front cover.
The programme page of *L’Initiation* from May 1890 states that it was regularly distributed on the fifteenth of each month and had been in existence for two years. It cost 10 francs a year in France and 12 francs outside of France for 10 issues. The early editions sold for 3 francs 50 each and were massive productions of up to 300 pages.\(^{360}\) This would have made it fairly accessible to the growing middle class. In the same year that the publication was started, Encausse moved the society’s head quarters to *Rue Trevise* where he established a lending library and occult bookstore.\(^{361}\)

According to its founding statutes, the society had four goals:

1. To publicize occultism;
2. To cultivate potential members of secret societies;
3. To train occultist lecturers; and
4. To study the phenomena of spiritism, mesmerism, and magic.\(^{362}\)

It is telling that their first goal was to publicize and their second was to cultivate a secret society. In the spirit of a growing consumer culture the *Ordre Martiniste* pursued these goals by sponsoring lectures, concerts, courses in the Kabbalah and Hermeticism, and séances.\(^{363}\) *L’Initiation* provided a blend of philosophy, literature, popular lore, science, and commercialism. It had a reading list of ‘Useful Reading for Initiation’ that first appeared in 1889. Monroe attributes the addition of this feature to the need to ensure new comers would not feel...
Edward Bulwer-Lytton’s *Zanoni* and *La Maison Hantée* appeared regularly on this list, demonstrating further the importance of occult periodicals in globalizing the occult through texts. There was a cross promotional aspect to *L’Initiation* in particular as it promoted occult texts through this reading list.

In the spirit of a growing commercial economy, Encausse offered ‘free gifts’ to subscribers, including a complementary subscription to the *Magnetisme* periodical and a ‘BEAUTIFUL PORTRAIT oil painting by an artist from Paris’ of an unspecified subject, hand-colored to order. To get this beautiful portrait, ‘simply send the office of the journal a photograph showing the color of the skin, hair, eyes and clothes’.

In keeping with the theme of learned occultism being an elite reaction against the more democratic spiritualism, in April 1889 Encausse criticized the Theosophical Society because:

> The teachings given to its members have the great defect of not being methodical and graduated. Books are recommended, most of which are in English, and initiation is done in a haphazard way, through the doctrines that are taught in a haphazard way, though the doctrines taught are truly interesting and worthy of the greatest attention.

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365 ‘Prime Gratuite a nos Abonnés’, *L’Initiation* 6 (January, 1890) 91
Original Text: ‘Ne reculant devant aucun sacrifice quand il s’agit d’être agréable à nos lecteurs, nous venons de nous entendre avec le Journal du Magnétisme, organe mensuel de la Société magnétique de France, dont l’abonnement est de 7 fr. par an, pour que cet intéressant journal soit servi à titre de PRIME ENTIÈREMENT GRATUITE à tous nos abonnés nouveaux et à nos réabonne’s, pendant la durée de leur abonnement’; ‘Nouvelle Diverses: Notre Prime Gratuite’ (June, 1890) 280. Original Text: ‘UN SPLENDIDE PORTRAIT peint à l’huile, par un artiste de Paris’ of an unspecified subject, hand-coloured to order’.
367 Papus, *L’Initiation* 3 (April, 1889), 68. Original Text: ‘L’enseignement donné aux membres le grave défaut de n’être pas méthodique et gradué. On recommande des livres pour la plupart en Anglais et l’initiation se fait un peu à la diable quoique les doctrines enseignées soient vraiment intéressantes et dignes de la plus haute attention’.
Noting that Blavatsky had told him that she had not read the works of Fabre d’Olivet or Wronski. These works were considered to form ‘the base of occult study, at least in France,’ Encausse declared ‘Theosophy still does not have a work of methodology, and Frenchmen love method and clarity above all else’.

Harvey has attributed these comments to French national pride, which he maintains ‘loomed large in the split between Papus and the other French neo-Martinistes and their former allies in the Theosophical Society.’ However, I would attribute this lack of willingness to embrace Theosophy’s wisdom of the East to a difference in French versus British cultural attitudes towards India.

While France had previously been an imperial power in the East, it had stronger cultural ties to Africa, Egypt, and China. Harvey has effectively argued in The French Enlightenment and Its Others (2012) that attitudes towards other races were one of the key questions of the French Enlightenment. However, there is no reason to believe that this discourse was focused on India. In fact, the French discourse on race seems to have been much more focused on China, the savages of the New World, and slavery in general. France was not without a history in India of course. However, this state of affairs changed in the middle of the eighteenth century with the expansion of the British presence in India and the rise of the East India Company as a dominant political factor on the continent. The British had expunged the French from India at the end of the 18th century.

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368 Harvey, Beyond Enlightenment, p. 94.
369 Harvey, Beyond Enlightenment, p. 94.
371 Lubelsky, Celestial India, p. 4.
By early 1889 the problems of the French Theosophical Society were growing. In a ‘Declaration to our Subscribers’ the February issue of *L’Initiation* condemned the growing sectarianism within the occult movement. It stated that ‘the Theosophical Society accuses us of not being exclusively Theosophical, the spiritualists accuse us being too much so, Catholics have suspected us of too much Freemasonry, and Freemasons of too much Catholicism’.\(^{372}\) Catholicism and Freemasonry continued to be important influences on French occultism in the *fin de siècle*. By 1895 the French were ready to break away from the international society. In the December 1895 edition of *L’Initiation*, in a section entitled Mécrologie, it was stated that there was a revolt against the Theosophical Society in France:

> We discovered that secret orders were Envoys of London and we were dupes of the English. All our disciples flocked to our side on the occasion, and Arthur Arnould was part of this group. I obtained permission from the President of the TS a charter to form an independent and completely French branch: Hermes. I named my ardent neophyte president of this new branch, which started work immediately. Some months later I discovered that we were deceived again and that the English had formed a secret group in hopes of undermining French intellectuality, which they seem to admire.\(^{373}\)

In the following month *L’Initiation* tackled what some might argue was the real reason that Theosophy never really took hold in France in the way it did in

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\(^{372}\) *L’Initiation* 2 (February, 1889), p.98. Original French: La Société Théosophique nous a dit que nous n’étions pas assez exclusivement théosophique, les Spirites nous ont accuse de l’être trop, les Catholiques nous ont soupçonné de trop de Franc-Maçonnerie et les Francs-Marcons de trop de Catholicisme. Nous sommes indépendants, viola tout, c’est là notre seule raison d’être et nous pouvons être fiers d’avoir attaint notre but.

the Anglophone world. Frédéric-Charles Barlet published a piece that tackled the Theosophical Society’s synthesis of world religions and the concordance with religions of the East in particular. The *L’Initiation* article questioned ‘the supremacy in the future of the world, which is being disputed between East and West’. The article queries whether the future, ‘should belong to the oriental races?’ Barlet condemns Blavatsky’s Theosophical doctrine as “a deceitful mix” with nothing to teach Christians. The different receptions toward Eastern religion in these two countries demonstrates the importance of imperial relationships and histories in the development of their respective occultisms.

In keeping with the theme of France staying closer to the Egyptian Hermetic tradition rather than the new influence of the oriental esoteric practices, in the January 1892 edition of *L’Initiation* an article appears as a review of a book entitled *Isis Dévoilée: Ou l’Égyptologie Sacrée* (1) by Ernest Bosc. The review is signed only P, which one can assume refers to Papus. The review starts by stating that:

> Very often the occult students wish to deepen the origins of the Western tradition. We already have some interesting documentation, some remarkable work on the Hebrew origins: but it is not the same for Egyptian or Chaldean origins. The writings of the Neoplatonists have not yet all been translated, and yet they contain treasures concerning Egyptian esotericism.

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It notes that the book is more than 300 pages and ‘contains all that can be called knowledge of Egypt and its mystery’.\(^{377}\)

While occultists had a desire to ground themselves in the scholarly discourse of the day, the more populist and commercial engagements with occultism lacked the depth of knowledge to engage with philosophical history. This is the reason for the emergence of inner orders such as the *Group Indépendant*. The *Ordre Kabbalistique* was created by Stanilas de Guaiita in 1889 only two years after the emergence of *L’Initiation*. The group was intended to bring about a French Rosicrucian renaissance.\(^{378}\) The September 1891 edition of *L’Initiation* states that the *Groupe Indépendant* has more than 350 members with numerous member societies, affiliates and representatives, branches in Europe and America.\(^{379}\) As described in *L’Initiation* in 1892, to be admitted to the *Ordre*, a new member had to earn a degree in Kabbalah. In keeping with our theme of the changing nature of transmission, disciples had to produce a thesis worthy of publication in *L’Initiation* and pass a series of oral examinations that demonstrated their knowledge of subjects such as hypnotism, practical magic, mesmerism, Neoplatonic philosophy, Hebrew, Sanskrit, alchemy, Freemasonry, Buddhism, and Zoroastrianism. In a section entitled *Ordre Kabbalistique de la Rose C Croix*, the article explains the requirements for a *Bacclaurét en Kabbale* and *Licence en Kabbale*.\(^{380}\) Similar to the professions, these barriers to entry served a purpose. In an effort to

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\(^{377}\) Bosc, ‘*Isis Dévoillée*’, pp. 67. Original Text: ‘renferme tout ce qu’on peut être appelé à savoir de l’Égypte et de ses mystère’.


\(^{380}\) ‘Ordre Kabbalistique de la Rose C Croix’, *L’Initiation* 16 (August, 1892) 176-180. Later we will see that the need to study Sanskrit and Buddhism is in direct contradiction to the rejection of wisdom of the East in the Theosophical Society.
maintain secrecy in a time of the democratization of magic, the group was kept quite small and frequented only by the most learned. Yet the more that the circulation of *L’Initiation* grew, the more the society could sell advertising in the periodical.

From the earliest editions, the periodical promoted occult lectures and books.\(^{381}\) The very title of the periodical demonstrates that initiation was moving from behind closed doors into something that one could buy off the magazine stand. There was clearly an interest in allowing easy access to a broad audience for the purposes of selling occult products and society memberships. However, neither the *Ordre Martiniste* nor *L’Initiation* provided all the secrets of the inner sanctum. In an age of democratizing magic, a tension emerged between democratization and the elitism that had previously ruled the devolution of ceremonial magic. That tension would be reflected in the emergence in inner sanctum of the *Ordre Kabbalistique de la Rose-Croix*. The *Ordre Kabbalistique* ‘represented the highest degree of knowledge and distinction to which a member of the *Groupe Indépendant* could aspire’.\(^{382}\)

In the final decade of the nineteenth century, most of the occult groups operating in France were part of the broader *Groupe Indépendant*.\(^{383}\) Demonstrating once again the *Ordre Martiniste* engagement with commercialism, the February 1895 edition of *L’Initiation* ran an advertisement for upcoming occult events that unsurprisingly lists Papus as the President of the *Groupe Indépendant d’Études Esotérique*.\(^{384}\) As both the President of the group and the editor of *L’Initiation* he could serve as an arbiter of the release of

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\(^{381}\) *L’Initiation* 2 (November, 1888) 192-194.


information about the secrets of the occult to the masses. The *Groupe Indépendant* section of the February 1890 edition of *L’Initiation* states that “the number of associate members of law related to the Commission of 2° to 30 January of .......... 274. The *Group Indépendant* esoteric studies to date therefore includes 367 members divided between Paris, the provinces and abroad”.\(^{385}\) In 1896, together with François Jollivet-Castelot, Guaîtà founded the Société alchimique de France and reorganized *L’hyperchimie*, a journal that had existed since 1875, to promote the revival of alchemy in France.\(^{386}\) While occultists needed the commercial engagement of the masses, they were unwilling to make all of their secrets available to the masses on which they depended. The same pattern was present with the Esoteric Section of the Theosophical Society and the Inner Order of the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn of maintaining an inner order of access to occult information. In contrast to this desire to maintain an inner sanctum, by the mid-1890s, Encausse and other high profile occultists were ironically celebrities.\(^{387}\)

In 1901, Georges Vitoux published the *Ordre Kabbalistique*’s secret constitution. In an effort to maintain an illusion of being an open society, the constitution declared that the order would appear to the profane outsider to be ‘overt and dogmatic society for the dissemination of the occult’.\(^{388}\) He also noted that:

> In addition to this degree, exclusively practical, there are two others sub groups, and theories, that are given initiation. Each member vowed obedience to the orders of the Director Council; but his freedom is absolutely safeguarded, in that he may leave the company as soon as he pleases, on the sole condition to keep the orders or the teachings received secret. The Kabbalah in all its

\(^{385}\) ‘*Organisation du Groupe*, *L’Initiation* 6 (February, 1890), pp. 186-187


\(^{387}\) Monroe, *Laboratories of Faith*, p. 244.

branches and occultism in general, are taught in the first two degrees.\textsuperscript{389}

This signals a \textit{fin de siècle} desire for a return to the occidental roots of the esoteric arts in an age of increasing influence from Eastern religions in the West.

Despite its engagement with more secret organizations, the \textit{Ordre Martiniste} became the central organization of French occultism by the first decade of the twentieth century. It would remain so until Encausse’s death in 1916.\textsuperscript{390} While Encausse is not given the revered status of Lévi in the history of French occultism, Encausse was on the cutting edge of the evolution of occultism in terms of his engagement with the printing press to spread the word about occultism and gain new initiates. He embraced the growing commercial economy to take French occultism to new levels of circulation both in the circulation of French occult periodicals and the global circulation of French occult texts. However, his works arguably did not really add anything significantly new to the doctrine in the same way that Lévi’s did.

The engagement of the \textit{Ordre Martiniste} with the commercial economy demonstrates the growing influence of economics on the nineteenth-century occult. It was this growth in printing and mail order occult societies that made the globalization of the nineteenth-century French occult possible. It was possible because of the changing nature of the transmission of occult philosophies to something that could take place through publications. Initiation

\textsuperscript{389} Vitoux, p. 184. Original Text: ‘<< Outre ce degré, exclusivement pratique, il en existe deux autres subsidiaires, et théoriques, ou est donnée l’\textit{Initiation}. Chaque membre fait le serment d’obéissance aux ordres du conseil directeur; mais sa liberté est absolument sauvegardée, en ce qu’il peut quitter la société dès qu’il lui plaît, sous la seule condition de garder secrets les ordres ou les enseignements reçus. La kabbale dans toutes ses branches et l’Occultisme en général, sont enseignés dans les deux premiers degrés>> Italics in original’.

\textsuperscript{390} Monroe, \textit{Laboratories of Faith}, p. 244.
became something that could take place through a periodical subscription. Not only could anyone with 10 francs a year become an occultist. The growing commercialization of the economy meant that those who wanted to grow their occult societies, such as Encausse, had to sell periodicals and memberships. However, French occultists also simultaneously protected their most guarded secrets through the *Ordre Kabbalistique*.

**Publications of Gérard Encausse**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Editions</th>
<th>Editions before 1914</th>
<th>Translations</th>
<th>First Published</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>Le Tarot des bohémiens: le plus ancien livre de monde, à la usage exclusive des initiates</em></td>
<td>113</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>English (48) French (53) German (6) Spanish (5) Italian (1) Persian (1) Undetermined (2)</td>
<td>1889</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>La Cabbale: Tradition secrète de l'occident</em></td>
<td>151</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>French (42) English (11) German (56) Hungarian (3) Russian (2) Spanish (6) Czech (5) Undetermined (10)</td>
<td>1892</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>La Science des Mages et ses applications théoriques et pratiques</em></td>
<td>36</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>French (28) German (7) English (1)</td>
<td>1892</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Le réincarnation: L'évolution physique, astrale et spirituelle ; L'esprit avant la naissance et après la mort</em></td>
<td>26</td>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>French (22) Spanish (4)</td>
<td>Unknown</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The most important of these books to be translated into English was *Le Tarot des bohémiens: le plus ancien livre de monde, à la usage exclusive des initiates of The Tarot of the Bohemians* (gypsies). In the 1958 English edition, with a preface by A.E. Waite, editor Gertrude Moakley makes the case that Waite ‘introduced fresh mystical interpretations and some healthy skepticism, but it was Papus who gave us the impressive compilation which might almost be called the theological apparatus of Tarotism’.\(^\text{391}\) In this quote we see Moakley trying to recover the reputation of Papus that Waite has challenged in earlier versions. The book includes an introduction, a preface by Waite and a translated preface to the original French edition that had been written by Papus. Waite argued that Papus has created a metahistory around the development of the Tarot. Waite states ‘such history does not in fact exist’.\(^\text{392}\)


In this book we also see the continued engagement of French occultism with Egyptian orientalism. Waite challenges Encausse on the link with “primeval hieroglyphs of the Book of Thoth.” He refers to the nine great quarto volumes of *Le Monde Primitif* which was published by Court de Gébelin between 1773 and 1782. Waite claims however that Encausse thought himself:

… the most considerable savant for his period, or that he was especially instructed in things Egyptian a generation or so before Egyptology came into being. In these warrants he affirms the Egyptian origin of Tarot cards, and the mode of demonstration he adopts, to render his conviction contagious, centres in their alleged conformity with the civil, religious and philosophical doctrine of the old world of the Delta.  

Waite claims that M. de Gébelin attained his certitude by seeing the game of Tarot played at the house of a friend and he there and then declared that it was one of the Egyptian books and that it was the sole remaining vestige of the superb libraries and literature which once flourished in the valley of the Nile.  

Waite does not explain how he knows this. However, it is certainly plausible that M. de Gébelin developed a false history of the Tarot around the discourse of Egyptian orientalism that would have been popular in the period. It would have given the card game an exotic flair in a time of interest around opening up the Eastern world.  

The preface which Encausse presented in the French edition very clearly states his view that ‘the Tarot pack of cards transmitted by the Gypsies from generation to generation, is the primitive book of ancient initiation’. He goes further, however, to tie it to Egypt. He states that ‘the uninitiated reader will find herein the explanation of the exalted philosophy and science of ancient Egypt’.  

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‘the game of cards called the Tarot, which the Gypsies possess, is the Bible of Bibles. It is the book of Thoth Hermes Trismegistus, the book of Adam, the book of the primitive Revelation of ancient civilization’.\textsuperscript{396} Encausse is clearly trying to give the Tarot an ancient lineage in an effort to tap into the discourse of the period of the Eastern world as a source of ancient and secretly protected knowledge. Giving occultism an ancient heritage would give it air of credibility in a period of competition between empirical and esoteric worldviews.

Encausse never achieved the global reach of either Kardec or Lévi. Many of his books seem to never have been translated outside of French. However, he did publish some important works such as \textit{Le Tarot des bohémiens}. Like Kardec, he achieved a certain level of popularity on the continent. Perhaps his greatest contribution was setting up a model for mail order initiation into occultism through the appropriate named \textit{L’Initiation} periodical.

\textbf{1.8 Conclusion}

In France we see the beginnings of nineteenth-century occultism, influenced by the growing rationalism of the Enlightenment, Catholicism, French Romantic \textit{socialisme}, Egyptian orientalism, and growing literacy and education in France. Furthermore, when we examine the way in which French occult texts were moving in the nineteenth century, a new picture of nineteenth-century occultism emerges. Allan Kardec’s spiritualism has been an overlooked influence on British occultism, and this has often been particularly true of the doctrine of reincarnation. It has long been overlooked that Kardec was publishing on reincarnation before Lady Caithness, Anna Kingsford, or Helena Blavatsky. Éliphas Lévi’s works on the Tarot and Kabbalah had an important

\textsuperscript{396} Papus, \textit{Tarot of the Bohemians}, p. 9.
influence on how occultism evolved globally. While the translation of *Dogme et Rituel* were important to this end, his text *Historie de la Magie* has often been overlooked as an important influence on concepts such as mesmerism, Astral Fluid, and the Astral Light. Even though it did not contain the all-important information on the Tarot which was included in *Dogme et Rituel*, it was being translated and published as widely as *Dogme et Rituel*.

Gérard Encausse is not seen as evolving the French occult doctrine in the same way as Kardec and Lévi. Neither Kardec nor Encausse would achieve the same status in the English-speaking world that Lévi did. Perhaps this was because neither had a translator of the status of Waite within the Anglophone occult community. However, Encausse operated within the new economy of the *fin de siècle*. He effectively used the growing commercial economy to bring occultism in France to new levels. *L’Initiation* periodical challenges any notion that commercialized esotericism emerged in the twentieth century. It demonstrates that the Golden Dawn were not the first occult society to engage in a system of learning, although it was neither as developed nor as ritualistic as that of the Golden Dawn. Despite the *Ordre Martiniste*’s important moves toward the commercialization of magic, they also created an inner sanctum that enabled them to maintain some of the secrets of magic through the *Ordre Kabbalistique de la Rose C Croix*. This was a trend we will see continued with the Theosophical Society and Golden Dawn. It is to the Victorian occultists that we now turn.
2.0 The Occult in Victorian Britain

In *Dogme et Rituel de la Haute Magie* (1854), Eliphas Lévi describes his first trip to London in 1854. He discusses how he received a note on a divided card that contained the seal of Solomon.\(^{397}\) Lévi maintains that he was directed to Westminster Abbey, where he was met by an elderly woman who said, ‘I am aware that the law of secrecy is rigorous amongst adepts; a friend of Sir B____ L____, who has seen you, knows that you have been asked for phenomena, and that you have refused to gratify such curiosity’.\(^{398}\) The book also included a recounting of how the two men engaged in the ritual of Apollonius of Tyana.\(^{399}\) This was the beginning of the legend of the relationship between Lévi and Bulwer-Lytton. This account provides what has become a traditional narrative of the transmission of occultism between France and Britain in the mid-to-late nineteenth century. It is a narrative that would be repeated by scholars such as McIntosh, Godwin, and Butler in their respective works on the topic.\(^{400}\)

In this chapter, I will revisit the narrative of the development of Victorian occultism and place it within its broader global and imperial context. In doing this, rather than seeing a picture of one French occultist influencing British occultists and bringing a new Tarot to Britain, a new narrative emerges of multiple global influences based on scientific, technological, and imperial changes that were unfolding across the globe as Victorian occultism emerged. The growth of the market economy in Britain and across the globe was not the least of those influences. Given the increasing commercialization of the economy in the nineteenth century, it would have been difficult for anyone to

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\(^{397}\) Lévi, *Transcendental Magic*, pp. 121-122.


avoid the benefits or vices of capitalism. Certainly in Britain, the home of Victorian and Gothic literature, print culture was a critical aspect of this growing commercialization of art and literature. Occult literature was being written, translated, and transmitted across the globe. Products that would have previously been considered heterodox were increasingly being reified as religious symbols in the Victorian world. Occultism was becoming the playground of both the growing middle classes and the increasingly educated working classes.

This chapter will examine the changes in Victorian print culture from the mid-to-late nineteenth century through a discussion of Edward Bulwer-Lytton and Kenneth Mackenzie. Together they demonstrate the engagement with the occult through fiction, non-fiction, magical manuscripts, and the periodical press. Bulwer-Lytton in particular demonstrates the importance of the growing commercial and industrialization of the economy to the global growth of occultism through literature. Mackenzie represents another side of Victorian occultism that engaged with the translation of magical manuscripts and the development of fringe Masonic occult periodical press. Mackenzie demonstrates the importance of fringe Masonic movements in the period and their overlap with the orientalism of the day. His most important work, the *Royal Masonic Cyclopeida* (1875), shows the influence of Eastern philosophies on nineteenth-century fringe Masonic societies. Together these two men demonstrates the wide and varied influences that print culture was having on the growth and development of occultism in the most powerful imperial nation on the face of the Earth.
2.1 Edward Bulwer-Lytton

Edward Bulwer-Lytton is largely remembered in the occult world for his fictional novels that dealt with occult themes, the most important of which is *Zanoni*. He is the ideal exemplar of the displaced aristocrat trying to make his way in an increasingly market-oriented nineteenth century. As such, he is the best example of the environment in which commercialized occult fiction emerged in the middle of the nineteenth century. It is telling that he chose to write down his occult views in a fictional context. As we shall see, he was not at all open about what his occult views were to the public. However, the primary sources leave little doubt that he was engaging with the occult sciences of spiritualism and mesmerism that were so popular during the period.

Many aristocrats in need of capital in the middle of the nineteenth century turned to the City of London’s financial sector to make their fortune. The gentlemanly capitalism theory maintains that many such displaced aristocrats ‘closely associated with the landed élite, and offering it both support and deference, were the “new men” of the emerging service sector, whose innovation in finance, distribution and the professions generated wealth and eventually bestowed social recognition’. However, Bulwer-Lytton demonstrates that not all of the gentlemanly capitalists went to work in the City. Born the third son of General Earl Bulwer and Elizabeth Barbara Lytton, his mother was the only daughter of Richard Lytton of Knebworth. Her father was known for squandering the family income he received as inheritance and leaving only the family estate to Barbara. As the third son in the Lytton family, Edward was guaranteed no real inheritance and turned to the world of writing to

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make his fortune. He engaged with the more entrepreneurial pursuit of writing to make his fortune and pursued it on a global stage. This made him a man ahead of his time in many ways as he saw the potential for the global commercialization of literature. Bulwer-Lytton resented the power of critics and publishers in what he perceived as their self-imposed role as arbiters of taste.\footnote{Mitchell, \textit{Bulwer Lytton}, p. 129.}

His focus was on commercial success, rather than critical acclaim. In many ways, he foreshadows the movement from production to consumption that would occur in the final decades of the nineteenth century, as described by Gagnier.

\section*{2.1.1 The Entrepreneurial Aristocrat}

In the true fashion of a gentlemanly capitalist, Bulwer-Lytton often found himself in need of money. This was a situation that many aristocrats would have found themselves in as the world shifted from the more land-based feudal economy to a market-based economy. Large feudal estates became more liabilities than sources of revenue in this changing environment. Edward’s brother William inherited his father’s estate Heydon at Norfolk and his brother Henry inherited his grandmother’s estate. As such, his mother felt that the Knebworth estate should go to ‘poor Edward’.\footnote{Mitchell, \textit{Bulwer Lytton}, p. 3. Most of his life he went by the name Edward Bulwer until he inherited his mother’s family estate when he was 40 years old. At this time he changed his last name to Bulwer-Lytton.} Unfortunately, Knebworth was not without its problems and became a drain on family resources. His biographer, Leslie Mitchell, maintains that his mother ‘inherited an estate so encumbered with debt that three sides of the quadrangle that formed the house had to be demolished in 1812’.\footnote{Mitchell, \textit{Bulwer Lytton}, p. 5.} From this experience, Edward developed a
fear of indebtedness that would follow him through much of his later life. He saw himself as having a duty to restore the family fortune in the face of the new economy. For this, he turned to the growing Victorian literary industry.

Bulwer-Lytton recognized the dangers of money and the growing commercialization of the economy. In his dramatic comedy, aptly titled *Money* (1840), currency represents a social evil and the vice is shown to be money itself. Wicked characters readily trade fundamental values for fortune.\(^{406}\) The play satirized a society that worshiped the god of money and it became his most successful play.\(^{407}\) In this we see the tension between Bulwer-Lytton’s own reliance on the marketplace and his sense that artists should be rewarded with more than what the supply and demand marketplace had to offer. Even though he knows he needs money, he resented the control of these new economics over his life. He also resented that he was not better compensated as an artist. He felt writers should be better paid for their work and looked to profit as means of measuring the world’s adoration.\(^{408}\) Biographer Mitchell maintains that ‘he wanted the artist to have a new status, respected as an interpreter of the soul’s most intimate longings, with something of a prophet thrown in’.\(^{409}\) Similarly, in the opening pages of the 1845 edition of *Zanoni*, Bulwer-Lytton dedicated the book to sculptor John Gibson. There he made his views on the growing commercial economy clear stating that ‘you have escaped the two worst perils that beset an Artist of our time and land – the debasing tendencies of Commerce and the angry rivalries of Competition’.\(^{410}\) He felt that

\(^{406}\) Seville, ‘Edward Bulwer-Lytton’, p.71. Also see the play at https://archive.org/details/moneycomedyinfiv00lytt


\(^{408}\) Seville, ‘Edward Bulwer-Lytton Dreams of Copyright’, p.55.


few people had the transcendental ability to become a true artist. As such, he saw himself as part of a spiritual elite. Even though he saw the dangers of money Bulwer-Lytton sought ways to gain more access to money for writers.

Certainly, Bulwer-Lytton would become one of the most successful writers of the middle of the nineteenth century. Mitchell argues that he ‘must rank as one of the towering figures of Victorian literature’. As we shall see, his books thrived in English and non-English contexts. A collected edition of his works appeared as early as 1838, when he was only 35 years old. Before 1914, there were thirty-two editions of The Last Days of Pompeii (1834) in print, which represents his most successful and enduring novel. Books such as Zanoni and A Strange Story demonstrate his ability to engage with major themes in Victorian society including occultism, debates over materialism, and the relationship between science and religion. In addition to the extensive number of editions and translations of Zanoni (see introduction), the World Catalogue Library System lists 945 editions of The Last Days of Pompeii, 138 editions of The Coming Race, 138 editions of A Strange Story, and 14 editions of The Haunters and the Haunted (and four editions of The House and the Brain). These books continue to be published to this day. By any standard he was a well-published author in the middle of the nineteenth century.

Bulwer-Lytton’s contracts with publishers demonstrate the growing financial prowess of the Victorian literary industry. In 1828 Henry Colburn paid him £500 for Pelham, which was considered a great deal at the time for a novel that was written early in a writer’s career. The success of that novel led the same publisher to offer £800 for The Disowned (1829) and £1500 for Devereux

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411 Mitchell, Edward Bulwer-Lytton, p. 129.
412 Mitchell, Bulwer-Lytton, p. xvi.
The fact that he produced two such books in one year demonstrates the speed at which he wrote in an effort to make money from his writing. Certainly, he was known for the number of books he sold, rather than the quality of his writing. After his early success, he was able to negotiate contracts from even more of a position of strength and was in a position to change publishers if he found them to be questionable from either a financial or an artistic perspective. Not surprisingly, he had a reputation for being difficult for publishers to deal with.

The financial value of his work rose steeply throughout his career. During the 1820s and 1830s, some American publishers were prepared to pay for advance sheets for the most popular of British authors, including Bulwer-Lytton. By the mid-1840s, he was negotiating a contract with Blackwood’s that brought him £3000 for each of the Caxton novels. This was a phenomenal amount for the period. In 1850, Routledge paid him £30,000 for a ten-year contract to produce his novels in cheap editions. It was one of the largest sums paid to a novelist in the nineteenth century. In keeping with the theory that gentlemanly capitalists had to stop depending on income from their estates, Bulwer-Lytton saw the income from his writing to be as important as that from the Knebworth estate. It was within this financial context that he would write his occult-themed novels.

In addition to his strong negotiating tactics with individual publishers, Bulwer-Lytton was among the first writers to be interested in the globalization of

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copyright protection for writers, as the Victorian literary industry expanded. He had a copyright law named after him when he was only thirty years old. The Dramatic Copyright Act of 1833 was commonly known as the Bulwer-Lytton Act.\textsuperscript{418} In ‘Edward Bulwer-Lytton: Dreams of Copyright’ (2007) Catherine Seville argues that ‘his influence on the development of copyright law was far from insignificant’.\textsuperscript{419} Certainly, the Bulwer-Lytton family members were the proverbial movers and shakers within the nineteenth-century literary industry. The Lyttons were a family that was turning to the growing literary industry as the value of the family fortune was declining. Edward’s son Robert Bulwer-Lytton (1831-1891) and wife Rosina (1802-1882) were also writers. They were also a family that was turning to the machinery of politics to gain protection for the new family business in a globalizing world economy. The political positions they were able to achieve in the field of foreign diplomacy enabled them to pursue copyright law on an international scale, as a family.

In 1849, Edward’s brother Henry was made British Minister to Washington. The following year Robert was sent to Washington D.C. as an unpaid attaché in British Legation.\textsuperscript{420} Seville maintains that despite Edward’s immense popularity and his ability to collect payments for advance sheets from American publishers, he was still in need of money and sought to obtain it from the international markets for his work. As the third son, he was not guaranteed an inheritance. Seville argues that ‘he was always short of money, and saw further opportunity here’.\textsuperscript{421} In 1851 he wrote to his son and asked, ‘is there any

\textsuperscript{418} Seville, \textit{The Internationalization of Copyright Law}, p. 2.
\textsuperscript{419} Seville, \textit{The Internationalization of Copyright Law}, p. 2.
\textsuperscript{420} Seville, ‘Edward Bulwer-Lytton Dreams of Copyright’, p. 31.
\textsuperscript{421} Seville, ‘Edward Bulwer-Lytton Dreams of Copyright’, p. 31.
chance, think you, of getting a Copyright for English Authors in America? Pray urge Henry to it. It might make me a rich man’.\footnote{Hertfordshire Archives, D/EK/ C41 (1851), January, February and April letters.}

### 2.1.2 Bulwer-Lytton the Statesman

In 1831, Bulwer-Lytton was elected as a Member of Parliament for the Whig Party in St. Ives, Huntingdonshire and returned to parliament for Lincoln in 1832, which he represented for nine years. However, he found no place for himself in the hierarchy of the Whig party. In 1841, he lost his seat at Lincoln and did not regain it in the election of 1847. Then in 1846 came the repeal of the protectionist Corn Laws, which exposed British agriculture to foreign competition. This caused division between Bulwer-Lytton and the Whig party.\footnote{Mitchell, \textit{Bulwer-Lytton}, p. 191.}

The repeal would become a globalizing force that left British agricultural projects subject to international competition, which was characteristic of the free trade of the period. Bulwer-Lytton fully owned to the House of Commons that it was the issue that had ‘estranged’ him from one party and led him to another.\footnote{Parliamentary Debates, no. 225, 1230, 10 December 1852.} In keeping with his views on globalization, he was in favour of the laws being repealed and opening up British agricultural products to international competition. Clearly, he was always in favour of the globalization of commerce. In 1852 he left the Whig Party, seemingly over the Corn Laws issue, and stood in Hertfordshire for the Conservative Party and represented the district for the next 14 years until he became Baron of Knebworth. In 1858, he became Secretary of State for the Colonies under Lord Derby’s government for a period of approximately one year. Bulwer-Lytton accepted a second offer to enter Cabinet that was made in May of 1858 and it is said that by December of that
year, he was ready to resign.\footnote{Mitchell, Bulwer-Lytton, p. 208.} It would seem that the harsh world of political jostling had become too much for his Romantic sensibilities.

Mitchell argues that Bulwer-Lytton saw colonization as a civilizing process that should be pursued for moral rather than economic reasons.\footnote{Mitchell, Bulwer-Lytton, p. 211.} A table of the publication history of his occult books (below) demonstrates that he was not dependent on colonial markets. His major markets were known to be in America and on the continent. However, English editions of his books were probably sent to the colonies. He served as Secretary of State for the colonies in the period immediately following the Indian uprising, or First India War of Independence as it is called in India. Tromp maintains that this event shifted the political climate in Britain, in relation to growing imperialism. She likens the British response to the Indian uprising to the ‘hardening of ideology’ that occurred in the United States following September 11, 2001.\footnote{Marlene Tromp, Altered States: Sex, Drugs, and Self-Transformation in Victorian Spiritualism (Albany, 2006), p. 75. In making this argument Tromp also refers to the work of Jan Pieterse.} By this she means that it would have been a perspective-changing event for British citizens in terms of their views on imperialism. Certainly it was an event that raised questions about British imperial expansion, and whether it was worth the resources that were being applied to it. As seen in the introduction, it also raised questions about the need for additional communications with India.

Bulwer-Lytton maintained that when a colonial people were ready for independence then it should be granted.\footnote{Mitchell, Bulwer-Lytton, p. 210.} He was not in favour of expending British resources in the colonies to maintain the colonies. In reference to the idea that the sun never set on the British Empire, a line in one of his novels states that ‘poor sun, how tired he must be – but not more tired than the
government. He argued that the management of India should be left to the East India Company on the basis that it understood Hindus and Muslims far better than any London-based government. This was also in contrast to both Bulwer-Lytton’s approach to dealing with the aboriginal populations in Canada. Mitchell argues that instead of giving the Hudson Bay Company the powers of government, Bulwer-Lytton created the colony of British Columbia (today a Canadian province) and a governor was appointed from London. However, it is unlikely that the Colonial Secretary alone could have accomplished a decision of such magnitude. In 1861 the rule of India was transferred from the East India Company to the Crown and Queen Victoria was declared Empress in 1877.

In *The Coming Race* (1871), which was published long after Bulwer-Lytton’s time in government, he depicts the Vril-Ya master race, which is said to be tall and dark. In the novel, their technological and spiritual abilities are far more developed than those of humans. They have a magnetic force called Vril, which enables them to control the weather and apply mesmerism. They are also able to transfer consciousness from one individual to another. This master race could also easily be a representative of Eastern races. Their mythology describes an ancient Buddha or Prometheus, who is an ancestor of all Vril-Ya. They believe in the reincarnation of the soul and do not fear death. This is an indicator that the topic of reincarnation was likely being talked about in occult circles, before the Theosophical Society was even founded. The novel is arguably representative of the race consciousness of the nineteenth century as the Eastern world opened up to the West. The narrator grows alarmed that

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the Vril-Ya are waiting for the right moment to return to the surface of the Earth and dispossess the human race by other darker skinned races.

The 1886 edition of *The Coming Race* was published by George Routledge and Sons which had offices in London and New York at the time.\(^{432}\) Notably it was ‘inscribed to Max Müller in tribute of respect and admiration’. As will be discussed further in chapter three, Müller was an important scholar of Eastern religions in the final decades of the nineteenth century. This suggests it is possible that Müller’s views on the East inspired the book. Certainly it shows a relationship between Bulwer-Lytton and Müller. The fictional book is narrated from the perspective of an American whose family had immigrated to the United States and fought in the American War of Independence. The narrator also claims that his father ran for Congress. In this we see the book opening with themes of imperialism.

The narrator claims to have been invited by a professional engineer into mines but conceals the location of the mine. They decided to pursue richer deposits than had been discovered to date. He describes coming upon a building that is of Egyptian architecture.\(^{433}\) They then come upon a stranger and were conducted through a corridor of “Oriental splendor”.\(^{434}\) In this we see the orientalism of the period reflected in the novel in that it speaks of oriental rather than a particular country or race. It speaks of the orient as one thing. The narrator then falls asleep and wakes up surrounded by a group of people that he calls Orientals with ‘sphinx like faces, with deep dark eyes and red man’s colour; above all, the same type of race – race akin to man’s, but infinitely strong of form and grander of aspect, and inspiring the same unutterable feeling

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\(^{433}\) Lytton, *The Coming Race* 1886, p. 20.

of dread'.\textsuperscript{435} In this we can clearly see the Eastern and imperial influences on the narrative. Also drawing on mesmerism and the concept of the Astral Fluid, the race get their latent powers from the all-permeating fluid they call Vril.\textsuperscript{436} The dark race is reflected as superior to the white race.

The novel arguably reflects the Western fear that the white race would be replaced. Lubelsky maintains that ‘the imminent threat to humanity described in \textit{The Coming Race}, resembles the theory of Blavatsky and Besant about the changeover of races and sub-races in the course of world history’.\textsuperscript{437} \textit{The Coming Race} taps into this nineteenth-century cultural anxiety about the coming together of the races and the eventual takeover of the white race by darker races. In keeping with the concept of a superior dark race, Blavatsky later argued that:

Civilized nations lack the phenomenal powers of endurance, both mental and physical, of the Easterns; the favouring tempomental idiosyncrasies of the Orientals are utterly wanting in them. In the Hindu, the Arabian, the Thibetan, an intuitive perception of the possibilities of occult natural forces in subjection to human will, comes by inheritance; and in them, the physical senses as well as the spiritual are far more finely developed than in the Western races.\textsuperscript{438}

Eastern races are seen as spiritually superior to the white race just as India was seen as a lost spiritual homeland. Of course, the use of terms like Orientals and Easterns demonstrates the orientalism of the period again. It presents East against West in a dualistic fashion, as if all of the Eastern world had certain things in common that were not characteristic of the West. The reality would have been much more complex. There was not one cohesive East or one cohesive West.

\textsuperscript{435} Lytton, \textit{The Coming Race} 1886, pp. 27-28.
\textsuperscript{436} Lytton, \textit{The Coming Race} 1886, p. 64
\textsuperscript{437} Lubelsky, \textit{Celestial India}, p. 172.
\textsuperscript{438} Helena Blavatsky, \textit{Isis Unveiled: Vol II} (Los Angeles, 1982), pp. 635-636.
The idea that nineteenth-century occultism was a reflection of the racial anxieties of the period is not a new one. Spiritualism, in particular, is seen as reflective of fears around the growing intermingling of races. Tromp argues that the practice of séance sitters having sexual relations with mediums who were channeling other races, reflected the nineteenth-century anxieties about imperialism:

Spiritualism was subject to the British desire to manage, tame, and civilize by those outside and inside the movement. Thus the production of dark-faced ghosts by middle-class white gentlewomen not only undermined gendered and racial boundaries, but simultaneously betrayed efforts to control the influx of the new faith along with its potential colonial dangers.\(^{439}\)

However, it was not only the British who were anxious about this growing intermingling of the races and what such globalization would mean for the future. Many white people were nervous about the possibility that the white race might be replaced.

Christine Ferguson’s *Determined Spirits* (2012) ties Anglo-American spiritualism to theories of racial determinism and phrenology. She refers to ‘the dual forces of influential early convert Robert Owen’s idealist necessitarianism and the early nineteenth-century phrenology movement from which so many of spiritualism’s British and American adherents were drawn’.\(^{440}\) Owen was known for his millenarian convictions that most human lives were determined entirely by environmental circumstances.\(^{441}\) In other words, one’s destiny was largely predetermined by matters such as race and birthplace. Phrenology became entangled with racial science in powerful ways during the nineteenth century. Ferguson ties phrenology to an opposition to the intermingling of the races,


\(^{441}\) Ferguson, *Determined Spirits*, p. 24.
noting that ‘a number of phrenologists opposed imperial expansion, feeling that it would only miscegenate the Anglo-Saxon race and accordingly weaken its intellectual stock’. As we shall see in the section on Bulwer-Lytton’s occultism, he was known for engaging with both spiritualism and phrenology. He would have been well aware of the racial anxieties of the day and engaged with practices that reflected it.

2.1.3 Bulwer-Lytton the Occult Author

There can be no doubt that Bulwer-Lytton’s occult writings were inspired by his engagement with esoteric philosophies and practices. In the *Cambridge Companion to Gothic Literature*, Milbank argues that the apogee of the naturalized supernatural in the Victorian age is Bulwer-Lytton’s *The Haunter and the Haunted* (1859). The story portrays the haunted house as a brain. The house has in fact become the casing of a mind. This novel symbolically questions the new field of psychology that was emerging in its contemporary form during the nineteenth century, as the haunted mind traverses with semi-consciousness, in a reflection of the increasingly scientific understanding of the mind during the period. This was a time when the Western world was shifting from a religious understanding of the self to a more scientific or naturalized understanding of the self. Owen argues that ‘this newly psychologized self represented an assault on what were perceived as the speculative formations of theologians and philosophers’. In other words, in the nineteenth century, there was a societal debate occurring over the newly conceived unconscious or secularized mind as opposed to the previously conceived soul or divine aspects of the self. During the period, the geography of the self, shifted dramatically as

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442 Ferguson, *Determined Spirits*, p. 27.
443 Owen, *The Place of Enchantment*, p. 115.
Western society’s attention was redirected from higher or divine aspects of the self, to unconscious, temporal, and non-divine foundations of the human personality.⁴⁴⁴

Through his novels Zanoni and A Strange Story, Bulwer-Lytton is argued to have more or less bracketed popular interest in mesmerism in England from 1842-1862, in the sense that these books appeared at the beginning and end of interest in mesmerism in England.⁴⁴⁵ In 1840, Bulwer-Lytton’s friend Chauncey Hare Townshend published his pamphlet Facts on Mesmerism, in defense of the famous mesmerist Dr. John Elliotson.⁴⁴⁶ Letters between Bulwer-Lytton and Townshend support the idea that they were involved in mesmerism circles together. In one of the letters to Townshend, Bulwer-Lytton states ‘and if you will bring your somnambulist [sic] - you will find a small circle most anxious to witness your marvels. Pray do!’⁴⁴⁷ A somnambulist is a person in a state of magnetic sleep in mesmerism. This indicates that Bulwer-Lytton’s occult writings were informed by his practice of mesmerism.

Like many Victorian occultists, Bulwer-Lytton believed in the capacity of science to explain magic. In a letter to John Foster in 1842 he stated ‘I do believe in the substance of what used to be called Magic, that is, I believe that there are persons of a peculiar temperament who can affect very extraordinary things not accounted for satisfactory by any existent philosophy’.⁴⁴⁸ In this we see the idea that science will eventually be able to account for what has traditionally been thought of as magic. However, he also believes that there are

⁴⁴⁴ Owen, The Place of Enchantment, p. 115.
⁴⁴⁷ Undated letter from Bulwer-Lytton to Chauncey Hare Townshend found in the Wisbech Museum.
special people who channel these messages from the universe. He goes on to say that:

You will observe that the constitution and temperament is always more or less the same in these magicians, whether they are clairvoyant or media; the wonders are produced thro’ them and cease in their absence and inactivity. In their constitution I find a remarkable agreement – it is only persons who are highly susceptible of electricity who have it, and their power is influenced according as the atmosphere is more or less charged with electricity. This all Media and Mesmerists will acknowledge.449

Those who dabbled in the occult sought to raise the sciences to the level of the esoteric traditions. They hoped that sciences such as physics and psychology would eventually map out the unseen levels of existence. This theme can particularly be seen in A Strange Story. The plot challenges the beliefs of rationalist doctor Allen Fenwick for whom science offers all the answers to the questions of existences. The character Lillian Ashleigh has psychic powers that challenge energies unknown to science. An evil necromancer named Margrave is searching for a compound called ‘the Principle of Animal Life’ that will guarantee immortality. Fenwick comes to believe in the soul as something separate from a corporeal existence. Fenwick abandons materialism as unconvincing.

Bulwer-Lytton later decried the very materialist turn that science had taken. In a letter to John Foster in December 3, 1861, he argued against the move from science being the purview of natural philosophers to become the area of materialist scientists. Furthermore, he felt that by ignoring unseen levels of existence there were questions on the universe that were impossible to resolve:

In regard to the supernatural – what I really wish to imply is this – without taking up mesmerism and spirit manifestation. I want to intimate that in their recorded marvels which are attested by

hundreds and believed by many thousands, things yet more incredible than those which perplex Fenwick are related, and philosophers declining thoroughly to probe these marvels, they have been abandoned for the most part to persons who know little or nothing of philosophy or metaphysics, and remain insoluble.\textsuperscript{450}

However, a note to Lord Walpole, dated 13 June 1853, demonstrates how inconsistent his views on materialism in science actually were. Bulwer-Lytton argues that there was sufficient proof from the spirit world to challenge material science: ‘I have been pursuing science into strange mysteries since we parted, and gone far into a spiritual world, which suffices to destroy all existing metaphysics and to startle the strongest reason. Of this when we meet, O poor materialist!’\textsuperscript{451}

\textit{Occult Publications of Edward Bulwer-Lytton}

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\textsuperscript{450} Victor Bulwer-Lytton, \textit{The Life of Edward Bulwer}, Vol. II, p. 47. Refers to a character in \textit{A Strange Story}.

\textsuperscript{451} Victor Bulwer-Lytton, \textit{The Life of Edward Bulwer}, Vol. II, p. 44.
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### 2.1.4 Engagement with the Occult

Mid-nineteenth century London was a world of séances and mediums, as documented by many writers such as Owen, Tromp, Ferguson, and Galvan.\textsuperscript{452}

Many Victorians took these activities very seriously and Bulwer-Lytton’s occult novels introduced many Victorian readers to themes such as Astral Fluid, Rosicrucians, elixirs of life, alchemy, and the Philosopher’s Stone. Other writers

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\textsuperscript{452} In addition to Owen and Tromp see Jill Nicole Galvan, \textit{The Sympathetic Medium: Feminine Channeling, the Occult, and Communication Technologies, 1859-1919} (Ithaca, 2010).
such as Conan Doyle, Rudyard Kipling, and Rosamund Lehmann would follow the spiritualist tradition into the twentieth century.\textsuperscript{453} Victor Hugo had long engaged with similar traditions on the other side of the channel.\textsuperscript{454} These ideas and activities attracted all classes and Bulwer-Lytton was one of the aristocrats who engaged with the nineteenth-century occult. While there is much that is disputed about Edward Bulwer-Lytton’s engagement with occult lore, what goes undisputed is his engagement with spiritualism, mesmerism, and phrenology.

Godwin maintains that Bulwer-Lytton socialized with the likes of Benjamin Disraeli, the Fourth Earl of Stanhope, John Varley, and many other luminaries at Gore House, where together they dabbled in the occult sciences. Benjamin Disraeli was a Conservative British Prime Minister and literary figure. Bulwer-Lytton served in his Cabinet. Gore House was the residence of Lady Blessington after 1836. Lady Blessington was Marguerite Gardiner, the wife of John Gardiner, First Earl of Blessington. Lady Blessington had married the First Earl Blessington in 1818 and held court in the early 1820s in St. James’s Square. After the Earl’s death she wrote novels and magazine articles, much as Bulwer-Lytton had done. Godwin argues that her scrying salons, for reading crystals, were one of the three intersecting circles of scrying in London between the 1830s and 1850s. She also travelled to continental Europe and socialized with politician and poet Sir William Drummond.\textsuperscript{455} Among the other guests were said to be Louis Napoleon (Napoleon III of France), during his exile to London from 1838-1840 and 1846 to 1848. Godwin maintains that when Napoleon returned to France after the Revolution of 1848, his court became a similar

\textsuperscript{453} Mitchell, \textit{Bulwer-Lytton}, p. xix.
\textsuperscript{454} Chambers, \textit{Victor Hugo’s Conversations with the Spirit World}.
\textsuperscript{455} Godwin, \textit{The Theosophical Enlightenment}, p. 178, p. 47.
focus for society occultists. This indicates the extent to which the elite of the day were engaged in Victorian occultism. It also demonstrates that the exchange of occult philosophies between Britain and France took place at the highest levels of society.

While Bulwer-Lytton was obviously sympathetic to occult beliefs, like many in the period his views were far from straightforward. In *The Life of Edward Bulwer: First Lord Lytton* (1913) he is quoted as writing the following to his son in ‘about 1853’:

I have had the American rappers and media with the spirit world, as they call themselves, here. It is very curious, and if there be a trick, it is hard to conceive it. There are distinct raps given to a table at which they sit, and by rapping at the letters of the alphabet, which the supposed spirits select, they hold distinct dialogues.

Even though Bulwer-Lytton engaged with spiritualism, he thought it difficult to work out how a trick could have been done. He was prepared to accept the possibility that spirits might have been involved. However, he had doubts about what the channeled ghosts are saying, and even the ghosts themselves:

They profess to be spirits of the dead, but I much doubt, supposing they are spirits at all, whether they are not rather brownies and fairies. They are never to be relied upon for accurate answers, tho’ sometimes they were wonderfully so, just like clairvoyants. Although it was startling. A spirit promised to communicate with me alone, named the day and place, but never did so. It does not inspire awe, but rather heightens the spirits and produces a gay humor.

Clearly, Bulwer-Lytton believes in the agency of unseen entities that exist beyond the material level. Again this is from the letter to his son from ‘about 1853’.

A letter from family friend Reverend Elwin sits in the Lytton family personal papers at Knebworth House. It provides a second hand report of Bulwer-Lytton

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engaging with spiritualism. In a letter to the Lytton family, Elwin describes Bulwer-Lytton’s views toward the séance:

Sir Edward has a strong tendency to believe in the marvelous and marvelous enough were some of the things he related to me. He was talking reproachfully on one occasion toward Hayden – the American medium through whom the spirits communicated their answers – accusing him of wasting time and money in attending her performances, when a large table in the room gave a sudden leap toward him. Presumably, it leaped back again, and ended by moving round and round, first slowly then swiftly. No one was in the room except himself and both were standing at the one place at some distance from the table.459

This letter clearly demonstrates that Bulwer-Lytton was participating in spiritualist activities that were common at the time. It details an encounter between Bulwer-Lytton and the American medium, Mrs. Marie Hayden, in which only he and the medium were in the room engaging with a spirit. He seems to have demonstrated skepticism toward the medium but was open enough to the possibility of disembodied intelligent agencies engaging in spiritualist activities. It is noteworthy that Elwin is also quick to point out of Edward that ‘he does not believe that the influence is spiritual but he believes fully that the phenomena are real and supposes them due to causes yet undiscovered’.460 This letter shows a measured attitude toward spiritualism, in the sense that science may one day be able to explain their existence.

Bulwer-Lytton’s grandson Victor Alexa Lytton agrees with this interpretation of Edward’s beliefs, in that he engaged with the esoteric but expected science to eventually explain it. In Life of Edward Bulwer First Lord Lytton Vol. 2 he says:

460 Letter from Reverend Elwin, Knebworth House, V2/54
I have found among his papers a sufficient number of references to physical phenomena to satisfy me that he was under no illusion regarding them. Spirit rappings, clairvoyance, astrology, etc. – he investigated them all, and found them all disappointingly unconvincing and unprofitable. His attitude of mind on these matters appears to have been exactly that of the members of the Psychical Research Society of the present day – anxious to learn something that would extend the horizons of human knowledge and experience, yet forced to confess that nothing which he witnessed himself really justified any definite conclusions.\footnote{Victor Bulwer-Lytton, \textit{The Life of Edward Bulwer}, Vol. 2, p. 41.}

Here he likely means unconvincing in the sense of not providing proof of disembodied spiritual intelligences.

Mitchell notes that it was a very reasonable activity in the nineteenth century to be involved with exploring the boundaries of science and the esoteric:

\begin{quote}
Scientific experimentation was opening up new fields of enquiry and discovering new forms of energy. The possibilities of electricity, for example, were only beginning to be known. Many people, including Lytton, could reasonably ask why other forces, hitherto labeled mysterious, should not come within the scrutiny of science. A mystic, in contacting the dead, might simply be exercising an energy that science had yet to identify. By this thinking, spiritualism merged into scientific enquiry. Many Victorians found the combination seductive.\footnote{Mitchell, \textit{Bulwer Lytton}, p. 131.}
\end{quote}

Many people in Victorian Britain believed that the new sciences were not yet developed enough to explain such things. Bulwer-Lytton’s grandson’s choice of words is extremely important because he claims that Bulwer-Lytton found spiritualism unprofitable, in that it produced limited results. Mitchell maintains that Bulwer-Lytton never joined a particular church and was religious on his own terms. His approach to religion was ‘religion was of a mystical fashion’.\footnote{Mitchell, \textit{Bulwer Lytton}, p. 138.} What Mitchell actually seems to be trying to say is that Bulwer-Lytton’s approach to religion was not through any traditional religious institution. While he was arguably skeptical, Bulwer-Lytton embraced the occultism of the period both as
a practitioner and something of a spiritual leader through his writings. As such, he is an excellent example of how people of the period were turning from traditional religion to the more market-oriented religion of the commercialized occult. It is to his well-known nineteenth-century occult novel *Zanoni* that we now turn.

### 2.1.5 Zanoni

The book for which Bulwer-Lytton is best remembered within occult and esoteric circles was also the one he thought his greatest achievement. He was noted for stating that ‘there was nothing like it in the language’.\(^{464}\) Certainly, *St. Leon* (1799) predated *Zanoni* and told a similar story of a noble who finds the philosopher’s stone and elixir of life. Franz Harmann’s *In the Pranos of the Temple of Wisdom, Containing the History of the True and False Rosicrucian* is another example.\(^{465}\) Lubelsky, however, argues that *Zanoni* was the beginning of a literary genre that focused on the occult.\(^{466}\) One of the things that makes *Zanoni* different is that Bulwer-Lytton was thought to be an initiate by his readers and the occult community – so much so that it has been questioned whether the book is more autobiographical than fiction. Bulwer-Lytton himself thought of it as an odyssey of the soul but also felt that for this reason, it would ‘be no favourite with the largest of all Asses – the English public’.\(^{467}\) He was annoyed with the lack of respect for artists as interpreters of the soul within England. He stated that ‘it shoots too much over the heads of people to hit the

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\(^{465}\) Hartmann (1838-1912) would be an appropriate subject for a study of transmission to occultism between Britain and Germany, as he was a founder of the German Theosophical Society.

\(^{466}\) Lubelsky, *Celestial India*, p. 167.

popular taste – but it has given me a vent for what I long wished to symbolize
and typify and so I am grateful to it’.468

The novel tells the story that is a typical pretext for fictional novels about
the practice of magic. A magical manuscript falls into the hands of the hero after
a discussion about Rosicrucians at an occult bookstore in Covent Garden,
London. The book tells the story of a Rosicrucian and maintains the myth of a
secret brotherhood with the goal of doing well for mankind. MacGregor Mathers
claimed in his translation of the *Book of the Sacred Magic of Abramelin* that he
had been told that Bulwer-Lytton based his description of one of the
Rosicrucian adepts in *Zanoni* on Abramelin.469 Furthermore, Mathers said that
the manuscript had been brought to his attention by a celebrated but now dead
occultist and also French poet, Jules Bois.470

In the book, the main characters Zanoni and Majnour are survivors of an
ancient sect who have achieved immortality by living exclusively in the realm of
spirit. This is believed to have been achieved through the use of an elixir that is
unknown to science. It is clear that in the book there is a level that is beyond
body and beyond death that only the most spiritually advanced can achieve.
Lubelsky argues that ‘Mejnour and Zanoni personify the two idealist aspects of
the human spirit. Mejnour symbolizes the spirit of science, and Zanoni the moral
idealist, who always seeks new knowledge and discovers that self-sacrifice is
the perfect way to become a better man’.471 As such it gives us clues to Bulwer-
Lytton’s views on science in the period, and the need for science to be raised

468 Edward Bulwer-Lytton to John Forster, Hertfordshire Archives,
D/EK/C27/283.
469 Samuel Liddell MacGregor (ed. and trans), *The Book of the Sacred Magic of
Abramelin the Mage* (London, 1898), p. xvi.
302-303.
up to the level of esoteric engagement. In the book, death is seen as preferable for one’s spiritual development.

*Zanoni* is well-known in occult circles for explaining initiation ceremonies. In particular it is known for introducing the concept of the Dweller of Threshold as outlined in Book IV. The dweller is the sum total of all personality characteristics that have remained unconquered or unstable. These characteristics must be overcome before one can become an initiate. In the spirit of evolving to a higher level in each life, progress is made by removing some of these characteristics in each lifetime. The liabilities carry over to the next lifetime and eventually become a very potent personality that is the Dweller on the Threshold. The Dweller eventually recognizes itself as the disciple and trials are self initiated. The disciple puts himself in a positive conditioning environment. Every unconquered situation rises to the level of consciousness. Triumph over the Dweller leads to initiation.472

In Book four, Zanoni becomes the disciple of Mejnour. In Chapter seven of Book four, the Dweller appears to Zanoni. It is described in the following way: ‘almost HUMAN in its passion and hate and mockery – something that served to show that the shadowy Horror was not all a spirit, but partook of matter enough, at least, to make it more deadly and fearful an enemy to material form’.473 Then the “Image” speaks to Zanoni and states:

Thou has entered the immeasurable region. I am the Dweller of the Threshold. What wouldst thou with me? Silent? Does thou fear me? Am I not they beloved? It is not for me that thy has rendered up the delights of thou race? Wouldst thou be wise? Mine is the wisdom of the countless ages. Kiss me my mortal lover.474

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Zanoni’s love, Viola, is imprisoned by the French government during the Terror of the first revolution and sentenced to die. So too is Zanoni. However, in theory he could use his magical abilities to escape death. He declines to do this because death is seen as preferable to existing on the physical level of the Earth. Instead, he sacrifices his immortality for love by giving Viola an amulet and dying at the guillotine. The important theme here is Zanoni’s willingness to die and become part of the non-material world, which he sees as largely preferable to physical levels of existence. In fact, in the book he speaks of dying in “eternal sunshine” and “Hosts of Beauty”. When he arrives at Heaven they say ‘welcome! O purified by sacrifice, and immortal only through the grave – this it is to die’. The two die together as Viola is found dead the next day, soon after the end of the Terror. Heaven is glorified as a better place than the physical level. The hereafter is shown as better than Earthly life.

Bulwer-Lytton was adamant that inquiries into the supernatural must be undertaken. He felt that there must be a return to an earlier science, which explored the esoteric and supernatural levels of existence. He argued that such marvels had ‘been abandoned for the most part to persons who know little of philosophy or metaphysics, and remains insoluble. I wish to make philosophers inquire into them as I think Bacon, Newton, or Darwin would have inquired’. Indeed, the book was published only three years after Dr. John Elliotson’s high profile resignation from University College Hospital which Budge argues was the end of popular interest in mesmerism in England.

\[479\] Gavin Budge, ‘Mesmerism and Medicine’, p. 39.
When seen in this context, it makes sense that the lead character *Zanoni* would give up his immortality and die for love:

Real philosophy seeks rather to solve than to deny. While we hear every day the small pretenders to science talk of the absurdities of alchemy, and the dream of the Philosopher’s Stone, a more erudite knowledge is aware that by the Alchemists the greatest discoveries have been made, and much which still remains abstruse, had we the key to the mystic phraseology that they were compelled to adopt, might open the way to yet more noble acquisitions. The Philosopher’s Stone itself seemed no visionary chimera to some of the soundest chemists that even the present century has produced. Man cannot contradict the Laws of Nature. But are all the Laws of Nature yet discovered?  

*Zanoni* has long been noted as a potential influence on Lévi’s French occultism by authors such as Godwin and Hanegraaff. This seems to be the most plausible theory for the method of transmission between Bulwer-Lytton and Lévi. Butler has argued that *Zanoni* was influential on Mathers and Westcott, as they make reference to it in their own work. The success of the novel ensured that the myth of the Rosicrucians persisted in Victorian literary culture, having been carried forward from its roots in seventeenth century Germany. Certainly, Butler has identified Rosicrucianism, Freemasonry, and Egyptian magic as predominant influences on Victorian occultism.

*Zanoni* was published in 1842 and *Dogme et Rituel* was not published until 1855. We also know that Les Héritiers Doorman published *Zanoni* in French in the northern region of France in 1842. Furthermore, A. and W. Galigani published *Zanoni* in English in Paris in 1842. This certainly makes it likely that Lévi would have read *Zanoni*. If he was going to such great lengths to

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480 Bulwer-Lytton, *Zanoni* 1888, p. 66
482 Butler, *Victorian Occultism*, p. 78
483 Butler, *Victorian Occultism*, p. 79.
tie himself to Bulwer-Lytton in *Dogme et Rituel*, it is probable that he would have known of Bulwer-Lytton’s success as an occult novelist.

In *A History of the Occult Tarot 1870-1970* (2008), Ronald Decker and Michael Dummett make the claim that Lévi actually influenced the writing of *Zanoni*. They argue that after meeting Lévi, Bulwer-Lytton rewrote *Zanoni* and added the following passage in Book Four: Chapter Five:

> From the known operations of that mysterious agency – a fluid that connected thought to thought with the rapidity and precision of the modern telegraph, and the influence of this fluid, according to Mejnour, extended to the remote past, -- that is to say, whenever and wheresoever man had thought. Thus, if the doctrine were true, all human knowledge became attainable through a medium established between the brain and individual inquirer and all the farthest and obscurest regions in the universe of ideas.\(^{486}\)

However, the only proof that Decker and Dummett offer of this meeting between Bulwer-Lytton and Lévi is the fact that this passage does not appear in the 1842 edition and does appear in later editions. While it is correct that this passage does not appear in an 1842 edition of *Zanoni* and it does in an 1856 edition (after Lévi’s first visit to London), this hardly presents conclusive proof of the reason that Bulwer-Lytton changed the later editions.\(^{487}\) Decker and Dummett offer no direct evidence of a meeting with Lévi. Admittedly, however, the passage is reminiscent of Lévi’s concept of Astral Light, as influenced by mesmerism.\(^{488}\) Given what we now know of the relationship between Bulwer-Lytton and Chauncey Hare Townshend, it is equally possible that Bulwer-Lytton was influenced by Townshend or mesmerism circles in Britain. Also, *Dogme et


\(^{488}\) As demonstrated in the chapter on French occultism, Astral Light drew on mesmerism’s concept of the magnetism and Astral Fluid in the body.
Rituel was in wide circulation by this time and Bulwer-Lytton equally could have read about it in Lévi’s work.

The traditional line of thinking is that Bulwer-Lytton would not have been able to engage with such impressive knowledge of esoteric themes in his novels without actually being an initiated member of an occult group. As we shall see, there is reason to believe that he was initiated as a Freemason or within a fringe Masonic society. Of course he would not have been able to publicly acknowledge initiation into a Rosicrucian or Masonic group. It might have been easier for him to put that information forward through a fictional character than admit that he was engaging in Rosicrucianism or Freemasonry. His extensive knowledge of the philosophies of ceremonial magic could not have been developed through his engagement with spiritualism alone.

Given the dates of publication of Zanoni and its translation into French, it is certainly possible that it was an influence on Lévi. It would seem Lévi was trying to tie himself to Bulwer-Lytton publicly during the period following the success of Zanoni. Given the number of editions of Zanoni published in the nineteenth century and the date of its immediate translation into French, certainly this book is the path of Bulwer-Lytton’s greatest influence on French occultism. His coverage in L’Initiation and the presence of Zanoni on the recommended reading lists for the Ordre Martiniste, also demonstrates his influence on French occultism through his writings (see introduction). However, his greatest influence on esotericism may have been in providing a model for the sale of occultism in the growing market economy. Given the number of editions of his books printed in the nineteenth century, he demonstrated that occult texts were saleable in the period and that books could travel to more places than any individual initiate.
2.1.6 Potential Influence on French Occultism

McIntosh argues that at the time when Lévi first went to London, his reputation in the field of occultism would have been ‘embryonic’. As an emerging new occult author, it is possible that Lévi wanted to create his own narrative to tie himself to Bulwer-Lytton. As previously noted, in 1994 Joscelyn Godwin suggested in *The Theosophical Enlightenment* that Bulwer-Lytton may have actually led Lévi into magic and been an influence on the French occult revival. However, the meetings between Bulwer-Lytton and Lévi may actually pale in comparison to the importance of the writings of these two men. McIntosh maintains that Bulwer-Lytton had meetings when Lévi in London in 1854 and Knebworth House in 1861. *Eliphas Levi: Rénovateur de l’Occultisme en France* claims that the two men met. Unfortunately, no visitor logs for Knebworth House exist for the period that Lévi is said to have visited. However, there is evidence that they at least knew each other as acquaintances.

We do have one letter from Lévi to Bulwer-Lytton. While it is not addressed to Bulwer-Lytton directly, it is found in his personal papers at the Hertfordshire Archive. Bulwer-Lytton seems to have written to Lévi to ask for advice on magic, on behalf of a friend. It is dated only as Sunday, April 10. Based on the years in which the 10th of April fell on a Sunday, we can conclude that the letter was probably written in 1842, 1853 or 1859. Certainly, the 1850s was the period in which Lévi started to publish his occult writings. If they did meet for the first time in 1854, it would make sense that they would have been

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489 McIntosh, *Eliphas Lévi*, p. 101
490 Knebworth House is the Lytton family home, located approximately 40 minutes north of London by twenty-first century train. Obviously it would have taken longer in the middle of the nineteenth century.
in correspondence before that. The letter paints a picture of two men who do not really know each other very well. It is addressed to Monsieur and uses the vous pronoun. The letter is signed A. Constant and is filed as such in the Hertfordshire archive.\textsuperscript{492} It is probable that Lévi uses his real name because he only used this pseudonym in his occult publishing activities, which began in 1854. However, on this point we can only speculate, as Lévi has not left a great deal of direct evidence in the way of papers and personal documents. Harvey has noted that Lévi was still publishing under the names Alphonse-Louis and Noémi Constant in French socialist circles in the 1850s.\textsuperscript{493} It seems to have been his practice to use different pseudonyms in different kinds of publishing. A stronger relationship between the two men could have developed after the letter was written.

It seems to indicate that Bulwer-Lytton had written to Lévi to get advice on magic. If the letter is to be believed, it challenges any notion that Bulwer-Lytton directly led Lévi into magic, as it paints a picture of Lévi advising Bulwer-Lytton on the topic. The letter supports the theory that the influence of Bulwer-Lytton on Lévi likely would have come through Bulwer-Lytton’s books, in that it demonstrates that they really did not have a strong personal relationship.

Furthermore, the letter paints a picture of Lévi as somewhat denouncing magic:

\begin{quote}
Here is the letter which you can pass on to your illustrious correspondent on my behalf. One asks me of a work which I am here to combat; I wish to demonstrate its danger and denounce it as a crime. I do not wish to do these works nor do I wish to recommend them to anybody; but I believe in their reality, which is founded upon the unlimited power of the human will and on the demonstrable existence of a universal agent analogous with but superior to magnetism which forms the spiritual unity of intelligent beings.
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{492} Letter from A. Constant to Edward Bulwer-Lytton at Hertfordshire Archives, D/EK/C10/75.  
\textsuperscript{493} Harvey, \textit{Beyond Enlightenment}, p. 199.
through the solidarity of the consummate intelligence and the absolute will.\textsuperscript{494}

Mitchell makes the claim that Bulwer-Lytton admired Lévi. He argues that *Dogme and Rituel de la Haute Magie* is quoted at length in *A Strange Story*.\textsuperscript{495}

He also cites the work of Robert Lee Wolff entitled *Strange Stories* (1971). Wolff refers to the often-discussed attempted evocations of Apollonius of Tyana. Apollonius of Tyana was a Roman Neopythagorean philosopher in the first century. One of these alleged attempts took place in 1854 and has already been discussed. The other is said to have taken place in 1861 during Lévi’s second visit to London. Wolff claims that there was a connection between Lévi’s second visit in 1861 and the appearance the next year of *A Strange Story*.\textsuperscript{496}

He argues that:

Indeed, we shall find much magic in that novel, which may well owe something to Lévi’s alleged experiments with Bulwer in Regent Street, and to the full description of magic rites in Lévi’s books, which we now know that Bulwer had in his possession while the novel was appearing serially. In the magical rites Bulwer describes in *A Strange Story* we find much to remind us of Eliphas Lévi’s own account of his evocation of Apollonius of Tyana.\textsuperscript{497}

Of course, this is entirely speculation on the part of Wolff. In particular, he refers to the 1862 Blackwood edition of *A Strange Story* in which he argues that Bulwer-Lytton quotes Lévi directly in the footnotes, without naming him.\textsuperscript{498}

Indeed, Bulwer-Lytton does refer to *Dogme et Rituel* (1852-53) in the footnotes. He calls it ‘a book less remarkable for its learning than for its earnest belief of a scholar of our own day in the reality of the art of which he records the history – insists much on the necessity of rigidly observing *Le Ternaire* (italics added), in

\textsuperscript{494} Hertfordshire Archives, D/EK/C10/75.
\textsuperscript{495} Mitchell, *Bulwer-Lytton*, p.142.
\textsuperscript{497} Wolff, *Strange Stories*, p. 263.
\textsuperscript{498} Wolff, *Strange Stories*, p. 263.
the number of persons who assist in the enchanter’s experiments’. This is hardly a ringing endorsement of the book or Lévi. Of course, all this proves is that Bulwer-Lytton read *Dogme et Rituel*. By this time, Lévi would have been a noted author within the esoteric community. So perhaps the tables had turned somewhat and Bulwer-Lytton was trying to create his own narrative of his engagement with the occult by tying himself to a well-known French occultist.

In terms of whether Bulwer-Lytton was actually an initiate, some evidence regarding Bulwer-Lytton’s occultism can be found in the publications of esoteric societies from the period. We do know that a tribute to Bulwer-Lytton, as the author of *Zanoni*, was published in the February 1873 edition of the fringe Masonic periodical *The Rosicrucian and the Red Cross*. The same obituary appears in 15 February edition of *The Freemason* periodical. As a matter of policy, one would have to have been a member of a Freemasonic society to have one’s obituary published in a Freemasonic publication. It is possible that he was a member of a fringe Masonic society and not necessarily an active member. As will be discussed later, he was often tied to Rosicrucian circles. Clearly, the book *Zanoni* and its author received a great deal of respect within Masonic circles if they felt it necessary to eulogize its author.

Mackenzie reported that he and Lévi had discussed Bulwer-Lytton during Mackenzie’s visit to Paris. An account of Mackenzie’s meeting with Lévi appeared in the May 1873 edition of *The Rosicrucian and the Red Cross*.

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502 Correspondence with Martin Cherry, Head Librarian, Freemason’s Library, London.
Mackenzie says that Lévi ‘rendered a tribute to the versatile knowledge of the Lord, then Edward Bulwer, Lytton [Mackenzie’s spelling] and returned to his favourite topic, the Cabala upon which he dwelt with emphasis’. This article would have been published after the death of Bulwer-Lytton in 1870. The focus on the cabala in this meeting would have been important in transmitting Lévi’s views to British occultists as it occurred decades before the English translations of *Dogme et Rituel*.

There is evidence to support the claim that Bulwer-Lytton was initiated into a Rosicrucian order in Frankfurt, Germany. Galtier has argued in *Maçonnerie Egyptienne, Rose-croix et néo-chevalerie. Les fils de Cagliostro* (1989) that Bulwer-Lytton was initiated into a branch of the Asiatic Brethren that was operating in the Frankfurt region, probably during his visits to Germany between 1841 and 1843. However, Mitchell argues that Bulwer-Lytton chose to live abroad more and more as he aged, partly because it was better for his poor health and partly because he felt he received respect as an artist on the continent. Bulwer-Lytton felt that this was a respect that eluded him in England. He made extended visits to Germany in 1833, 1840, 1847, 1848, 1849-50, 1859, and 1862. He had a daughter in Germany who died in 1848. Mitchell argues that Bulwer-Lytton’s desire to be in Europe was based not on a network of friends but rather his appreciation for the ideas of the writers in Italy.

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504 Gérard Galtier, *Maçonnerie Egyptienne, Rose-croix et néo-chevalerie. Les fils de Cagliostro* (Paris, 1989), pp.175 and 177. Like others, Galtier is presenting secondary sources rather than primary evidence to show that Bulwer-Lytton was initiated as a Rosicrucian. One of his sources is William Wynn-Westcott who was known for creating false histories, such as the story about the origin of the Golden Dawn cipher manuscript. This will be discussed further in the chapter on the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn.
and Germany, which he saw as similar to his own. Therefore, the travels abroad would probably have been for reasons of health and participation in the artistic culture of the continent.

Godwin maintains that Bulwer-Lytton, ‘confided in a letter of 1872 to Hargrave Jennings that he himself, unlike current pretenders to Rosicrucianism, possessed the “cipher sign of the Initiate” and stated that the Rosicrucian Brotherhood still existed, only not under any name recognizable by outsiders’. Godwin draws this information from Christopher McIntosh’s *The Rosy Cross Unveiled* (1980) which presents the letter from Bulwer-Lytton to Jennings. The letter says that Bulwer-Lytton ‘cannot enter into the subject of the “Rosicrucian Brotherhood,” a society still existing, but not under any name by which it can be recognized by those without its pale’. Referring to Jennings’ book *The Rosicrucians: Rites and Mysteries* (1870), Bulwer-Lytton states that ‘no better book upon such a theme has been written unless a member of the Fraternity were to break the vow which enjoins him to secrecy’. This certainly reads like the words of an initiate. It shows a certain amount of knowledge of the philosophies and symbolism of the esoteric society. However, while it might indicate an initiation to an esoteric society, it is not conclusive proof. Furthermore, if he was initiated, the evidence is that this was not a role he embraced publicly. This is strong evidence that he was initiated and that he had the knowledge to play an important role in the transmission of occult philosophies.

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William Wynn Westcott (1848-1925) and Mathers published a paper for the Societas Rossicrucian in Anglia (SRIA) in 1916 which claimed that ‘in 1850, the very old Rosicrucian Lodge at Frankfort-on-the-Main fell into abeyance; in this lodge the first Lord Lytton was received into adeptship and became imbued with the ideas he displayed in his novel of Zanoni and other works’. In another article, Westcott asserts that Bulwer-Lytton refused to admit participation in esoteric circles for ‘public reasons’. However, he claims that Bulwer-Lytton was admitted as a Frater to a German Rosicrucian College. Of course, Westcott offers no proof of this such as letters or membership lists. This is speculation that Bulwer-Lytton’s role as a high profile writer politician, from a prominent family, would have made it difficult for him to publicly acknowledge his involvement in occult societies. Westcott of course would have had much to gain by tying a high profile occult novelist and politician to esoteric movements with which he was involved. As we shall see in the chapter on the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn, Westcott was prone toward the creation of his own narratives in relation to that order.

There is evidence that Bulwer-Lytton himself took issue with being publically tied to a Rosicrucian Society. A copy of the pamphlet and the letters of explanation from John Yarker indicate that Bulwer-Lytton took issue with this use of his name as Grand Patron in a society pamphlet. Presumably, he would not have been made Grand Patron if he were not already engaged with the order and clearly he did not want to be so publicly tied to the order. However, this may have been an issue with being made Grand Patron without

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512 Westcott, ‘Data of the History’, p. 44.
513 Letters to and from the Rosicrucian Society to Edward Bulwer-Lytton (3) in Index 1 Hertfordshire Archives, D/EK 1872 C25/37.
his permission, rather than an issue with being associated with the order itself. Mitchell argues that Bulwer-Lytton was so protective of his public image that he shied away from any position that could be labeled as cranky or eccentric. As we have seen, however, many of the major esoteric groups of the day had their own periodical publications, which made their existence anything but hidden or secret. The evidence does indicate his engagement with the esoteric arts, particularly with spiritualism and mesmerism. As such, one must question Mitchell’s argument that engagement with an esoteric order would have made Bulwer-Lytton seem eccentric or that he would have avoided such an association.

In a letter to Westcott, Mackenzie makes two important claims. First, he claims that Bulwer-Lytton was initiated at the Neophyte level and second, that those who have such degrees do not share that information publicly. Of his own degrees Mackenzie stated:

I possess the real degrees but I may not by my tenure give them to any one in the world without a long and severe probation to which few would consent to submit. It has taken me a quarter of a century to obtain them and the whole of the degrees are different to anything known to the Rosi, Society of England – those few who have these degrees dare not communicate them. Read H[argrave] Jennings again and [Bulwer-Lytton’s] Zanoni; Even Lytton who knew so much was only a Neophyte and could not reply when I tested him years ago. How then could Little maintain that he had them? I know how many real Rosicrucians there are in these islands.

Howe postulates that Mackenzie is referring to Jennings’ book The Rosicrucians; Their Rites and Mysteries (1870) which Howe maintains is ‘nonsense from start to finish’.

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Rosina Bulwer’s father (Francis Massey Wheeler) was a member of the Knights Templar in Ireland, as demonstrated by a certificate of membership found in the Bulwer-Lytton family archives at Knebworth House.\textsuperscript{517} Indeed, Rosina grew up near Limrick on the West Coast of Ireland, where it is said that ‘belief in the supernatural prevailed’.\textsuperscript{518} However, this is no reason to believe that Francis Wheeler and Bulwer-Lytton ever knew each other. Rosina seems to have barely known her father and is said to have received no financial support from him.\textsuperscript{519} This would have further exacerbated Rosina and Edward’s need to find sources of income. So while Francis Massey Wheeler’s membership in the Knights Templar provides no reason to believe that Bulwer-Lytton would have followed suit, it does perhaps show us how common membership in esoteric societies was in this time period. Certainly, it was common in the Bulwer-Lytton family.

Based on information available in the family papers in the Hertfordshire Archive, we also know that Bulwer-Lytton’s brother Henry was Provincial Grand Master in Turkey of the Freemasons of England in the 1860s. A Masonic diploma granted by Italian Freemasons, belonging to Henry, can be found there.\textsuperscript{520} This certainly would have made it easy for Edward to be initiated into a Freemasonic Lodge. However, this writer has discovered no proof of such activity. In 1897, Emily married Edwin Lutyens and moved to Bloomsbury Square in London.\textsuperscript{521} She later joined the Theosophical Society and formed a

\textsuperscript{517} Knebworth House family archives, seen on November 20, 2012.
\textsuperscript{518} Rosina Bulwer Lytton, \textit{A Blighted Life: A True Story} (Bristol, 1994) p. viii.
\textsuperscript{519} Mitchell, \textit{Bulwer-Lytton}, p. 25.
\textsuperscript{520} Masonic materials belonging to Henry Bulwer, Hertfordshire Archives, D/EK F68 (2) 1861, 1865 and D/EK F69.
London Lodge of which she became president. Emily was born in India when her father, Robert Bulwer-Lytton, was Viceroy to India there. This creates a picture of a family with strong ties to India, the literary community, and the practices of esotericism.

What makes Bulwer-Lytton particularly interesting is the fact that someone seemingly so protective of his esoteric engagement would choose to write about it so publicly in novels such as *Zanoni*. This leads one to believe that he was not as secretive as was often assumed. It is possible that he was merely trying to create the illusion of being secretive, as does the woman in Oscar Wilde’s *Sphinx Without a Secret* (1887) that was published after Bulwer-Lytton’s death but around the time of the creation of the Hermetic Order of the Golden. Given the established prevalence of occultism in Victorian society, certainly there was no need to be secretive. However, this would not have been the case for Masons and Rosicrucians who were formally initiated and sworn to secrecy. It is also possible that he wanted to create an illusion of secrecy to make his books seem more inviting to potential readers. His publishing activities were very financially driven as evidenced by how much money he actually made and his strong negotiation skills. He was clearly engaging with the very service-based capitalism while writing about characters such as Zanoni, who viewed the higher levels of self as a superior, non-material existence. We certainly know that Bulwer-Lytton’s engagement with the nineteenth-century occult included spiritualism, mesmerism, and phrenology, and likely a Rosicrucian or Mason. However, the claim that he may have influenced Lévi seems to be accurate. Yet, it was not in the direct fashion that has often been assumed. There is certainly not strong evidence that there was close

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relationship with Lévi, particularly in light of the letter between the two men. It seems extremely likely that Bulwer-Lytton was primarily an influence on Lévi through his fiction and *Zanoni* in particular. The reverse also seems to be true in that it was primarily Lévi’s fiction that was an influence on Bulwer-Lytton.

### 2.2 Kenneth Mackenzie

Unlike Bulwer-Lytton, who was recognized globally for his fictional texts, Mackenzie represents a different side to the nineteenth-century occult publishing world. As we shall see, his greatest contributions were in the area of fringe Masonic periodicals, as well as occult manuscripts. In an attempt to maintain occult secrecy, Mackenzie is most noted for his influence on the global movement of occult manuscripts. This section will demonstrate that because of Mackenzie’s prowess with languages, he has often been tied to the translation of nineteenth-century occult texts. As well, this section will show that his best-known publication, the *Royal Masonic Cyclopedia*, again demonstrates the prevalence of Eastern influence on Masonry in the nineteenth century.

Reportedly, Mackenzie started working with crystals in 1851 after meeting a gentleman in a bookbinder’s shop who took him to his home and showed him this new world of beauty. Godwin speculates that Mackenzie’s instructor in crystalomancy was almost certainly Frederick Hockley, who was also said to be the most persistent crystalomancer of the century. We now know from Mackenzie’s own voice that Hockley was indeed an important teacher to him, of all things esoteric. In a much later letter Mackenzie stated:

> With reference to the Real Tarot the gent at Bath has already been worrying me about it so have Bros Yarker and Bro the Rev. William Ayton. I am not disposed to communicate the Tarot System indiscriminately although I am acquainted with it. To do so would be

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to put a most dangerous weapon into the hands of persons less scrupulous than I am. Our Bro. Hockley to whom I owe most of my occult education in like manner withholds much for the same reason.\(^{524}\)

This was a letter to one of the founders of the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn, William Woodman. It is dated 1879. Beyond the fact that this letter further proves the relationship between Hockley and Mackenzie, it also shows Mackenzie referring to one Real Tarot. This letter would have been written after his meeting with Lévi. Of that meeting he notes in particular, ‘I took some trouble to find out about the lost cards of Eliphas Levi [Mackenzie’s spelling]—but have not succeeded in tracing them. He wanted £8 for a copy of them’.\(^{525}\)

This shows that Mackenzie’s investigation of Lévi’s Tarot continued beyond their initial meeting and that Mackenzie was reluctant to transmit it. This is in opposition to his publication of the events of his meeting with Lévi in a Freemasonic journal. It raises the question of whether Mackenzie transmitted everything he learned of the Tarot in his meetings with Lévi. It also shows that Lévi was indeed engaged with trying to capitalize on his esotericism. Here we are seeing Lévi engaging with an entrepreneurial pursuit.

Like Bulwer-Lytton, Mackenzie was also involved in the nineteenth-century Victorian occult community. Godwin reports that Mackenzie was researching crystalomancy in the early 1850s.\(^{526}\) Also like Bulwer-Lytton, Mackenzie was said to have exercised skepticism about the concept of communication from the dead. He gave the British National Association of Spiritualists a paper entitled ‘Visions and Mirrors in Crystals’ in 1878.\(^{527}\)

\(^{524}\) Letter from Mackenzie to William Woodman regarding the transmission of the Tarot, 7 August 1879, Freemason’s Library, London.\(^{525}\) Mackenzie 1879, Freemason’s Library, London.\(^{526}\) Crystalomancy is a form of scrying achieved through trance induction by means of crystal gazing.\(^{527}\) Godwin, *The Theosophical Enlightenment*, p. 185.
participation of people like Bulwer-Lytton and Mackenzie in scrying and crystallomancy shows us how the earliest practices of Victorian occultism evolved. Godwin argues that:

When used with rituals and with the intention of communing with angels, scrying formed a branch of ceremonial magic in the Judeo-Christian tradition. It stimulated the scientific imagination, at a time when some ‘natural philosophers’ were not quite ready to exclude incomprehensible phenomena from consideration. Lastly, to some experimenters it seemed to offer a channel of communication with the dead, hence a promise of their own survival.\footnote{Godwin, \textit{The Theosophical Enlightenment}, p. 186.}

In an environment in which the importance of faith in established religion was declining, people were becoming less inclined to count on faith and the sacraments to obtain entrance to the afterlife.\footnote{Owen, \textit{The Place of Enchantment}, pp.11-12. Owen maintains that by the end of the nineteenth century there was a perceptible sense in Britain that Christianity had entered a state of crisis. Because of its incorporation of scientific principles, the ‘new’ occultism, however, was attractive partly because it offered a spiritual alternative to religious orthodoxy but one that ostensibly operated without the requirement of faith.} While many who practiced spiritualism and esotericism also practiced Christianity, growing scientific empiricism and access to information on Eastern religions may have caused them to question what lay beyond the grave. The new religion of occultism was adopting the principles of scientific investigation to explore the esoteric. This made occult sciences such as spiritualism and mesmerism ideal responses to growing empiricism and the declining authority of traditional religion.

In 1858, Mackenzie started his own magazine entitled \textit{The Biological Review}, of which four issues were published. The journal was largely devoted to mesmerism and homeopathy.\footnote{Decker and Dummett, \textit{A History of the Occult Tarot}, p. 46.} Again we see the importance of the influence of Hindu philosophies on the Western world in this publication. Significantly, Lieutenant Richard J. Morrison wrote a learned account of the Hindu yugas and the relation of their numbers to astrology. ‘An article on the Hindu gods says
that the Indian gods are astrological, as is the Buddhist Wheel of the Law. It attacks the crass ignorance of the Baptist missionaries and approves Francis Wilford’s theories.\textsuperscript{531} Francis Wilford (1761-1822) was a noted orientalist and noted member of the Asiatic Society of Bengal. There was an intermingling of Hindu religion with esotericism as early as 1858. It is also noteworthy that Wilford was an acquaintance of Edward Bulwer-Lytton.\textsuperscript{532}

Decker and Dummett maintain that in 1872 British occultist Robert Little persuaded Mackenzie to accept honorary membership in S.R.I.A. ‘Mackenzie gave frequent lectures to the members of S.R.I.A., including one in April 1873 concerning his visit to Lévi; the lecture was published in the Society’s journal and Lévi was elected an Honorary Foreign Member.’\textsuperscript{533} Even though Lévi was said to have paid two visits to London already, little attention was paid to his Tarot in English esoteric circles until the 1880s.\textsuperscript{534} No English edition of the combined volumes of *Dogme et Rituel* appear until 1896, meaning the works were not completely accessible to English-speaking occultists until that time.\textsuperscript{535} By 1879 Mackenzie was planning on writing a book entitled *The Game of Tarot: Archeologically and Symbolically Considered.*\textsuperscript{536} Trübner and Co. issued a prospectus for it.\textsuperscript{537} The prospectus claimed that it would be a small quarto with illustrations in the text and 78 illustrations in a separate case. It was to be priced at one guinea.\textsuperscript{538} By December 1885 Mackenzie had abandoned all intentions

\textsuperscript{531} Godwin, *The Theosophical Enlightenment*, p. 213.
\textsuperscript{532} Godwin, *The Theosophical Enlightenment*, p. 194.
\textsuperscript{534} Decker and Dummett, *A History of the Occult Tarot*, p. 46.
\textsuperscript{535} World Catalogue Library System (Last accessed 19 June 2014).
\textsuperscript{536} Mackenzie, letter to Westcott dated 7 August 1879, Freemason’s Library and Museum, London.
\textsuperscript{537} Decker and Dummett, *A History of the Occult Tarot*, p. 47.
of writing a book on the Tarot, telling Westcott in a letter ‘I am not at present
writing about the Tarot. It was a projected work some years ago and fell
through. I may perhaps resume it some day. I gave Bro. Mathers a prospectus
as a curiosity. The subject is terribly intricate and I have not the same means of
literary command I formerly possessed’.\textsuperscript{539} If the text had been published, it
would have preceded Encausse’s \textit{Le Tarot des bohémiens} by a number of
years.\textsuperscript{540}

A traditional narrative of the development of post-Enlightenment magic is
that Éliphas Lévi developed a new Tarot that was transmitted through Kenneth
Mackenzie to the founders of the Golden Dawn. The order then went on to have
an important influence on Western magic as practiced by Wiccans, Druids, and
pagan societies.\textsuperscript{541} The question must be asked however: what do we really
know about the transmission of Lévi’s Tarot to Mackenzie? Furthermore, when
we examine Mackenzie, a picture emerges of a man who was influenced by
many different aspects of esotericism. Like Bulwer-Lytton he was a writer and
involved in the publishing industry, although he certainly was not of the stature
of Bulwer-Lytton. In fact, the greatest influence of his writing was in the Masonic
and fringe Masonic communities of Britain.

Mackenzie embraced his Masonic duties rather publicly. He was
Supreme Grand Secretary to the Primitive and Original Rite of Freemasonry – a
public relations person of sorts for the Masonic movement, as evidenced by his
title in the constitution of the Swedenborg Rite.\textsuperscript{542} Butler asserts that

\textsuperscript{539} Howe, \textit{The Magicians of the Golden Dawn}, p. 30.
\textsuperscript{541} Butler, \textit{Victorian Occultism}, p. 16.
\textsuperscript{542} Kenneth R.H. Mackenzie, \textit{Fundamental Constitutions of the Primitive and
Original Rite of Freemasonry (or Swedenborgian Rite), for the United Kingdom
of Great Britain and Ireland} (London, 1877), Freemason’s Library London, B
699 (SWE) UNI.
Mackenzie claimed to have received Rosicrucian initiation in Austria where he spent much of his childhood. He remained in Vienna for his education after his parents had returned to England. There he learned German, French, Latin, Greek, and Hebrew. In 1851 he returned to England. Mackenzie worked in the publishing office of Benjamin Disraeli, who was a well-known literary figure before becoming Prime Minister of Britain. As already noted, Disraeli was active in Victorian spiritualism circles with Bulwer-Lytton. We also know that Kenneth was the cousin of the Prime Minister of Canada, Alexander Mackenzie (1822-1892). Again we are seeing a picture of an occultist who was a world traveller, with strong political ties, and strong ties to the Victorian publishing industry.

Even though he was actively engaging with Masonic, spiritualist, and science periodicals, there is no reason to believe that he was being translated internationally in the same way as Bulwer-Lytton. Mackenzie’s most published fictional book was arguably *The Marvelous Adventures and Rare Conceptions of Mast Tyll Owlglass: Newly Collected Chronicled and Set Forth in Our English Tongue* (1860), of which the World Catalogue Library System lists 27 editions. He published *Burmah and the Burmese* in 1853, of which there have been 10 editions in total. Importantly, sixteen editions of the *Royal Masonic Cyclopaedia* (1877) are listed on the World Catalogue Library system. Mackenzie was also the author of the *Fundamental Constitution of Primitive and Original Rite of Freemasonry*, also known as *The Swedenborgian Rite for the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland* (1877). In 1881 Mackenzie edited the early editions of the Masonic periodical *Kneph*.

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545 World Catalogue Library System (Last accessed 30 March, 2014).
546 B 699 (SWE) UNI.
Butler maintains that Mackenzie was initiated as a Freemason but resigned within the same year, preferring fringe Masonic societies. He became a member of Societas Rosicrucian in Anglia in 1872.\textsuperscript{547} He resigned in 1875 and joined the Royal Oriental Order of the Sat B’Hai that same year.\textsuperscript{548} In the Royal Masonic Cyclopedia he described this last society as originating in India and being structured as a hierarchy of seven degrees.\textsuperscript{549} He also describes the order as existing in England and Scotland, with orders in America and Austria.\textsuperscript{550} He maintains that the Order of Ishmael is an ancient Eastern order headed by three chiefs who reside in the East and with a hierarchy of 36 degrees.\textsuperscript{551} He states that Roman Catholics could not be members in Britain but could enter the order on the continent. However, many secrets were not given to Catholic Freemasons that are otherwise disclosed. Also, he noted that members were expected to follow the religious teachings of their particular faith whether it was Judaism, Hinduism, Islam, or Brahmanism.\textsuperscript{552} The order was said to have branches in Russia, Turkey, Greece, Austria, Italy, Germany, Denmark, Sweden, Norway, France, Spain, Portugal, Africa, and the United Kingdom.\textsuperscript{553} This shows how truly international Masonic movements were in the mid-to-late nineteenth century, having established their own print culture and publications. The members of the Hermetic Brothers of Egypt also claimed Mackenzie. Mackenzie argued that they originated in ancient times and he states that ‘if we may believe those who belong to it, the philosopher’s stone,
the elixir of life, the art of invisibility, and the power of communications directly with ultramundane life, are parts of the inheritance they possess.'

Furthermore, Mackenzie maintained that he had met only three people who claimed membership, demonstrating its extreme secrecy. In *A History of the Occult Tarot 1870-1970*, Ronald Decker and Michael Dummett maintain that Mackenzie was also a member of the Royal Asiatic Society. In keeping with the theme of the influence of imperialism on nineteenth-century occultism, Mackenzie referred to his engagement with orientalism in a letter to William Woodman. Mackenzie stated ‘I am finishing an elaborate article for October on Chinese Freemasonry, a field of study quite new and very interesting’.

It is known that Mackenzie went to Paris in 1861 to visit Lévi. Apparently Mackenzie’s father worked there as a physician at the time. An account of their meeting appeared in the journal *The Rosicrucian and the Red Cross* in May 1873. Again this article was critical in bringing Lévi’s Kabbalah to British occultists. As discussed in the section on Éliphas Lévi (1.6), he was the first to bring the symbolism of the Tarot and Kabbalah together and this had important implications for the magic of the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn. Butler maintains that Mackenzie returned from Paris full of enthusiasm and ideas for occult societies and rituals. She argues that he took great delight in introducing the British occult world to Tarot symbolism. Godwin reports that three meetings between Mackenzie and Lévi took place while Mackenzie was in Paris.

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and that upon returning to England, Fredrick Hockley sat him down to compose an account of those meetings. Those manuscripts were circulated and published for the Societas Rosicruciana in Anglia in 1873.\textsuperscript{560} Butler argues that ‘without Mackenzie’s transmission of Lévi’s Tarot synthesis, the Golden Dawn’s magic would not have been as comprehensive as it was, ensuring it a lasting and enduring status in Western magic’.\textsuperscript{561} This shows how important these meetings are perceived to be by both practitioners of the esoteric traditions and historians.

A letter in Mackenzie’s own hand challenges this long held narrative of transmission through Mackenzie directly from Lévi to the founders of the Golden Dawn. In a letter from Mackenzie to Francis Irwin dated 6 November 1877, he stated:

I have lately heard from a very old friend and Broth Rev. W.A. Ayton M.A. Of Oxon. For many years he has been as much interested in the Kabbalah as ourselves, and has read Eliphas Levi [Mackenzie’s spelling]. You saw the letter much more recently than I did and perhaps you may be able to answer his question e.g. whether E.L. left any exact instructions behind him for the working of the tarot. I have a fashion of working it myself but I work it with the aid of astrology, which is distinct process from that pursued by E.L. My general end in trichinous is those of Alliette which are tinged with cartomancy but for the letter I much prefer an Italian process by which I have had marvelous results.\textsuperscript{562}

This letter shows Mackenzie questioning his understanding of Lévi’s Tarot, which he reportedly transmitted to Britain. In this letter we see him seeking instructions regarding the workings of Lévi’s Tarot. Furthermore, Mackenzie notes that he has had better luck with Italian Tarot and the cartomancy of Alliette. Mackenzie was clearly engaging with multiple types of Tarot in addition to that which he learned from Lévi. So the path of the transmission of the Tarot

\textsuperscript{560} Godwin, The Theosophical Enlightenment, p. 216.
\textsuperscript{561} Butler, Victorian Occultism, p. 112.
\textsuperscript{562} Letter from Kenneth Mackenzie to F.G. Irwin, dated 6 November 1877, Freemason’s Library, London.
from Lévi to the founders of the Golden Dawn was likely more complicated than scholars have often concluded. It is also known that MacGregor Mathers spent a great deal of time in Paris, which further opens up the possibility of multiple transmissions. In this letter we see that existing narratives of transmission occurring through a small number of face-to-face meetings being challenged by a personal letter.

Mackenzie also visited Allan Kardec while in Paris. As already discussed, Kardec was the founder of the reincarnationist school of French spiritualism and his views were known to be contrary to those of Lévi in that Kardec focused on the more scientific aspects of spiritualism and mesmerism. Mackenzie sent a letter to the editor of The Spiritual Magazine in 1862, describing his meeting with Kardec in Paris. Mackenzie claims to have told Kardec of the progress being made on spiritualism in England and that he himself preferred communicating with the spirit world through crystals, mirrors, or vessels of water, rather than through mediums. After his visit to Paris Mackenzie considered England to be considerably more advanced than French spiritism. However, he also stated that Kardec advised him that French spiritism was ‘widespread over the whole area of the country, and that his correspondence is continually on the increase’. Mackenzie noted that he had purchased the following books while in France: Histoire de Jeanne D’Arc, and Histoire de Premier Hommes, ou le fin des Malentendus. He stated that Kardec also had publications coming out, of which he mentioned Le Spiritisme à sa plus Simple Expression, a pamphlet that would be sold for a quarter of a franc,

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563 Kardec’s real name was Hippolyte-Léon Rivail.
and Réfutations des Critiques contre le spiritisme. Mackenzie said several other important works were forthcoming in 1862. He also described going to the shop of M. Ledoyen, the publisher at the Palais Royale, and conferring with him regarding spiritualism. Mackenzie said several other gentlemen were present who joined with him in their praise of the doctrine. This is an excellent example of how periodicals were used to transmit information about French occultism to Britain. Certainly, it is fair to say that the growing publishing industry was an important aspect of bringing occultism to Britain. Through Mackenzie we see the evolution in print culture in Masonic and fringe Masonic circles. We see the use of the periodical press to transmit occult ideas and information between countries, with Mackenzie publishing articles on visits with Lévi and Kardec.

Mackenzie has also been regarded as an important figure in the transmission of the original Golden Dawn manuscript. Here his translation abilities were key. Darcy Küntz, translator of the 1995 edition of The Complete Golden Dawn Cipher Manuscript, has put forward the theory that:

There can be no question that Kenneth Mackenzie was the author of Cipher Manuscript. Mackenzie was a great scholar who spoke German and French fluently. He was also a specialist in cryptography and managed to decipher an extremely difficult Masonic manuscript, called Grand Lodge of the Three Globes. Cryptography was rather easy for Mackenzie and he wrote that, “The Ordinary Royal Arch Masonic alphabet has become a mere boy’s amusement at the present time.”

For proof of Mackenzie’s authorship, Küntz states that R.A. Gilbert has also declared that the diagrams in the cipher are similar to the diagrams in Mackenzie’s handwritten manuscript, The Ancient Ritual of the Patriotic Order

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of the Oddfellows, 1797.” Kuntz also puts forward the theory that the Cipher Manuscript was based on the German Rosicrucian initiation ceremonies which Mackenzie received from an Austrian named Count Apponyi. He maintains that ‘it is possible that the Cipher Manuscript [italics added] was Mackenzie’s outline for a new Order, The Golden Dawn, based upon these ceremonies’. Furthermore, Kuntz argues that ‘a translation of the grade structure was published in Mackenzie’s Royal Masonic Cyclopaedia [067.617]’. Kuntz offers no direct evidence that ties Mackenzie to either the manuscript or the transference of it to the founders of the Golden Dawn. Furthermore, Henrik Bogdan maintains in Western Esotericism Rituals of Initiation (2007) that ‘...legendary stories of origin were quite common in the milieu of nineteenth-century initiatory societies. For instance, the Societas Rosicrucian in Anglia and the Red Cross of Constantine, both founded by Robert Wentworth Little (1840-1878) had completely legendary stories of origin’.

It was through the efforts of Mackenzie and Hockley that Enochian magic experienced a revival in Britain. Both were active Masons, crystallogomancers, and spiritualists. Both are believed to have been engaging with John Dee’s manuscripts. Dee was the astrologer (seer) for Queen Elizabeth I. Asprem argues that ‘the interest in Dee’s angelic conversations ran more or less parallel to the crazed interest in spiritualism and mediumistic phenomena of the Victorian era’. He also maintains that Dee’s work was an important influence on Hockley, who is considered to have been one of the pioneers of Victorian

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569 Kuntz, Cipher Manuscript, p. 12.
570 Kuntz, Cipher Manuscript, p. 13.
571 Kuntz, Cipher Manuscript, p. 13.
occultism and a “zealous mason”. Hockley is also thought to have been a student of the magical school initiated at Cambridge early in the century by Francis Barrett, who was the compiler of the influential occult text *The Magus* (1801). In *The Rosicrucian Seer* (1986) R.A. Gilbert describes *The Magus* as a ‘plagiarism of plagiarisms’, which ‘greatly revived interest in astrology, alchemy and magical operations and was probably largely responsible for the nineteenth-century revival of practical occultism’.  

Hockley is also thought to have worked for John Denley, the occult bookseller on Catherine Street, in Covent Garden (who was memorialized in the opening pages of *Zanoni*). It is not clear what capacity in which he worked for Denley. However, it is believed that he was involved in the copying and perhaps even the production of occult manuscripts for Denley to sell. Demonstrating his engagement with Enochian magic, among Hockley’s collection of manuscripts was a copy of Dr. Rudd’s *Nine Hierarchies of Angels* as well as a private copy of *Clavis Angelicae* containing the 18 great Calls and Celestial Invocations of the Table of Enoch. In the introduction to *The Rosicrucian Seer*, R.A. Gilbert lists a ‘chronological handlist of identifiable Hockley manuscripts’. He states there are thirty-eight manuscripts that can be positively identified as being the work of Frederick Hockley, most of which are transcripts of older texts, while six are records of scrying and two are what might be termed “occult commonplace books”.

Hockley had an important relationship with Mackenzie. Asprem maintains that Mackenzie was interested in the legacy of Dee, so much so that he claimed

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574 Asprem, *Arguing with Angels*, p. 45.
to have taken a speculatrix to the British Museum where he conducted a
session with Dee’s own crystal. Mackenzie also spent time at the British
Museum, where he is believed to have studied John Dee’s materials. Upon
his death, Mackenzie is believed to have left several notebooks dealing with the
magical system “revealed” by angels. Asprem maintains that the interest of
these two occultists in the Enochian system was probably the channel through
which the Enochian materials became part of the Golden Dawn synthesis.
More will be said about this in the chapter on the Golden Dawn.

2.3 Conclusion

Based on a letter from Lévi to Bulwer-Lytton, we now realize that they
may have barely known each other and that Lévi warned Bulwer-Lytton against
magic. We also know that based on an early edition of A Strange Story, that
Bulwer-Lytton was reading Lévi’s work. This was the important source of
transmission of occultism. We know this because of the translation dates of
Zanoni into French. Mackenzie’s published accounts of his meetings with Lévi
demonstrate the public nature of fringe Masonic dealings through their
periodicals, throughout the nineteenth century. This challenges the notion of
Masonic secrecy and shows how secrecy was being redefined. Despite Bulwer-
Lytton’s obvious engagements with spiritualism and mesmerism, he seemed to
want to remain secretive about any Masonic or fringe Masonic dealings. The
evidence paints these occultists as people who were very interested in making
a living from their occult philosophies by publishing about them. The growing
Victorian literary industry laid the groundwork for the transmission of occult

579 Asprem, Arguing with Angels, pp. 46-47.
580 Asprem, Arguing with Angels, p. 46.
582 Asprem, Arguing with Angels, p. 47.
philosophies that would be developed in the final decades of the nineteenth century. The Theosophical Society and Golden Dawn would draw on the works of Bulwer-Lytton, as did the *Ordre Martiniste*. The Golden Dawn would benefit greatly from Mackenzie’s engagement with the Tarot and Enochian magic. It is to the contribution of the Theosophical Society that we now turn.
3.0 The Theosophical Society

In July 1874, several American spiritualist newspapers reported the appearance of allegedly “supernatural” phenomena at the farm of the Eddy family in Chittenden, Vermont. Henry Steel Olcott, a New York attorney and retired colonel, with an interest in spiritualism, was so intrigued by the stories about the Eddy family that he decided to go to Vermont and see it for himself. On his return to New York, he published his impressions in a series of reports in *The New York Sun*. These led to an offer from another New York newspaper, *The Daily Graphic*, to return to the Eddy farm, this time accompanied by an illustrator. Olcott went there again on the 17 September 1874 and spent twelve weeks at the farm, during which time he reported that he witnessed daily contacts with the world beyond. One day, another visitor appeared at the Eddy farm. She was a Ukrainian woman named Helena Petrovna Blavatsky (1831-1891).\(^{583}\) Olcott maintains in his memoirs, *Old Diary Leaves* (1895), that during the séances they had engaged with ‘up to the time of H.P.B.’s appearance on the scene, the figures which had shown themselves were either Red Indians, or Americans or Europeans akin to visitors. But on this evening of her stay, spooks of other nationalities came before us.’\(^{584}\) Blavatsky was a skilled medium who brought a whole new exotic flair to the séance room. This accounts for her popularity in America, as she channeled exotic oriental spirits and provided an engagement with other races, which had not been present at American séances in the past. This initial encounter between Olcott and Blavatsky eventually led to the creation of the Theosophical Society.\(^{585}\)

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\(^{583}\) Lubelsky, *Celestial India*, p. 77.


\(^{585}\) Lubelsky, *Celestial India*, p. 83.
These events provide some clues as to how spiritualism was being portrayed in the mainstream press in the final decades of the nineteenth century. It also demonstrates how the approach to occultism was being influenced by globalization and imperialism as Blavatsky brought spirits of other races to America. She had traveled widely before coming to America and would have been aware of the influence of the East on esoteric doctrines through her exposure to Freemasonry and European Romanticism. As we shall see, the Theosophical Society would also use the mass press to spread its special brand of occultism and grow its numbers. They not only benefited from the networks of empire but also created their own global networks.

Scholars of Theosophy, such as Hanegraaff and Godwin, have long viewed the expansion of occultism as a product of the radical Enlightenment and the opening up of the study of Comparative Religion. They have argued that it was the coming together of these intellectual traditions in the final decades of the nineteenth century. This chapter will argue, however, that we must view the emergence of Theosophy within the context of forces of globalization and imperialism that occurred in the final decades of the nineteenth century.

### 3.1 The Theosophical Society and the Globalization of Religion

Based on the number of chapters of the Theosophical Society that existed by the 1890s (394 by 1894), its presence in India, and the numbers of translations of its texts, it is fair to say that no other occult society was more actively involved in the globalization of the nineteenth-century occult. The

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following chart demonstrates the pervasiveness of Theosophical publishing activities and how actively involved with publishing the leaders of the society actually were. By far, Blavatsky and Besant achieved the greatest circulation of their texts and Blavatsky received the widest level of translation. Besant and Sinnett have also been widely translated.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theosophist</th>
<th>Total Editions Found</th>
<th>Total Editions before 1914</th>
<th>Translations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Helena Blavatsky*</td>
<td>919</td>
<td>276</td>
<td>Spanish, Dutch, German, French, Danish, Portuguese, Italian, Japanese, Czech, Slovenian, Serbian, Hebrew, Russian, Swedish</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Henry Steel Olcott</td>
<td>218</td>
<td>132</td>
<td>German, Dutch, Spanish, Vietnamese, Finnish</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Annie Besant</td>
<td>842</td>
<td>389</td>
<td>Spanish, German, French, Russian, Dutch, Sanskrit, Polish</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alfred Percy Sinnett</td>
<td>460</td>
<td>281</td>
<td>French, German, Spanish, Swedish, Italian, Russian, Finnish, Dutch</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*It should be noted that Blavatsky died in 1891 and the circulation of many of her translations would have been managed by Olcott and Besant after Blavatsky’s death.*
It is undisputed that the Theosophical Society was a critical influence on the development of occultism in the later decades of the nineteenth century. This can been seen through the work of scholars such as Godwin and Lubelsky. Hanegraaff and Partridge have also effectively argued that the society was extremely influential in the development of commercialized New Age religion in the twentieth century. These conclusions have been drawn after what constitutes a strong analysis of the intellectual currents in the post-Enlightenment period including Romanticism, the study of world religions, orientalism, American transcendentalism, the psychologization of esotericism, mesmerism, and the rise of New Thought.

Demonstrating the importance of Theosophy to religion in the contemporary world, in The Handbook of the Theosophical Current (2013), Hammer and Rothstein argue that when the international Theosophical Society broke apart:

...Out at the other end of the funnel emerged a barrage of new ideas and practices, spreading through various movements of the 20th and 21st century, influencing popular religiosity, and finally permeating just about every nook and cranny of contemporary “folk” religious culture. Bestsellers and television shows are devoted to Theosophical concepts such as reincarnation and spiritual evolution; the Internet overflows with references to Theosophical concepts such as the human aura (a Google search in May 2012 retrieved 47 million hits) and the chakras (12 million hits). Even truly mainstream media such as National Geographic Channel present programs devoted to arch-Theosophical concepts such as Atlantis, and the spiritual mysteries of Egypt.

Exactly how much of this engagement with Eastern religious concepts is owed to Theosophy is debatable. As discussed in the introduction, there was

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588 See Hanegraaff, New Age Religion and Western Culture, Chapter 15.
significant exchange of information between Britain and India, in particular, through the development of extensive networks of empire, particularly after the opening of the Suez Canal and expansion of the electrical telegraph. As such, much of the East-West exchange of religious philosophies was possible because of this developing imperial infrastructure. The Theosophical Society drew on this infrastructure as it headquartered itself in India in 1878. However, even before going to India, the society actively drew on the intellectual tradition of Indian orientalism.

The Theosophical Society has been credited with bringing together the philosophies of Eastern religions to the West by Godwin and Hanegraaff. Godwin argues that:

…the work of Blavatsky and Olcott in founding the Theosophical Society in 1875 was presented as a mission to correct the misapprehensions of spiritualism, to expand the horizons of science to oppose dogmatic Christianity. The means to do this were drawn from Egyptian occultism, both ancient and modern, and from the Western esoteric tradition. At the same time, there was the brooding presence in the background of India and of an Oriental wisdom that surpassed that of the West. As Blavatsky’s allies in this work there were the mysterious “adepts” who appeared to have both Egyptian and Indian connections.\textsuperscript{590}  

Similarly, Hanegraaff argues that ‘the fundamental contribution of modern theosophy to the history of occultism consists in its assimilation, by the early founders, of elements of Oriental religions and perspectives of “Comparative Religion” in an already existing western occultist framework’.\textsuperscript{591} However, what the Theosophical Society actually accomplished was a more populist engagement with the religions of the East than was provided by the academic pursuits of Oxford philologist F. Max Müller. One might even call Theosophy “Hinduism Lite” or “Buddhism Lite”.

\textsuperscript{590} Godwin, \textit{The Theosophical Enlightenment}, p. 307.  
\textsuperscript{591} Hanegraaff, \textit{New Age Religion and Western Culture}, p. 449.
As already established, academic interest in the philosophies of Eastern religion had been active for approximately one hundred years before Blavatsky arrived on the scene. However, she arrived at a key time when the networks of empire were growing quickly because of the opening of the Suez Canal. In 1858, Thomas Cautley Newby of London published *The Indian Religions: or, results of the mysterious Buddhism* by Hargrave Jennings. Hanegraaff maintains it was published in response to an article written by Müller on Buddhism a year earlier. Furthermore, he states it is ‘a perfect illustration of how these materials could be syncretized with the new study of myth and religion, so as to produce an occultist mixture’.

Müller was a critical contributor to the growth of the Oriental Renaissance, with *The Sacred Books of the East* project (1879) and the text *India: What can it Teach Us?* (1882). The creation of the Theosophical Society achieved a similar syncretism of Eastern and Western religion and brought it to more people with their extensive publishing activities across the globe. It represented a more populist engagement with orientalism than had previously been the case through the more elitist Freemasonry. In many ways, the texts of Theosophy foreshadowed the New Age religious texts of the twentieth century in that it was a democratic engagement with religion through the text without the control of a traditional religious institution such as a church. It also presented a sanitized and Westernized construction of Eastern religious traditions, calculated to appeal to Western audiences, rather than presenting the more mundane reality of Hindus or Buddhists. In the nineteenth there was an institution present in the distribution and interpretation of occult texts through occult societies. By the time we reach the 1980s, the New Age book market started to grow in bookstores, free of any institution to help the

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592 Hanegraaff, *New Age Religion and Western Culture*, p. 446.
individual interpret the text. This reached whole new levels with the proliferation of television and the Internet.

The society arrived within the context of a growth in printing activity. The nineteenth-century publishing industry was responsible for bringing together many of the occultists in our story. In many ways, the Theosophical leaders of the late nineteenth century started to create a model for secularized esotericism that was accessible through the private sector or a for profit environment. Nineteenth-century print technologies and the growth of commercial culture created a shifting environment just as new media are creating a shifting environment in the contemporary world. Addressing how changes in the printing press affected Victorian society, Richard Menke argues that Victorian conceptions of print literature ‘tended to align storage with materiality, transmission with immateriality, so that writing – with its dual capacity for storage and transmission – occupied a shifting and ambiguous ground between the two.”

Just as web sites, texting, and social media are influencing how we use language in the contemporary period, the printing press influenced how occultists engaged with language in the nineteenth century. Theosophists, with their beliefs in esoteric levels of existence, would have been particularly prone toward the ambiguous.

Miller places many Theosophical publishing activities within the rise of “slow print” activities that were part of the 1880s socialist revival of radical political activity. Yet many of the books written by Theosophists became top sellers and were translated into multiple languages. The society built printing presses across the globe. This does not present the image of a small

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594 Miller, *Slow Print*, pp. 2, 221–256.
independent print operation, free of influence from commercial forces. As will be discussed, Theosophists claim to have had little concern for making money. However, the number of editions of the books published by Blavatsky, Besant, Olcott, and Sinnett tell another story. Their books were being actively translated and selling in multiple countries across the globe.

Certainly the Theosophical Society was a more textual engagement with the esoteric than the spiritualist societies and other occult activities that had preceded it. It was a much more organized form of occultism in that they established lodges across the globe that were open to anyone. While there had been spiritualist organizations and Masonic lodges previously, the Theosophical Society achieved a truly global status, accepting men and women, and actively trying to print and translate texts. It created a framework for the commercialization of occultism and networks that previous occult engagements had not even considered. Clearly, the circulation of reading material on Theosophy and the occult in general was always part of the activities of the Theosophical Society. In *Theosophy in the Nineteenth Century* (1994) Gomes maintains that in 1882 Theosophists received a “Partial List of Books Recommended for Purchase by Theosophical Societies”. He argues that the purpose of the list was to help Theosophists ‘to study literature of mesmerism and animal magnetism, works that explained the phenomena of Spiritualism in a scientific way, such as those of William Crookes and A.R. Wallace, the writings of Thomas Paine and prominent American freethinker D.M. Bennett and Col. Robert Ingersoll books on symbolism and mythology, and Edwin Arnold’s *Light of Asia*.\(^{595}\)

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Blavatsky started the *Theosophist* periodical in India in 1879. William Judge of the American Section started publishing *The Path* from New York in March 1886, and Blavatsky started *Lucifer* in London in September 1887. The Theosophical Publishing Company was formed in May 1887 to issue *Lucifer*, and in 1888 it began publishing articles under the title of *Theosophical Siftings*. This was a series of pamphlets that were between 16 and 20 pages each, that sold for sixpence.\(^{596}\) *Theosophist* was run first out of Bombay and later out of Adyar. It cost 8 rupees a year in India and 10 in Europe and the United States.\(^{597}\) By 1895 the catalogue of the London Theosophical Publishing Society offered five translations of the Bhavagad Gita, 22 books on Buddhism, works on Hegel, yoga, and assorted Hermetica.\(^{598}\)

Demonstrating the global reach of the Theosophical publishing activities, the following Theosophical presses were known to exist across the globe:

- Theosophical Publishing House in London, United Kingdom and eventually Chennai, India
- Theosophical University Press, Covina and eventually Pasadena, California
- Theosophical Publishing Co. in Point Loma, California
- Theosophical Publishing Society in Benares, India
- Aryan Theosophical Press, in Point Loma California
- Theosophical Co. in Los Angeles

In a meeting of the British Section of the society in July 1890, Mme. de Neufville was called upon as the president of the Holland and Belgium Section. She

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\(^{596}\) Gomes, *Theosophy in the Nineteenth Century*, pp. 426-427.


\(^{598}\) Gomes, *Theosophy in the Nineteenth Century*, p. 428.
expressed the importance of print and translation to the globalization of the society:

Mrs. Besant, Ladies, and Gentlemen,—I have the pleasure to inform you that, although the Members of the Theosophical Society in Holland and Belgium are as yet but a handful, they have not been idle. We have already translations of important articles in Theosophical journals and also of extracts from Theosophical works. These are being printed and will be widely distributed. Moreover efforts are being made, not without success, to get articles on Theosophical subjects into the public papers.\footnote{\textit{Opening of the Headquarters}, \textit{Lucifer} 6 (July 1890), 433.}

She also spoke of the importance of the English language to the globalization of the society.

In the first place, the English language in which the major part of modern Theosophical literature is written, is widely understood in these countries; and where there is an ignorance of English, existing works and translations in French can supply the lack of any native literature on the subject. We have, therefore, great hopes that with the help of our English and French brethren, we shall soon have a distinct activity in the Netherlands, which will speedily grow into a strong Theosophical movement, and give the world a new proof of this well known industry and seriousness of your friends the Dutch people.\footnote{\textit{Opening of the Headquarters}, p. 434.}

Similar points were made by a visitor named Mdme. Cedersshiold from the Swedish branch. She stated that:

Many translations of Theosophical works have been and are being made into Swedish, and although the press of the country is severely silent about us, we are surely and steadily spreading Theosophical ideas by means of individual effort, which is by no means the least practical method to pursue. Visitors to Sweden may now see familiar Theosophical works on our book stalls, and we have every reason to be satisfied with the victory Theosophy has so far gained in that country. For when it is remembered that the first adherents to Theosophy in Sweden had to depend on their knowledge of a foreign language for their information on the subject, we may have very great hopes that now that we have translations of some of our best works on Theosophy, a rapid spread of Theosophical opinions will ensue.\footnote{\textit{Opening of the Headquarters}, p. 433.}
The society was far more organized than the sporadic spiritualist movements and more open than Masonry. Although there were very organized spiritualist societies, all one needed to engage in spiritualism was a media and a table. This made spiritualism very available to the working class. The Theosophical Society, on the other hand, deplored the naïveté of spiritualists but did not dismiss the existence of paranormal phenomena. This was part of an overall pattern of the growing engagement with literature and more learned occultism in the final decades of the nineteenth century.

### 3.2 Orientalism and Theosophy

Godwin has effectively argued for the influence of ‘Wisdom from the East’ on nineteenth-century Theosophy. In an attempt to explain the British engagement with Hindu orientalism he paints it as an outgrowth of imperialism in India. Godwin maintains that the initial curiosity of the colonizers was practical, rather than necessarily spiritual, demonstrating how the development of Theosophy, and indeed the occult was influenced by imperialism in India:

> The curiosity of the early orientalists was practical, for the process of colonization went more smoothly when the colonizers could understand the language, culture, and world views of their subject people. That is why, for example, the East India Company and the Crown encouraged scholarly interests of their employees Charles Wilkins and Sir William Jones.

Charles Wilkins, a senior merchant in the East India Company, achieved the first breach of the Brahmanical reserve. He was aided diplomatically by Warren Hastings, the first Governor General of India, who persuaded Brahmin pandits (scholars) to help Wilkins with his great project, a translation into English of the

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This was the beginning of Anglo-India relations on the intellectual plane and the beginning of the effective presentation of Hindu texts to a European readership. After 1785 any English speaker able to buy a quarto volume could read the *Bhavagad Gita* for themselves. Of course, in this period before the growth in cheap printing technology and widely available education, such a text would have been available to a select elite audience with both the funds and the literacy to read it. Consequently, outside of the intellectual and scholarly world, the influence of this early translation would have been negligible among the masses. However, it would have reached the educated decision makers and opinion leaders of the day who had the literacy skills to engage with printed texts. Of course, all of this would have changed by the middle of the nineteenth century when it would have started to become more widely available as the Victorian literary industry and education started expanding.

German involvement with Sanskrit also grew with Napoleon’s conquests. As French nationalism became stronger after the Enlightenment and French Revolution, there was a perceived need for a new German national identity. Germany was searching for alternative cultural sources and India was seen as a suitable enough source. In 1818 Schlegel became the first professor of Sanskrit at the University of Bonn. However, this did not represent a complete transmission of Hinduism from India to Europe. As argued by Partridge, ‘Westerners can be academically interested in Eastern faith and culture without thinking that the East might have anything of value to offer to

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606 Lubelsky, *Celestial India*, pp. 26–27.
them'.\textsuperscript{608} However, he admits that there was an influence on Western conceptions of religion. Using Hegel's \textit{Phenomenology of Spirit} (1807) as an example, Partridge maintains that Hegel's "absolute idealist" concept of "Spirit" or "Mind" is quite distinct from a Western Christian notion of God who stands over a created order. Rather, Partridge argues that Hegel's conception of God is far closer to the Eastern monistic philosophies and refers to the Vedanta as "exalted idealism". He frames this as discovering Western idealism in the East, rather than a turning Eastward'.\textsuperscript{609}

In the eighteenth century French and German Romanticism evolved in ways that included Hinduism. J.J. Clarke argues in \textit{Oriental Enlightenment} (1997) that it was the commercial interests of Europe, particularly of the East India Company, that provided the main vehicle for the passage of ideas between India and Europe in the Romantic period.\textsuperscript{610} The ideas that emerged from German philological study heightened interest in a common origin of Indians and Germans. This defined the aim of philological research as the reconstruction of the birthplace of the Aryan race and the primal Aryan language.\textsuperscript{611} The nineteenth-century German Romantics aspired to a unified Germany and believed that there had been a unified Aryan nation, which spoke the ancient mother-language of German.\textsuperscript{612}

The tone of orientalism was set with James Mill's publication of \textit{History of British India} (1817), which offered a highly critical account of Indian religion and culture. He never visited India but was an employee of the East India

\textsuperscript{608} Partridge, \textit{Re-enchantment of the West}, Vol. II, p. 89.
\textsuperscript{609} Partridge, \textit{Re-enchantment of the West}, Vol. II, p. 90.
\textsuperscript{611} Lubelsky, \textit{Celestial India}, p. 27.
\textsuperscript{612} Lubelsky, \textit{Celestial India}, p. 27.
Company. The World Catalogue Library System lists 239 editions of this text, of which 139 were published before 1914. In fact, the book largely falls out of publication after 1858 (the final year of the Indian uprising) and has a rebirth in 1920. The first edition was published by Baldwin, Cradock, and Joy. This was true for all the early editions up to 1826. Basse Gottfried in Quedlinburg, Leipzig, published the first German editions in 1839. In 1840 it was published by James Madden and L.A. Lewis in London. In 1848, Horace Hayman Wilson published a fourth edition with notes and continuation. It was published again in 1858. James Mill was also the father of John Stuart Mill and was noted for being very influential on colonial administrators in the period.

Neither the French nor the Germans would ever develop the networks with the East that became such a prominent feature of Britain’s relationship with India in the nineteenth century (as discussed in the introduction). However, the fruits of Napoleon’s military campaign to Egypt made Paris a leading centre for orientalist research, particularly after Jean-François Champollion deciphered Egyptian hieroglyphs by means of the Rosetta Stone. In 1845 F. Max Müller arrived in Paris to follow in the steps of the German Orientalists and learn Sanskrit from the French. This was a period of upheaval in Paris during the lead up to the revolution of 1848 and the emergence of the Second Republic. Clearly, Müller felt it was necessary to study Sanskrit in Paris.

By 1868 Müller had been appointed to chair comparative philology at Oxford University. Although Blavatsky is often credited with opening up the dialogue on Eastern religions, Lubelsky gives much of this credit to Müller, maintaining he was ‘principally responsible for opening the minds to the

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613 Clarke, Oriental Enlightenment, p. 72.
614 World Catalogue Library System (Last accessed 21 June 2014).
616 Clarke, Oriental Enlightenment, p. 72.
dialogue between Christianity and the religions of the Orient, and between intellectual circles in Britain and their opposite numbers in India'. 617 India: What can it teach us? was based on a series of lectures he gave at Cambridge. The Sacred Books of the East was a fifty-volume translation project involving a number of translators, including Müller, who were converting the Eastern religious texts into English. The texts translated included the Sacred Books of the Aryas, The Texts of Confucianism, The Qu’ran, and the Buddhist Suttras. Müller sought to explain why the study of Sanskrit was important, even though the language had not been spoken in 2000 years.

Lubelsky maintains that Müller was an influential advisor to Gladstone and had a significant influence on the empire’s policies on India. We do know that Müller had met William Gladstone at Oxford in 1853 618 and that they did have a relationship. It only takes a perusal of the Gladstone Library catalogue or a visit to the library to see that Prime Minister Gladstone was clearly interested in the topic of comparative religion. The Life and Letters of The Right Honourable Friedrich Max Müller also contains correspondences between the two men on many things, including religion. Yet there is only one letter on India dated 18 January 1883. This was the year Müller started The Sacred Books of the East Project and he had just finished India: What Can it Teach Us? Müller seems to be refraining from pushing his views on Gladstone:

Dear Mr. Gladstone – I am afraid I am taking a very great liberty in sending you my last book on India. I must confess, I have long wished for an opportunity of engaging your interest on behalf of India; I do not mean the mere surface of India, with its grotesque religion, its pretty poetry, and its fabulous antiquity, but the real India that is only slowly emerging before our eyes; a whole, almost

617 Lubelsky, Celestial India, p. 63.
618 Lubelsky, Celestial India, p. 46.
forgotten act in the great drama of humanity, very different from Greece, from Rome, from modern Europe...  

This letter does not tell a story of a man who had an extensive influence on British policy in India. Certainly, we see Müller trying to create a narrative of India. Referring to the Kālidāsa’s plays and the Laws of Manu, he states:

But there was an older literature in India, the Vedic and the Buddhistic, which are only now being slowly disinterred, and it is there that we can watch a real growth from the simplest beginnings to the highest concepts which the human mind is capable of, it is there that we can learn what man is, by seeing once more what man has been.  

Müller was trying to create an image of India as an ancient civilization that we can learn from, similar to the Greeks and the Romans.

Proving that their relationship was limited, Müller finally states that he really does not expect Gladstone to do much to honour his request:

As a very old admirer of yours, I should be glad if I could make you look at the work which Sanskrit scholars have lately been doing; but this is only one of many wishes, the fulfillment one may desire, but one hardly expects. In fact, I should not have ventured to say even so much if I did not know that you have only to put my book aside, and may feel assured that I am not so unreasonable as to expect even a line of acknowledgement from your secretary.

Again, this does not tell a story of two men who had a close relationship. It shows Müller trying to get his work in front of the Prime Minister. In reality, he seems to be like any other high level scholar who is trying to gain government support for his work. There is no sense that he is influencing government policy.

There were, however, a series of letters from Müller to Gladstone from 1870 and 1871. This is significant since this was the time of the Franco-Prussian War. This was, as previously discussed, an important turning point in British nationalism. This is significant because Müller’s heritage was German. It

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is very clear that Müller’s allegiance is to Germany and he believes that Britain was being too kind to France. There is a letter written to Müller’s wife from Gladstone’s residence at Hawarden Castel, dated 10 December 1870. Again demonstrating that Müller is having difficulty in gaining influence on Gladstone over matters of public policy, he stated ‘No talk yet with Mr. Gladstone, except on University matters, but the fight will come I expect’.\textsuperscript{622} Similarly, writing to his friend Dr. Abeken on 13 December 1870 he stated that ‘as I told you before, Gladstone’s sympathies are by no means for Germany, neither is he familiar with the German language or literature, or the German character or ways; also the French refugees have taken great hold upon him. He distrusts Germany, especially Prussia’. Showing the limits of even a Prime Minister’s power Müller stated that Gladstone remarked ‘this is my opinion. What the Cabinet thinks is quite a different question.” [Italics in the text.] Finally in resignation Müller states, ‘I stayed at Hawarden till last night, and, though I have accomplished nothing, we have certainly parted friends’.\textsuperscript{623} These passages demonstrate that the two men were good enough friends that Müller would be invited to Gladstone’s home. However, they also demonstrate Müller’s difficulty in influencing the Prime Minister. Certainly Müller seems unable to influence Gladstone on the Franco-Prussian War and it is obvious that Müller tried to.

There is an interesting letter dated 21 February 1871 in which Müller discusses Gladstone’s views on world religions. Addressing Gladstone’s views on his new lecture series, Müller stated:

\begin{quote}
When I came to the passage in my Second Series where I had tried in a few lines to explain your view of the origin of Greek Mythology, I did not know what to do. From reading your book I certainly thought that you admitted an early stratum of Jewish thought, on which, by metamorphic and other processes, the religion and mythology of
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{622} Müller, \textit{The Life and Letters}, Vol. I, p. 396.

Homer were built up. In a letter which you did me the honour to address me, you proposed a different theory, or at least you gave me a new insight into your views on the subject. You seem to admit there is an independent origin for the religious and mythological opinions of the Greeks and the Jews, and to be satisfied with the admission of a later contact between Aryan and Semitic ideas.  

This letter might indicate that Gladstone was open to Müller’s views on the existence of an Aryan race that evolved out of India, separate from the Jews. Müller was also distinguishing between Jews and the occidental tradition.

These views on the five root races that evolved out of Atlantis after its destruction became an important aspect of Theosophy. In *Isis Unveiled Vol. I* Blavatsky discusses the *Atlantis*-legend and the idea that there are those scattered throughout the world who ‘know their early ancestors, the sages of India, Babylonia, Nineveh, and the imperial Thebes’. She maintains that ‘these men believe the story of Atlantis to be no fable, but maintain that at different epochs of the past huge islands, and continents existed where now there is but a wild waste of water.’  

The concept of the root races was further developed in *The Secret Doctrine*. Later Theosophists also developed the concept, most notably William Scott Elliot in the *Story of Atlantis* and Besant in *Man: Whence, How, and Whither* (1913).

While we do not have direct evidence of Müller’s influence on public policy of the period, certainly we can take him as an important example of the intellectual climate of the period. *The Sacred Books of the East* was published in 1879 and the World Catalogue Library system lists up to 178 editions of the fifty volumes. Up to 63 of those were published before 1914. This has been largely an English language publication, with 171 editions published in

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Müller’s *India: What can it teach us?* was published in 1882. The World Catalogue Library system lists 97 editions. Up to 52 of those were published before 1914. In terms of languages, it was published in English (40), German (14), Hindi (1), and Malayalam (1). It is not surprising that such a text would be published in German, given the influence of Indian philosophies on German Romanticism. Müller was publishing these texts in roughly the same time period as Blavatsky was publishing *Isis Unveiled* (1877) and *The Secret Doctrine* (1888). From the late 1870s onward there seems to have been a market outside of the academic world for texts that were engaging with Indian spirituality.

In terms of the narrative of India that Müller presents, he is clearly in favour of imperialism. In the 1883 edition of *India: What can it Teach Us?* Müller wrote a dedication to E.B. Cowell that was dated 16 December 1882. He states that ‘at present and for some time to come Sanskrit scholarship means discovery and conquest’. He makes it clear that he is a teacher of those who might enter the India civil service (the British civil service in India). In many ways it is telling that the India civil service is so clearly staffed in Britain. Müller believes that British should continue to be in India for the purpose of scholarship, to maintain its dominant global position in this area:

> If some of the young Candidates for the Indian Civil Service who listened to my Lectures, quietly made up their minds that such a reproach shall be wiped out, if a few of them at least determined to follow in the footsteps of Sir William Jones, and to show to the world that Englishmen who have been able to achieve by pluck, by perseverance, and by real political genius that material conquest of India, do not mean to leave the laurels of its intellectual conquest entirely in other countries, then I shall indeed rejoice, and feel that I have paid back, in however small a degree, the large debt of gratitude which I owe to my adopted country and to some of its

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626 World Catalogue Library System (Last accessed 20 November 2015).
627 World Catalogue Library System (Last accessed 20 November 2015).
Müller is thankful for the assistance of statesmen who have support his research on India and believes this is part of a bold and adventurous British spirit that has given the world the texts of Eastern religion. However, he also sees Britain as being outstripped by Germany in Sanskrit studies. It is hardly surprising that he would be pro-conquest either because of the period that he is operating in or because of the necessity of being in India for his academic work.

In Lecture I, Müller makes it pretty clear that he was invited by the Board of Historical Studies at Cambridge to deliver a course of lectures, specifically intended for the candidates for the Indian Civil Service. All of this paints a picture of a reciprocal relationship between Müller and government. They would use him to facilitate the conquest of India with his knowledge of the texts and language. He would use them to fund and support his academic work. In an effort to paint India as equally important to other ancient civilizations he questions why the study of Greek and Latin, and the poetry, philosophies, laws, and art of Greece and Italy should command general respect and yet the study of Sanskrit and the art of culture of India ‘is considered by most people as useless, tedious, if not absurd’. Finally, he notes that this is not the case in other cultures such as France, Germany, Italy, and even in Denmark, Sweden, and Russia. The reality is that Britain was engaging with India far more so than any of these other countries and yet its political achievements in India were not being matched by its academic achievements. This comes to have

631 Müller, India: What Can it Teach Us?, pp. 3-4.
632 Müller, India: What Can it Teach Us?, p. 4.
powerful implications for the evolution of the Theosophical Society which brings a less academic engagement with the East to the masses.

3.3 British Imperialism and Literature from 1880 to 1914

The period in which the Theosophical Society was forming was a period of growing imperialism in Britain. Wilfred Baumgart argues in *Imperialism: The Idea and Reality of British and French Colonial Expansion, 1880-1914* (1982) that the imperialism of the Disraeli government was driven largely by the unification of Germany and Prussia on the continent. Baumgart describes this situation as creating 'a completely new power factor on the chess-board of international relations'.

On 9 February 1871 Disraeli stated in the House of Commons that: 'this war represents a German Revolution, a greater political event than the French Revolution of the last century… The balance of power has been entirely destroyed, the country which suffers most, and feels the effects of this great change most, is England'. Baumgart describes Disraeli’s approach as ‘consolidationist imperialism’ rather than expansionist.

These fears and imperial tendencies were expressed in the literature of the day. After the Franco-Prussian War there was fears about the expansion of French and German nationalism. The British government and scholars felt the need to expand globally and that was expressed through the literature. In 1868 Charles Dilke published *Great Britain*, a book that argued for Britain’s imperial domination of the globe. Dilke was Undersecretary for State for Foreign Affairs during Gladstone’s second government from 1880 to 1882 and was admitted to the Privy Council in 1882. In 1883 John Robert Seeley published his lectures

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634 Hansard, Disraeli speech, 9 February, 1871, House of Commons [http://0parlipapers.chadwyck.co.uk.lib.exeter.ac.uk/hansard/fullrec.do?sourceconfig5.cfg&area=hcpp&id=CD5V0204P0-0001](http://0parlipapers.chadwyck.co.uk.lib.exeter.ac.uk/hansard/fullrec.do?sourceconfig5.cfg&area=hcpp&id=CD5V0204P0-0001)
under the title *The Expansion of England: Two Courses of Lectures*. Seeley had been appointed a professor of Latin and historian at University College, London, in 1863. The book argues that the dominions were critical to England’s power and that it might not be beneficial to hold on to India over the long term. The World Catalogue Library System lists 200 editions of this text. Initially, it was published in London by Macmillan and Co. and in the same year in Boston by the Roberts Brothers. Macmillan also had offices in New York which it sold in 1896. In 1884, it was published in Leipzig, Germany by Bernhard Tauchnitz, demonstrating the global movement of ideas about imperialism in the 1880s. Showing the popularity of the ideals it espoused, the book was published again in 1885, 1886, 1888, and 1889 in London. The second edition was published in 1895 in London and Boston by the same publishers. By 1902 Little Brown had taken over publishing it in Boston while Macmillan continued to publish it in Britain into the early 1900s. The book continued to be published in Germany. It made reappearance in 1985, published again by Macmillan. It was published by Cosimo Classics in 2005, Cambridge University Press in 2010, and Barnes and Nobel in 2011, demonstrating that people continue to engage with it to this day.

In 1886, James Anthony Froude published *Oceana, or England and her Colonies*. Froude was an English historian, novelist, and clergyman. He was also the editor of *Frazer’s Magazine*. He completed the *History of England* in 1870. Froude’s history was known for its defence of the English Reformation which he saw as the hinge on which British history turned. *Oceana* he

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636 Macmillan and Company was founded in 1843 by Daniel and Alexander Macmillan who were two brothers from Scotland. They published such authors as Lewis Carroll, Thomas Hardy, and Rudyard Kipling. Notably they also published the work of William Butler Yates who was a member of the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn.

637 World Catalogue Library System (Last accessed 19 August 2015).
described as a voyage through the colonies to hear the views of people of all classes.\textsuperscript{638} The World Catalogue Library System lists 101 editions of *Oceana*, with the first edition being published by Longmans, Green and Co. in London. In the same year Scribner published it in New York. It was published in Leipzig, German, in English by Tauchnitz in 1887. It was republished in London in 1892, 1894, 1898, 1907, and 1912, and in New York in 1897 and 1911. Demonstrating the continuing interest in the text, editions were published by Freeport Library Press in New York in 1972 and Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, in 2010.\textsuperscript{639} This again shows the continued popularity of the text.

Baumgart argues that these books ‘are concerned only with the white-settled colonies and not the dependent territories (with the exception of India).’\textsuperscript{640} He maintains that in Britain, that nationalist imperialism was fostered by the growth in the printing press and the mass-circulation that accompanied it, as an extension of the electoral reforms of 1867 and 1884. *The Reform Act of 1867* enfranchised urban working classes males in England and Wales for the first time. *The Representation of the People Act 1884* extended the same voting qualifications that existed in towns to the countryside. As well, compulsory school attendance laws were introduced in 1870 and 1880.\textsuperscript{641} Mass communications and literacy provide an environment in which decision makers could foster nationalism. These advances fuelled the creation of a nationalist identity in Britain, as well as France and Germany. Furthermore, national identity co-existed simultaneously with the growing ability to move ideas internationally and throughout colonies. As already discussed in the

\textsuperscript{638} James Anthony Froude, *Oceana, or England and her Colonies* (London, 1886), pp. v-vi.
\textsuperscript{639} World Catalogue Library System (Last accessed 19 August 2015).
\textsuperscript{640} Baumgart, *Imperialism*, p. 49.
\textsuperscript{641} Baumgart, *Imperialism*, p. 53.
methodology section of the introduction, the webs of empire also created the possibility for literature to move across international lines. Notably, in this case the webs of empire were publishing networks and the transportation infrastructure that enabled them such as steam ships, printing presses, and telegraphs. However, this increase in the international movement of literature created a simultaneous desire to define the homeland against the broader world. As Benedict Anderson argues in *Imagined Communities* (1983), ‘the general growth in literacy, commerce, industry, communications, and state machineries that marked the nineteenth century created powerful new impulses for vernacular linguistic unification within each dynastic realm’.

Similarly, Gauri Viswanathan argues in *Masks of Conquest* (1989) that English as a study of culture and not simply the study of language found a secure place in the British Indian curriculum. Viswanathan maintains that the use of English literature in Indian curriculum was essential to the processes of sociopolitical control by the guardians of English traditions. For example, literature can be used to shape character, develop aesthetic sense, or the discipline of ethical thinking. As such, she argues that English literature was used as a means of social control within the colonies.

The literature of Ruyard Kipling has long been noted for spreading the ideals of imperialism through the English-speaking world in texts such as *The Jungle Book* (1894) and *The White Man’s Burden* (1899). Kipling, was born in Bombay and taken to Britain by his parents when he was five years old. From 1882 to 1892 he worked as a journalist in India. Baumgart argues that Kipling embodied the idea of the British Empire and glorified Britain’s colonization as a

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religious mission. As a literary hero of the day, Kipling inspired both the general public and the torchbearers of imperialism.\textsuperscript{644} Kipling was awarded the Nobel Prize for literature in 1907 and achieved popular success.\textsuperscript{645} This speaks to the influence and importance of his literature in the final decades of the nineteenth century. He has remained a controversial figure, in part because of his views on Empire. However, in the \textit{Cambridge Companion to Rudyard Kipling} (2011), Howard J. Booth argues that ‘many have refused to see the issue as a simple choice between an imperialist and a great artist whose attitudes and politics do not matter’.\textsuperscript{646} Booth maintains that Kipling can be used to challenge popular assumptions about literature and imperialism. Kipling challenges the notion that anyone with intelligence, responsiveness, and literary talent must always be on the side of the opponents of empire.\textsuperscript{647} He demonstrates that a thinking high profile person could have been in favour of imperialism.

The literature of this period can be seen as having overlaps with the ideology of occultism in that both were cultural critiques of materialism. Baumgart argues that:

\begin{quote}
...a typical characteristic of the literature of imperialism was that it tended to oppose the materialism of the time and to strive for lofty ideas... Psychologically speaking, the literature suggested a need to compensate for the unromantic hardships of life in the industrial society, the yearning for adventures in an exotic world untouched by civilization.\textsuperscript{648}
\end{quote}

While governments were creating their own narratives of imperialism, counter-imperialism literature was also emerging. It was in this environment that the

\begin{flushend}{644}Baumgart, \textit{Imperialism}, p. 55. \\
\textsuperscript{646}Booth, \textit{Cambridge Companion to Rudyard Kipling}, p. 1. \\
\textsuperscript{647}Booth, \textit{Cambridge Companion to Rudyard Kipling}, p. 2. \\
\textsuperscript{648}Baumgart, \textit{Imperialism}, p. 54.\end{flushend}
leaders of the Theosophical Society drew on the British imperial presence and created their own narratives of India.

### 3.4 Helena Blavatsky

While Helena Blavatsky is often seen as a marginal historical figure, in reality she was an important actor in the evolution of religion that began with the long nineteenth century. She co-founded an occult society that became a global network and pioneered the reification of esoteric texts as commercialized religious symbols. Even though the Theosophical Society would eventually build international publishing networks, a lot of this work would happen after her death when the society came to be run by Annie Besant and Henry Steele Olcott. Notably, many of the reprints of *The Secret Doctrine* would occur after Blavatsky’s death. However, she drew on the infrastructure of globalization to travel the world in promoting her Theosophical doctrine and she wrote books attempting to bring together the major world religions. It was largely Blavatsky who achieved the synthesis of Western occultism with Eastern religious philosophies. This became a major aspect of the nineteenth-century Theosophy. *Isis Unveiled* and *The Secret Doctrine* stand as two of the most enduring occult texts of the last century and a half. Blavatsky also went beyond Edward Bulwer-Lytton who published his occult philosophies in the form of fiction. She stated her esoteric views clearly, in a non-fiction genre. The New Age authors of the twentieth and twenty-first century owe her a great debt.

The following sections will discuss Blavatsky’s engagement with nineteenth-century orientalism and the networks of the globalization that were so characteristic of the period from 1870 up until her death in 1891. It has long been argued by scholars such as Olav Hammar and Carl T. Jackson that
Theosophy became more engaged with Eastern religions after Blavatsky and Olcott move to India in 1879. These sections will demonstrate that Blavatsky was fully engaged with Hindu orientalism in particular while she was still writing *Isis Unveiled*, which was published in 1877. They will also demonstrate Blavatsky’s engagement with global networks as she carried out her occult work, mostly from India. However, even though she entered public consciousness at a time when empire, the publishing industry, and the commercial economy were all expanding, she was not skilled with the business aspects of running an occult society. Her periodical the *Theosophist* seems to have turned a profit largely because she volunteered her labour to it. She spent her life living hand-to-mouth and supported herself and the society mostly with her Russian publications.

Much has been written about Blavatsky, although there is still a great deal that we do not know of her with certainty. Her life before she emerged in New York as a spiritualist is often difficult to track and analysis of her Russian publications and correspondence is required to get a complete picture of the woman. Like many other occultists she was of aristocratic origins. Her mother was a member of the high Ukrainian aristocracy through the Dolgorouky family and died in 1842. After that Helena’s father was anxious to find a match for her in marriage. At 17 she was married to the 40-year-old Nikifor Blavatsky. He was the deputy military governor of Erevan in Armenia. She would find only dissatisfaction in marriage. After only three months, Blavatsky ran away from him to Constantinople. She wandered for years before arriving in America. Little is known about her life during the period between the end of her marriage and her arrival in America.

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649 Lubelsky, *Celestial India*, p. 78.
650 Lubelsky, *Celestial India*, pp. 78–79.
Aside from her native Russian, she spoke English, French, German, and some Italian. She also claimed to be able to read a certain amount of Sanskrit.\footnote{Dixon, \textit{Divine Feminine}, p. 24.} Even though she was clearly learned, Olcott describes her as a ‘rebellious pupil with no love of serious literature, no attraction for learned people, no tendency to haunting libraries’.\footnote{Olcott, \textit{Old Diary Leaves} 1895, Vol. 1, p. 222.} Both of these presentations of Blavatsky could be accurate if we view her works as essentially dealing at a superficial level with the scholarship of the period on India, comparative religion, classical mythology, and the sciences. Blavatsky’s publications demonstrate her to be someone who knew a little about a wide variety of things, without ever attaining the level of knowledge that a professional scholar such as Müller would have achieved. This would be very much in keeping with the patchwork nature of Theosophy as a whole and her texts in particular, which drew on many religions, cultures, and esoteric traditions.

Theosophy had a reciprocal relationship with globalization. It was both a product of globalization and simultaneously helped to globalize religion as its print networks moved occult philosophies around the world. Blavatsky’s travel itinerary demonstrates how truly global occult philosophies had become from the middle of the nineteenth century. Godwin maintains that the path which led Blavatsky to become a founder of the Theosophical Society was a very international one:

Blavatsky, Rawson, and Metamon were working on occultism in Cairo in about 1851, after which Blavatsky went to Paris and astonished the Freemasons there with her knowledge. In 1853, she proceeded to New York where she made lifelong friends, presumably through the same network of fringe and Oriental masonry. Twenty years later she repeated the itinerary: she again contacted Metamon in Cairo, then went a roundabout route to Paris, and shortly after sailed to New York where she arrived on 7 July 1873 and founded the Theosophical Society in 1875. Everywhere she was involved with
Freemasonry, Oriental secret societies, occult fraternities, and with the spiritualists who constituted, as it were, the exoteric “church” from which doors opened to the more esoteric circles.\textsuperscript{653}

From this history of Blavatsky we can see that she was making use of the transportation infrastructure that enabled globalization.

Blavatsky was a citizen of the world in the truest sense of the word. Olcott maintains that when he first laid eyes on her at the Eddy farm, she was with a French Canadian woman with whom she conversed in French. He stated, ‘I saw at once from her accent and fluency of speech that, if not a Parisian, she must at least be a finished French scholar’.\textsuperscript{654} His first conversation with her was actually in French and he stated that French authors told him that Blavatsky’s French articles would serve as models of style in French schools.\textsuperscript{655} As a nineteenth-century Russian aristocrat, it is very possible that Blavatsky was quite fluent in French, as this was the language of the Russian aristocracy during the period of her lifetime. In 1889 she published \textit{Pensées sur karma et la réincarnation} in French. It was published by the \textit{Compagnie théosophique}.\textsuperscript{656} Her multi-lingual status and ability to travel globally made her an ideal candidate to establish an occult society with global reach. However, it would not reach its greatest heights during her lifetime.

\subsection*{3.4.1 Blavatsky’s Publishing Activities}

Blavatsky’s greatest contribution to religion was her Theosophical doctrine, which she developed through her books. Her greatest accomplishment was in bringing the philosophies of Eastern religion together with Western

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{653} Godwin, \textit{The Theosophical Enlightenment}, p. 281.
\item \textsuperscript{654} Olcott, \textit{Old Diary Leaves} 1895, Vol. 1, p. 5.
\item \textsuperscript{655} Olcott, \textit{Old Diary Leaves} 1895, Vol. 1, p. 5, p. 106.
\item \textsuperscript{656} Bibliothèque Nationale de France, General Catalogue (Last accessed 21 August 2015).
\end{itemize}
esoteric philosophies in a very public way, through books like *Isis Unveiled* and *The Secret Doctrine*. The books demonstrate how Blavatsky created an East-West synthesis of esoteric religion. The history of the Theosophical periodicals that she founded illuminates how the society was supported financially.

Blavatsky maintained an active correspondence with Sinnett, so much so that her letters to him have been published in book format entitled *The Letters of H.P. Blavatsky to A.P. Sinnett* (1925). He is an excellent source of information on her publishing activities. Sinnett stated that Blavatsky continued her relationship with Russian publications long after she had left Russia. This again demonstrates her global reach. During Blavatsky’s early days in India ‘she was obliged during the period to do what literary work she could for Russian magazines to earn her livelihood, and supplement the narrow resources on which the headquarters of the Society were kept up’.657 This describes an organization that was run on shoestring budget, held together by the meager income that its leader made by doing journalistic work. It was a society that was in need of capital. It makes sense that Blavatsky would have used her publishing skills to support it as a time when the publishing industry was growing and globalizing.

Sinnett maintains that the *Theosophist* periodical was an important source of revenue for the society:

> The Theosophist, the monthly magazine devoted to occult research, which she [Blavatsky] set on foot in the autumn of her first year in India, paid its way from the beginning, and gradually came to earn a small profit, subject to the fact that its management was altogether gratuitous, and all its work, in all departments performed by the little band of Theosophists at the head-quarters; but all the while that sneering critics of the movement in the papers would be suggesting, from time to time, that the founders of the Society were doing a very good business with “initiation fees,” and living on the tribute of the

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faithful, Mme. Blavatsky was really at her desk from morning till night, slaving at Russian articles, which she wrote solely for the sake of the little income she was able to make in this way, and on which, in a far greater degree than on proper resources of the Society, the headquarters were supported, and the movement kept on foot.  

Similarly, in a published letter to Sinnett dated 19 August 1885, Blavatsky describes the finances of the Theosophical Society and the importance of her publishing to it:

> Who in the public knows, that after having worked for ten years, I have been forced to leave India – a beggar, literally a beggar depending on the bounty of the Theosophist – (my own journal, founded and created with my own money!!) when I never asked or received one pie for my phenomena, when thousands of my own money earned by my Russian articles have been given away, when for five years I have abandoned the price of Isis and the income of the Theosophist to support the Society. And now – I am generously allowed Rs. 200 monthly from that income to save me from starvation in Europe, and reproached for it by Olcott in nearly every letter.  

Apparently there was some discussion of selling the Theosophist, to which Blavatsky strenuously objected. It is also interesting to note that she gave all her earnings from the Theosophist and Isis Unveiled to the Theosophical Society to keeping it running.

In a letter from 1885, from Blavatsky to Sinnett, she takes issue with selling the Theosophist:

> “Sell” my Theosophist? Why not sell myself and Society at once, if we have become such a saleable article. I immediately telegraphed – “I absolutely refuse to sell Theosophist” to Adyar and spent forthwith the famous £3 16s, or nearly so. And now I mean to fight tooth and nail and I adjure you by Master’s name to help me with good articles from time to time for my poor journal – the child of my heart.  

In this passage we see Blavatsky talking about the Theosophist as “saleable” and we also see her talking about using the telegraph to communicate with

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658 Sinnett, *Incidents in the Life*, p. 235
Adyar. This shows the importance of the telegraph networks to her being able to conduct her work globally. Blavatsky is asking Sinnett for help with “good articles” for her struggling journal which she is trying to keep.

Demonstrating further the importance of *Theosophist* to the finances of the Theosophical Society, Blavatsky refers to the role of the periodical in funding the publishing of the *Secret Doctrine*. In a letter from 1885 she stated:

I have to save the *Theosophist* to write and finish the *Secret Doctrine*. What good shall I do the cause and any of you who believe in me, by convincing at the cost of superhuman efforts a dozen or two, and having the outsiders disbelieving in me as they ever have. The Coulombs and Missionaries have sworn to ruin the Society: they have failed to do so by ruining me – why should I save my reputation with the few – *help myself to ruin* the Society by depriving it of the S.D. and its members of what I can teach them.661

She clearly sees the *Secret Doctrine* as something that will help the society thrive into the future and she sees the revenue from the *Theosophist* as something that she needs to help the *Secret Doctrine* through the publication process. Furthermore, demonstrating the importance of its published texts to the society, Blavatsky sees the *Secret Doctrine* as critical to the legacy and continuation of the Theosophical Society.

### 3.4.2 *Isis Unveiled*

*Isis Unveiled* was the first of Blavatsky’s two key texts, the other being the *Secret Doctrine*. In it we see many references to India and the idea that Hindu orientalism was having an important influence on Blavatsky in the earliest days of her Theosophical publishing. Hanegraaff has effectively argued that the concept of karma in particular became of central importance to occultism only

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after Olcott and Blavatsky’s travels to India in 1878.\textsuperscript{662} However, \textit{Isis Unveiled} is largely seen as being more representative of Blavatsky’s Hermetic phase.

Ellwood maintains that while the original Theosophical Society was intended as an open forum for speakers on a wide range of philosophical and esoteric topics, Blavatsky saw it as a vehicle for imparting ancient wisdom from the beginning. She believed it was her calling to present ancient wisdom anew to the world.\textsuperscript{663} This would explain her need to write a book like \textit{Isis Unveiled}, which brought esoteric lore into the mainstream.

**Timeline for the Publications of \textit{Isis Unveiled}**

- The World Catalogue Library System lists 141 editions in total, with 58 listed from before 1919.
- In the same year it was published by the Theosophical Publishing House in London and the Theosophical University Press in Covina, California, near Los Angeles. Demonstrating the book’s popularity, \textit{Isis Unveiled} was published in New York again in 1878, 1882, 1884, 1886, 1889, 1891, 1892, and 1901.
- Bernard Quartich published it again in London in 1884 and 1901. Blavatsky had died by 1891.
- The Theosophical Publishing Company published it in 1906 at Point Loma California.

\textsuperscript{662} Hanegraaff, \textit{New Age Religion and Western Culture}, p. 455.
• In 1910, both Rider and Co. and the Theosophical Publishing Society published *Isis Unveiled* in London. That same year, the Theosophical Publishing Society published it in Benares, India.

• In 1919, the Aryan Theosophical Press published it again at Point Loma. Notably, by this time, the American Theosophical Society had broken away from the international society that was headquartered in Adyar, India.

• The London Theosophical Publishing House published *Isis Unveiled* again in 1923.

• The Theosophical Co. in Los Angeles published a centenary anniversary edition in 1931.

• In 1950 and 1960, the Theosophical University Press in Pasadena, California published it.

• In 1968 the Theosophical Co. in Los Angeles published it and in 1972 the Theosophical University Press published it again.

• In 1975 and 1982 it was published by the Theosophical Co.

• In 1976 and 1998 the Theosophical University Press published it.

• In 1994, Quest Books and the Theosophical Publishing House published it.

• In 2006, the Theosophical Publishing House in Chennai, India published it.

• Cambridge University press in the United Kingdom published it in 2012. The Classics US published it in 2013.664

The Bibliothèque Nationale catalogue général lists it as translated into French in Paris between 1913 and 1921 under the titled *Isis dévoilée: clef des mystères*.

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664 World Catalogue Library system (Last accessed 21 August 2015).
de la science et de la théologie anciennes et modernes.\textsuperscript{665} It has also been translated into Spanish, Dutch, German, Russian, French, and Italian.\textsuperscript{666}

In the publisher’s foreword to the 1910 edition, it is stated that ‘for many years the work has been difficult to obtain and has only been available in the form of a reprint from worn plates at a high figure’.\textsuperscript{667} The publishers paint this as being a source of difficulty in obtaining the text. They claim that ‘no attempt at revision or condensation has been made, for it was deemed that H.P.B.’s first work should be accessible to students in its original form. Obvious orthographical and grammatical errors have been corrected, and the Greek and Hebrew phrases have been revised, but for the rest the work remains as it was written’.\textsuperscript{668} Even though they set the book to new type, the original pagination was maintained ‘in order that all references to this important work in the now voluminous literature of Theosophy may be available for this as the original edition’.\textsuperscript{669} They obviously put a great deal of care into creating a useful text for members and followers of the work of Blavatsky.

Adding to the esoteric lore, Blavatsky claimed that her Tibetan Mahatmas remained in touch with her through telepathic communication and inspired the book in 1877.\textsuperscript{670} She claimed to have spent seven years with spiritual leaders she called Mahatmas or Masters in Tibet. Other testimony suggests that during the period she was supposedly in Tibet, she was seen in other areas.\textsuperscript{671} In true esoteric fashion there were questions about whether Blavatsky herself, being a medium, had written the book or whether she was under the control of spirits.

\textsuperscript{665} Bibliothéque Nationle catalogue general (Last accessed 21 August 2015).
\textsuperscript{666} World Catalogue Library system (Last accessed 9 February 2016).
\textsuperscript{668} Blavatsky, \textit{Isis Unveiled} 1910, Vol. 1, p. x.
\textsuperscript{669} Blavatsky, \textit{Isis Unveiled} 1910, Vol. 1, p. x.
\textsuperscript{670} Monroe, \textit{Laboratories of Faith}, p. 235.
\textsuperscript{671} Lubelsky, \textit{Celestial India}, p. 79.
when she wrote it. Olcott answered that question in the negative. Godwin argues that Blavatsky never claimed to have written every word of the two volumes herself. He maintains that it included contributions from other occultists - Sotheran, Rawson, Alexander Wilder, and especially Olcott - beside the innumerable quotations from approximately 100 books on comparative religion, occultism, and contemporary science. This too demonstrates Blavatsky’s global outlook.

In terms of Blavatsky’s desire for material wealth from the book, Olcott maintains that her greatest concern was the content of the book while her publisher was far more concerned with the finances. On 17 May 1877, her publisher wrote to her that:

\[ \text{The alterations have already cost $280.80, and at that rate, by the time the book appears it will be handicapped with such fearful expense that each copy of the first 1000 will cost a great deal more than we shall get for it, a very discouraging state of affairs to begin with. The cost of composition of the first volume alone (with stereotyping) amounts to $1,359.69 and this for one volume alone, mind you, without paper, press work or binding! Yours Truly, J.W. Bouton.} \]

Olcott claims that this did not deter her from making further changes. He also maintains that she continued to make endless corrections in the types and ‘even after the printing plates were cast, she had them cut to transpose the old matter and insert new things that occurred to her or that she had come across in the reading’. Clearly Blavatsky took great care with the content while not showing much respect for the financial considerations of the nineteenth-century publishing industry. Those were more the concerns of the publishers. It would

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672 Olcott, Old Diary Leaves 1895, Vol. 1, p. 236.
673 Godwin, The Theosophical Enlightenment, p. 305.
675 Olcott, Old Diary Leaves 1895, Vol. 1, p.217 see *fnt
have been more cost effective for her to edit it fully before preparing it for the press. This demonstrates the extent to which Blavatsky was developing material as she went rather than developing a cohesive doctrine. Furthermore, in keeping with Miller’s views on slow print, Blavatsky seemed to resent the authority of the publisher, which could help to explain why the Theosophical Society developed so many of its own presses. Olcott describes how he and Blavatsky were willing to pursue publishing the book themselves if the publisher refused to put any more capital into the venture. He maintains that they had prepared almost enough additional manuscripts to make a third volume, and this was ruthlessly destroyed before they left America for India. The reason for this, he stated, is that Blavatsky never dreamed she would want to utilize the material in India. Again, Blavatsky did not show much concern for the value of the work that she put into the third volume or financial considerations overall.

Blavatsky preferred to deal with a publisher she admired rather than make money on her publications. In a letter to Sinnett she complained about Redway advertising what she called an “infamous lie of Mme Coulomb”. She continues that, “I will have nothing whatever to do with Redway unless he withdraws that advertisement. I rather publish Isis Unveiled in America, and not get one pie for it, than have my works advertised, and those of such good devoted theosophists as the Countess, along with such an infamous libel.” In this we see her global publishing options in her threat to take the book to America and publish it. In another demonstration of her global reach she stated that, “I will try to put all of the theosophists in India against having their books sold at Redway”.

It is important that she thinks she can influence Theosophists in India against using a publisher in London. As already explained

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676 Olcott, Old Diary Leaves 1895, Vol. 1, p. 217
in the introduction, George Redway was an important publisher to the
Theosophical Society. Blavatsky clearly does not like interacting with a
publisher that is driven by commercial principles.

**Publications by Helena Blavatsky**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
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<th>Editions before 1914</th>
<th>Translations</th>
<th>First Published</th>
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<td><em>Isis Unveiled</em></td>
<td>192</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>Spanish (24), Dutch (17), German (30), Russian (14), French (8), Undetermined (6), Italian (4)</td>
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<td><em>The Secret Doctrine</em></td>
<td>294</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>German (44), Spanish (23), Russian (17), Dutch (16), Danish (8), Japanese (4), Italian (3), Portuguese (3), French (10)</td>
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<tr>
<td><em>The Key to Theosophy</em></td>
<td>180</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>Spanish (9), Dutch (7), Danish (3), Czech (2), Japanese (1), Russian, French</td>
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<tr>
<td><em>The Voice of the Silence</em></td>
<td>177</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>Spanish (23), German (21), Dutch (6), Russian (6), Slovenian (2), Telugu (2), Catalan (1), Danish (1), French (1), Indonesian (1), Serbian (1), Undetermined (3)</td>
<td>1889</td>
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<td><em>Practical Occultism and</em></td>
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<td>6</td>
<td>Spanish (9), German (2), Hebrew (2)</td>
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<td>Undetermined (3)</td>
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<td>La Voix du silence, fragments choisis du &quot;Livre des préceptes d'or&quot;, à l'usage journalier des Lanous (disciples).</td>
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<td>Translated from English</td>
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<td>L'Église Chrétienne et le christianisme, lettre ouverte à l'Archevêque de Cantorbéry</td>
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Publications by Henry Steel Olcott

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<td>12</td>
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<td>Inside the Occult: The True Story of Madame H.P. Blavatsky</td>
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<td>English</td>
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<td>The Golden Rule of Buddhism</td>
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<td>3</td>
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<td>Isis in America: the Classic Eyewitness Account of</td>
<td>2</td>
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The path to fame and longevity was not an easy one for the Theosophical Society. Ellwood maintains that as public response dwindled there was an unexpected and successful response to the publication of *Isis Unveiled* in 1877, demonstrating once again the importance of books to the reach of the society. While this period may not have yet been the heyday of the East-West Theosophical synthesis, there can be no question that Blavatsky was already looking toward India in *Isis Unveiled*. Indeed, Blavatsky published a whole chapter entitled ‘India the Cradle of the Race’ in *Isis Unveiled Vol. 1*, which was published a year before she moved the Theosophical Society to Adyar.  

In the first sentence of the preface of the first volume she stated ‘the work now submitted to public judgment is the fruit of a somewhat intimate acquaintance with Eastern adepts and study of their science’. In the first volume, she maintains that ‘no religion was more exclusive than that of the

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Brahmans. It is also clear that she was reading Max Müller. Referring to the fact that one must be born into the Hindu cast system rather than simply converting to it, Blavatsky quotes Müller: ‘a Brahman was born – nay, twice-born, and could not be made, not even the lowest caste, that of the Sudras, would open its ranks to a stranger." She then proceeds to explain how Hinduism is inconsistent with Western science: ‘No; our scientists do not – nay cannot understand correctly the old Hindu literature, any more than an atheist or materialist is able to appreciate at their just value the feelings of a seer, a mystic, whose whole life is given to contemplation’. In this quote we see Blavatsky’s anti-materialist leanings in that she believes a materialist is not able to understand a mystic who operates on esoteric levels. In this vein, she seems to see Western science as materialistic while she views Hindu literature as mystical or esoteric. Both the materialist and the Western scientist are operating on the physical plane, in her view, while the mystic and Hindu are operating on the esoteric plane. Again we see the idea of India as place that is spiritually superior. In addition to presenting her views on science, this quote demonstrates that Blavatsky had at least some interest in and knowledge of Hindu literature.

Even if Blavatsky was a fan of his work, this does not mean he returned the favour. In the preface of the *Collected Works of F. Max Müller: Theosophy or Psychological Religion* (1898), Müller states that he has added the word Theosophy to the title because it seemed to him that:

…this venerable name, so well known among early Christian thinkers, as expressing the highest conception of God within the reach of the human mind, has of late been so greatly

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misappropriated that it was high time to restore it to its proper function. It should be known that one may call oneself a theosophist, without being suspected of believing in spirit-rappings, table turning, or any other occult science or black arts.\(^{683}\)

In this we see what has now become a familiar theme: an elite thinker trying to separate themselves from the more populist and less ceremonial spiritualism. We see Theosophy being aligned with spiritualism, which was viewed as less academic or learned. In many ways this is an attempt to discredit Theosophy. However, it also means that Müller was well aware of Theosophy and not surprisingly tries to discredit it. In some ways, Blavatsky’s Theosophy would have been in competition with his texts on Eastern religions.

Blavatsky possessed a continuing interest in what she viewed as the materialist turn that Western science had taken. She also appears to view the West as not understanding Hinduism and its ancient texts:

They have a perfect right to soothe themselves with the great lullaby of their self-admiration, and the just consciousness of their great learning, but none at all to lead the world into their own error, by making it believe that they have solved the last problem of ancient thought in literature, whether Sanscrit or any other; that there lies not behind the external “twaddle” far more than was ever dreamed of by our modern exact philosophy; or that above and beyond the correct rendering of Sanscrit words and sentences there is no deeper thought, intelligible to some of the descendants to those who veiled it in the morning hour of earth’s day, if they are not to the profane reader.\(^{684}\)

Clearly she was interested in Sanscrit, if not knowledgeable of it by the time she wrote *Isis Unveiled*.

Further demonstrating her engagement with Hinduism before going to India, Blavatsky stated that:

The Hindu Code had never laid any claims to the divinely revealed. The distinction made by the Brahmans themselves between the Vedas and every other sacred book of however respectable an


antiquity is no proof of it. While every sect holds the Vedas as the
direct word of God – sruti (revelation) – the Code of Manu is
designed by them simply as the smriti, a collection of oral traditions.
Still these tradition, or “recollections,” are among the oldest as well
as the most revered in the land.\textsuperscript{685}

She clearly had some knowledge of the Hindu Code and the sacred texts of
Hinduism before going to India.

Similarly, Blavatsky makes the case for the influence of antiquity on the
Brahmans. Demonstrating a high level of respect for Indian civilization that
would have been characteristic of the imperialism of the period, she argues that
what we think of as antiquity was actually rooted in the arts and sciences of pre-
Vedic India:

\begin{quote}
If Egypt furnished Greece with her civilization, and the latter
bequeathed her to Rome, Egypt herself had, in those unknown
ages when Menes reigned, received her laws, her social institutions,
her arts and sciences, from pre-Vedic India, and that therefore, it is in
the old initiatrix of the priests – adepts of all the other countries – we
must seek for the key to the great mysteries of humanity.\textsuperscript{686}
\end{quote}

In this she stated that India was spiritually superior to Egypt demonstrating the
influence of Indian orientalism on her by the time of the publication of \textit{Isis
Unveiled}.

While nothing so extensive appears in the second volume of \textit{Isis
Unveiled}, references to Hinduism, India, Nirvana, the Hindu devil, the \textit{Bhagavad
Gita}, Vedas, and the demoralization of British India by Christian missionaries all
make an appearance.\textsuperscript{687} Blavatsky was obviously reading about India and
Hinduism, which at least partially explains why she would have chosen to move
the Theosophical Society headquarters there.

\textsuperscript{685} Blavatsky, \textit{Isis Unveiled} 1877, Vol. 1, p. 588.
\textsuperscript{686} Blavatsky, \textit{Isis Unveiled} 1877, Vol. 1, p. 589 quoting “Egypt’s Place” etc. Vol.
V, 34; Key and Louis Jacolliot in \textit{The Bible in India}.
\textsuperscript{687} Helena Blavatsky, \textit{Isis Unveiled: To the Mysteries of Ancient and Modern
It is noteworthy that a few years later, in 1883, A.P. Sinnett published *Esoteric Buddhism*, again showing the Western engagement with Eastern religion. The book deals in concepts including Buddha (chapter IX), Nirvana (chapter X), karma (chapter V), and Brahma (chapter XI). The number of editions printed for the books of people like Blavatsky, Müller, and Sinnett speak to the level of interest in the idea of India as a lost spiritual homeland over time.

The World Catalogue Library System lists 153 editions of Sinnett’s *Esoteric Buddhism*, of which 107 were published before 1914. It was translated into French, German, Spanish, Swedish, Italian, Russian and other undetermined languages.

**Timeline for the Publications of *Esoteric Buddhism***

- Trübner and Company first published it in London. This was a well-known occult publisher in the period.
- By 1884 the book was translated into German, published in Leipzig by Hinrichs.
- It was also in the United States by 1884, published by Houghton Mifflin and Co. that had offices in New York and Boston.
- By 1885, a fifth annotated and enlarged edition was published by Chapman in London.
- Another edition was published by Houghton Mifflin in the United States in 1887.
- In the same year a Swedish edition was published in Stockholm.

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• In 1888, Chapman and Hall published another edition in London.

• In 1889 Houghton Mifflin published another edition in the United States. In the same year the annotated and enlarged edition was published by in Minneapolis by Wizards Bookshelf.

• The book was translated into French for the first time in 1890 and published in Paris at the Librarie d’Art Indépendant.

• In 1890, 1893, 1895, and 1896 it was republished in Boston.\footnote{Gomes maintains that 'until the appearance of Blavatsky’s Secret Doctrine… in 1888, Esoteric Buddhism remained the main book placing the ideas that would become identified with Theosophy in a coherent form’. The book had initially appeared as partitions in The Theosophist as “Fragments of Occult Truth.” However, the seeds of the Theosophical Society’s engagement with India had already been sown in Isis Unveiled.}}\footnote{World Catalogue Library System (Last accessed 22 August 2015). Gomes, Theosophy in the Nineteenth Century, p. 426. Gomes, Theosophy in the Nineteenth Century, p. 426.}
### Publications by Alfred Percy Sinnett

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Editions</th>
<th>Editions before 1914</th>
<th>Translations</th>
<th>First Published</th>
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<tr>
<td><em>Esoteric Buddhism</em></td>
<td>153</td>
<td>107</td>
<td>English (95) French (22) German (12) Spanish (11) Undetermined (8) Swedish (3) Italian (1) Russian (1)</td>
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<td>74</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>English (67) German (3) Finnish (2) French (1) Undetermined (1)</td>
<td>1881</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>The Mahatma Letters to A.P. Sinnett from Mahatma M&amp;K.H.</em></td>
<td>69</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>English (67) French (1) Undetermined (1)</td>
<td>1923</td>
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<tr>
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<td>10</td>
<td>English (30) French (3) Undetermined (2)</td>
<td>1886</td>
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<td><em>The Constitution of the Earth</em></td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>English</td>
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<tr>
<td><em>Patent Rights: An Inquiry into their Nature</em></td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>English</td>
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<td>3</td>
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<td>1902</td>
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<td>3</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>English</td>
<td>1896</td>
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<td><em>The Money of World</em></td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>English</td>
<td>1895</td>
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<td><em>The Path of Initiation</em></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>The Growth of the Soul</strong></td>
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<td>2</td>
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<td>1905</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>The Phenomena of Spiritualism Considered in the Light of Theosophic Teaching, etc.</strong></td>
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<td>3</td>
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<td>1895</td>
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<td><strong>The Knowledge Needed for Progress</strong></td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>English</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>The Bearing of Occult Study on Ordinary Life</strong></td>
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<td>3</td>
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<td><strong>Expanded Theosophical Knowledge: An Recast of a Lecture, etc.</strong></td>
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<td>0</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>The Infinitude of Progress</strong></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>English</td>
<td>1913</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Karma: A Novel</strong></td>
<td>27</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>English (26)</td>
<td>1885</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Tennyson an Occultist: As His Writings Prove</strong></td>
<td>16</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>English (15)</td>
<td>1920</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>The Growth of the Soul: A Secret to Esoteric Buddhism</strong></td>
<td>26</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>English (21) Dutch (5)</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>The Rationale of Mesmerism</strong></td>
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<td>20</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
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*Isis Unveiled* clearly demonstrates Blavatsky’s interest in Eastern religions, including Hinduism. The global circulation of this text demonstrates that she was not alone in having such interests. It also shows that she was
drawing on the work of Müller and other material on India in the period. However, the book was far from a scholarly account of how Hinduism was practiced. Blavatsky cherry-picked elements of the Hindu doctrine and traditions that fit with her overall esoteric views, as she did with many other religions. She included material from a lot of other sources and traditions, and rationalized this by tracing it all back to the lost wisdom of the ancient world including Atlantis and India. As we have seen, it is typical for esotericists to invoke ancient wisdom to bring credibility to their particular approach to magic. In this vein, Isis Unveiled very much drew on the nineteenth-century constructed vision of India. Undoubtedly this gave Blavatsky’s work an exotic flare that would have been popular in a period when the British, in particular, were so enamored with India.

While Western esotericism had long been a mixture of classical and Hebraic religion, Renaissance magic, and Rosicrucianism, Theosophy in particular signals the point at which Hinduism and Buddhism seriously entered the mix. Egyptology had already done so after Napoleon’s expedition to Egypt. However, it was the growing imperial networks of the day that made it possible to bring Hinduism and Buddhism in the nineteenth-century esoteric synthesis. This trend toward embracing India would reach whole new levels in The Secret Doctrine as imperial networks continued growing between Britain and India.

3.4.3 The Secret Doctrine

In The Oriental Religions and American Thought (1981), Carl T. Jackson states that The Secret Doctrine was a fitting end to the discussion of Blavatsky’s years in India. In many ways it was her most important publication. As already established, there was significant Hindu influence in her previous work.

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Published in 1888, Jackson maintains that *The Secret Doctrine*, ‘reflected much greater indebtedness to Oriental thought than *Isis Unveiled*’. The following sections will dispute that claim.

*The Secret Doctrine* was published in two volumes in 1888, as a sequel to *Isis Unveiled* and suitably subtitled *The Synthesis of Science, Religion, and Philosophy*. This sealed Blavatsky’s reputation as one of the nineteenth century’s greatest occult teachers, although many editions would be published after her death. The World Catalogue Library System lists 294 editions, including 65 that were published before 1914. We know that it was translated into French, Spanish, Dutch, German, Russian, Danish, Japanese, Portuguese, and Italian. It was translated into French at least as early as 1907.

**Timeline for the Publication of *The Secret Doctrine***

- *The Secret Doctrine* was simultaneously published in New York and London in 1888 by the Theosophical Publishing Co. The World Catalogue Library system lists William Judge as the head of the America Theosophical Publishing Co.
- Again in 1893, the Theosophical Publishing Society published it in New York and London.
- In 1895 and 1897 the Theosophical Publishing Company published it again in London.
- In 1897, the Theosophical Publishing Society published it in Chicago by the Theosophical Book Concern, and in Benares and New York.
- In 1908, the Theosophical Publishing Society published it in London.

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• In 1909, the Aryan Theosophical Press published it in Point Loma, California.

• In 1913 it was published again in London and in 1917 it was published again in Point Loma.

• Editions of the book have continued to be published throughout the twentieth century, with editions published as recently as 2004, 2005, and 2008. It is telling that in 2008 it was published by Forgotten Books in London.\textsuperscript{694}

However, while it might be perceived as forgotten it is still being published more than a century after Blavatsky initially published it. The idea that it is a forgotten text speaks to the place that Blavatsky has been ascribed in history as a marginal historical figure, despite her important role in the populist globalization of religion.

In the preface to the 1888 first edition, Blavatsky states that The Secret Doctrine was originally intended to be an updated version of Isis Unveiled:

\ldots it was intended that the “Secret Doctrine” should be an amended and enlarged version of “Isis Unveiled.” It was, however, soon found that the explanations which could be added to those already put before the world in the last-named and other works dealing with esoteric science, were such as to require a different method of treatment: and consequently the present volumes do not contain, in all, twenty pages extracted by ‘Isis Unveiled’.\textsuperscript{695}

Blavatsky admits that there were defects in her literary style but she did not feel it necessary to ask the indulgence of her readers. She explained that she was a foreigner, and her knowledge of the language was acquired late in life.

However, ‘the English tongue is employed because it offers the most widely-diffused medium for conveying the truths which it had become her duty to place

\textsuperscript{694} World Catalogue Library System (Last accessed 22 August 2015).
before the world’. In this period Blavatsky clearly saw English as the most global of world languages for distributing her message on Theosophy as widely as possible.

Supporting the idea that her books were a populist engagement with religion, she stated that ‘what is contained in this work is to be found scattered throughout thousands of volumes embodying the scriptures of the great Asiatic and early European religions, hidden under glyph and symbol, and hitherto left unnoticed because of this veil’. The veil was that all ancient religions encoded a single message – a secret doctrine – that their ostensible teachings serve to obscure from the eyes of the uninitiated. Blavatsky claims that ‘this work is a partial statement of what she herself has been taught by more advanced students, supplemented, in a few details only, by the results of her own study and observation’. There can be no doubt that Blavatsky took the public engagement with orientalism and Hinduism to new levels with her publications and through the Theosophical Society, which clearly spread across the world and published her books in many corners of the globe.

As already pointed out, it has long been held that Blavatsky had a shift from a Hermetic period to an Eastern period, as represented by her two major texts. I have shown that the situation was far more complicated and less clear than this assertion. This section will further demonstrate that orientalism was as much an influence on the philosophies expressed in *Isis Unveiled* as it was on those of *The Secret Doctrine*. Hammer maintains that *The Secret Doctrine* played a significant role in introducing numerous Sanskrit terms into the lexicon of many educated Westerns. These included karma, maya, atman, bahman, bahman.

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nirvana, samsara, and others. Yet he provides no clear proof of how these words made it into the English lexicon. Neither of Blavatsky’s books represents a total transmission of Hindu religious practices from India to West. I will argue there was no major shift away from Hermetic influence in *The Secret Doctrine*.

In reality, if one examines the table of contents of *The Secret Doctrine* it includes no more information on India or Hindu religion than *Isis Unveiled* did a decade before, in advance of Blavatsky and Olcott going to India. In fact, it contains many references to Western occidental concepts. For example, the book refers to the Universal Mind, Nature’s Symbols, the Astral Light, the Moon, the Lunar Chain, Occult and Kabalistic Pneumatics, the Gnostic Idea, the Fall of the Angels, Egypt’s many religions, and the Jews. There are other instances where Blavatsky is trying to combine Eastern and Western concepts such as the Egyptian Lotus and the idea that Moses copied from Sargon. In this she seems to be making an effort to achieve the concordance of world religions.

Similarly, volume II of *The Secret Doctrine* includes references to the Hammer of Thor, Noah, the Garden of Eden, the Jewish God-name, man as the pale shadow of God, Atlantis, the seven souls of Egyptology, and the natural “Fall”. On the oriental side it includes references to the hairy men of China, the Antediluvian Buddhas, and the Tibetan Lilith. However, the book remains very influenced by Western religion in combination with Eastern concepts.

In the first pages of the introduction of *The Secret Doctrine* Blavatsky herself takes issues with Sinnett for entitling his book *Esoteric Buddhism*. Blavatsky states:

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...it has enabled our enemies to find an effective weapon against theosophy; because, as an eminent Pali scholar very pointedly expressed it, there was in the volume named “neither esotericism nor Buddhism.” The esoteric truths, presented in Mr. Sinnett’s work, had ceased to be esoteric from the moment they were made public; nor did it contain the religion of Buddha, but simply a few tenets from the hitherto hidden teaching which are now supplemented by many more, enlarged and explained in the present volumes.\textsuperscript{702}

This is interesting because Blavatsky herself is invested in bringing concordance to Eastern and Western religions. This seems to be a move to position herself as a superior source on Eastern wisdom to Sinnett. However, even she admits that \textit{The Secret Doctrine} is not a complete transmission of Eastern religion to the West. Referring to her own book she states that ‘though giving out many fundamental tenets \textit{from the SECRET DOCTRINE of the East}, raise but a small corner of the dark veil’.\textsuperscript{703} However, she effectively blames this lack of information on her inability to give out all the secrets of esotericism. ‘For no one, not even the greatest living adept, would be permitted to, or could – even if he would – give out promiscuously, to a mocking, unbelieving world, that which has been so effectively concealed from it for long æons and ages’.\textsuperscript{704} She is very clearly demonstrating one of the themes in this story that occultists were willing to let some of the information become public in texts, but not all of it. In fact, she claims she is not allowed to make all of it public. This, of course, was a common claim of occultists. The \textit{Ordre Martiniste} and Golden Dawn similarly claimed that members would learn the secrets as they worked through the degree system or got invited to the inner orders. Interestingly, this book was published in the same year that Blavatsky created the Esoteric Section of the Theosophical Society that will be discussed further in the section on Annie Besant.

\textsuperscript{703} Blavatsky, \textit{The Secret Doctrine} 1888, Vol. 1, p. xvii.  
The inclusion of Eastern religious philosophies in the esoteric traditions in 1880s occultism is significant enough that it cannot be ignored. It is a particular feature of Western esotericism as it emerged in the nineteenth century in the midst of globalization and imperialism. Today, many people assume that contemporary New Age religion is drawn exclusively from the philosophies of Hinduism and Buddhism. Unless they are specifically educated on religion, they often miss the occidental influence on occultism and New Age. They miss the blending of Eastern and Western religious philosophies that occurred in the final decades of the nineteenth century through commercialized religion. Occultism was largely based in ancient occidental ideas that did not combine with Eastern religious philosophies until the nineteenth century. Hanegraaff maintains that selected concepts from Hinduism and Buddhism were adopted by Blavatsky in the nineteenth century in so far as they could be assimilated. Otherwise they were ignored or given new meaning.\(^705\) However, we cannot ignore that the Theosophical Society was publishing about Eastern religions for the public in a new way during the height of British Imperialism in India.

Popular literature provided information in a manner that was easily absorbed through the newly educated middle class. This “Hinduism lite” probably would have been the most appealing version of Hindu religion in the age of the rise of religion outside of traditional churches. While popular literature is not the most accurate way to learn about Hinduism, Buddhism, or any religion, it is the easiest and most interesting way to do so. The product was not developed to be an accurate educational tool on Eastern religions. It was developed to sell and support the Theosophical Society.

\(^{705}\) Hanegraaff, *New Age Religion and Western Culture*, p. 455.
Ironically, despite her attempts to publish and sell books in her lifetime, and all of her travels, Blavatsky seems to have died a woman without resources. Besant paints Blavatsky’s last days as being spent in poverty, having put all her energies and resources into the Theosophical Society:

…She was very poor toward the end of her earthly life, having spent all on her mission, refusing to take time from her Theosophical work to write for the Russian papers which were ready to pay highly for her pen. But her slender purse was swiftly emptied when any human pain that money could relieve came her way.\(^{706}\)

Certainly Blavatsky echoed this point in an undated letter to Besant, in An Autobiography. According to Besant she wrote:

\begin{quote}
I have but 3os. of my own money of which I can dispose (for as you know I am a pauper, and proud of it), but I want you to take them and not say a word. This may buy thirty dinners for thirty poor little starving wretches, and I may feel happier for thirty minutes at the thought [all italics are Besant’s].\(^{707}\)
\end{quote}

While she was good at writing books that people wanted to read, she was not so good at managing the financial benefits of this notoriety. Blavatsky largely invested her money and efforts in supporting the Theosophical Society and writing her books. Of course, she notably always had the money to travel and explore the occult arts. In doing this, she established the doctrine of nineteenth-century Theosophy and set the stage for a new approach to Theosophy following her death. As Blavatsky’s successor Besant would work with Olcott to take the Theosophical Society to whole new levels on the global stage.

### 3.5 Annie Besant

This section will demonstrate that, unlike Blavatsky, Annie Besant was a very accomplished writer, publisher, political organizer, and public personality. Besant clearly knew how to make the communications networks of the late

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nineteenth century work to her advantage as they grew in the *fin de siècle* and into the early part of the twentieth century. Few occultists in our story have used the printing press as effectively, both before and after becoming an occultist. In fact, it was the printing press that fatefully brought Besant to both her career as an activist and to the Theosophical Society. No other occultist was as actively involved in nineteenth-century social movements as Besant. She very astutely made her choice of which causes to be involved with. The debates over whether the society would be chiefly influenced by “Eastern” or “Western” esotericism would play out mostly through the Theosophical Society. It was her choices after Blavatsky’s death that ensured an Eastern, and largely Hindu focus for the Theosophical Society. The India links with Theosophy were enabled by infrastructure of imperialism. However, it was occultists with their own agendas who made the decisions on the philosophies of occultism. This section will argue that Besant created a narrative of occultism that suited her own needs for advancement within the society and she effectively used the printing press to do this.

In 1874, Besant learned of the existence of the National Secular Society through the *National Reformer* periodical. She went to a Hall of Science to collect her certificate of membership and there she met Charles Bradlaugh.\(^{708}\) Bradlaugh was a famous atheist and founder of the National Secular Society. A few days after their first meeting, he offered her a position on their paper. Her first article appeared on 30 August 1874.\(^{709}\) Besant gave her first lecture to the National Secular Society in London on 25 August 1874, three weeks after her first meeting with Bradlaugh. She felt that her first lecture should be on behalf of

her own sex and so selected the title ‘The Political Status of Women’.\textsuperscript{710} Her second lecture was entitled ‘The True Basis of Morality’ and later printed in a pamphlet, which attained worldwide circulation.\textsuperscript{711} That same year she campaigned for Bradlaugh and the Radical party in Northampton District. This was a seat that Bradlaugh would eventually win having been supported by John Stuart Mill early in his political career.\textsuperscript{712}

Besant rose within atheist and radical circles and soon she became a regular speaker, alongside Bradlaugh, at National Secular Society events all over Britain. She set out on her first speaking tour of Britain on 12 February 1875.\textsuperscript{713} Besant describes this as the year that saw her launched on the world as a public advocate for Freethought. It was also the year of the founding of the Theosophical Society.\textsuperscript{714} That same year Besant was also chosen to be vice president of the Freethought Society and she held that position until 1890. Together with Bradlaugh, she preached atheism, the advancement of the working class, and a rational neo-Malthusian economy.\textsuperscript{715}

On 20 January 1877, Besant and Bradlaugh established a publishing house called Freethought Publishing Company.\textsuperscript{716} Bradlaugh was first elected to parliament in 1880, as the Liberal member for Northampton. Their relationship continued and Besant continued to write for the \textit{National Reformer} until 1885 when she defected from the secular liberal camp to the Fabian Society, which would have been a political rival for Bradlaugh. However, she

\textsuperscript{710} Besant, \textit{An Autobiography}, p.182.
\textsuperscript{711} Besant, \textit{An Autobiography}, p.183.
\textsuperscript{713} Lubelsky, \textit{Celestial India}, p. 197.
\textsuperscript{714} Besant, \textit{An Autobiography}, p.189.
\textsuperscript{715} Lubelsky, \textit{Celestial India}, p. 197. Neo-Malthusian usually refers to population control to ensure enough resources for all. Certainly Besant was known for being in favour of access to birth control.
\textsuperscript{716} Lubelsky, \textit{Celestial India}, p. 198.
remained on good terms with Bradlaugh. They moved their publishing offices to 63 Fleet Street and she worked there until December 1890. In 1883 she launched *Our Corner*, which was priced at 6 pence and aimed at a fairly popular readership.\(^{717}\) Besant was rapidly elected to the executive of the Fabian committee in 1886. She also had considerable political organization skills learned from her time with Bradlaugh and suggested that the Fabians establish a league of its own council and officers, with separate publications financed by independently raised funds.\(^{718}\) In 1886, she produced a socialist pamphlet for the Fabians called *Modern Socialism*, which originally appeared in *Our Corner*, and was then published by the Freethought Publishing House.\(^ {719}\) Her friend George Bernard Shaw noted that: ‘Now at this time Annie Besant was the greatest orator in England, perhaps the greatest in all of Europe…’\(^ {720}\) These were the connections that Besant made during the last years before her turn toward Theosophy. They would serve her well as she moved toward international fame as President of both the Theosophical Society and Indian National Congress.

In this time period the *Gazette’s* editor, W.T. Stead, was associated with Madame Olga Novikoff, who was a friend of former Prime Minister Gladstone. Novikoff introduced Stead to Blavatsky and asked him to review *The Secret Doctrine* in his magazine. Stead passed the task to Besant.\(^ {721}\) After publishing favourable reviews of *The Secret Doctrine* in the *Pall Mall Gazette* and the *National Reformer*, Besant announced that she was joining the Theosophical

\(^{718}\) Patricia Pugh, *Educate, Agitate, Organize: 100 Years of Fabian Socialism* (London, 1884), p. 11.
\(^{719}\) Lubelsky, *Celestial India*, p. 207.
\(^{721}\) Lubelsky, *Celestial India*, p. 115.
Society in 1889. She stated that ‘the wisdom of those “masters,” in whose name Madame Blavatsky speaks...has given only into the hands of the selfless the control of those natural forces which, misused, could wreck society’.  

When Besant first inquired with Blavatsky about Theosophy, Blavatsky’s response was to tell Besant about the report of the Society for Psychical Research (SPR) and advise her to ‘go and read it, and if, after reading it, you come back -- well’. Many in the scientific community of the day challenged Blavatsky’s authenticity as a spiritual leader and sage. In December of 1885, a committee appointed by the SPR concluded that Blavatsky was to be regarded as ‘neither as a mouthpiece of hidden seers, nor as a mere vulgar adventuress; we think that she has achieved the title of permanent remembrance as one of the most accomplished, ingenious, and interesting imposters in history’. To reach this conclusion the SPR had spent hundreds of hours gathering testimony from Theosophists and cross-examining the most prominent members of the Theosophical Society in England. They had even sent an investigator, Richard Hodgson, to the Theosophical Society’s global headquarters in India.

Besant maintains that after reading the report multiple times she ‘quickly saw how slender the foundation on which the imposing structure was built’. The next day saw Besant at the Theosophical Publishing Company office at 7 Duke Street, Adelphi, where Countess Wachtmeister – one of the latest of Blavatsky’s friends – was at work. Besant that day signed an application to be admitted as a fellow of the Theosophical Society. Soon after that, Besant published a pamphlet entitled Why I became a Theosophist. Her conversion astounded

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724 Dixon, Divine Feminine, p. 17.
725 Dixon, Divine Feminine, p. 17.
many of her atheist and secularist associates. However, she was a great gain for the Theosophical Society. In *An Autobiography*, Besant describes this as the year she came “Home”.727

Notably this was her second autobiography. Besant had published *Autobiographical Sketches* during her first incarnation as a secularist social reformer. She claimed it was written at least partially to defend attacks against her as an atheist: ‘I have resolved to pen a few brief autobiographical sketches, which may avail to satisfy friendly questioners, and to serve, in some measure, as defence against unfair attack’.728 It was published by the Freethought Publishing Company, which she shared with Bradlaugh. *Autobiographical Sketches* was serialized in her monthly journal *Our Corner* from January 1884 to June 1885.729 Miller argues that the two texts indicate how Besant’s sense of self changed amid her conversion and how her representation of print subjectivity transformed accordingly:

*An Autobiography*’s opening and closing passages position Besant’s text as a means of traversing space and time, of reaching out in a semi-mystical way to those of us on the other edge of the page. In contrast, the first installment of Sketches present Besant’s life story as an assemblage of discrete evidence, documentation, and facts of evaluation.730

Certainly, there is a difference in tone between the two autobiographies. In the later autobiography Besant has adopted the tone of an occult author that is typical of the genre such as Olcott’s *Old Diary Leaves* and Sinnett’s *Occult World*. Occultists often painted themselves as being called spiritually and as being brought to the study of Theosophy (in particular) by a series of coincidences.

Demonstrating how important the printing press was to the nineteenth-century occult, *An Autobiography* was largely a history of Besant’s engagement with publishing. Miller argues that in her autobiographies ‘print emerges as a radically immanent medium: not the dead letter but the living word’.\(^{731}\) Besant uses quotes from her own writings in an effort to demonstrate that she is trying not to deflate previous positions. Yet her work *My Path to Atheism*, from 1877, is absolutely anti-Christian, if not anti-religious. Without a doubt, Besant’s attitude toward religious thinking changes significantly.

### 3.5.1 The Theosophical Years

In *An Autobiography*, Besant describes how she started to move away from materialism and toward Theosophy:

> Ever more and more had been growing on me that feeling that something more than I had was needed for the cure of social ills. The Socialist position sufficed on the economic side, but where to gain the inspiration, the motive, which should lead to the realization of the Brotherhood of Man? Our efforts to really organize bands of unselfish workers had failed. Much indeed had been done, but there was not a real movement of self-sacrificing devotion, in which men worked for Love’s sake only, and asked but to give, not to take. Where was the material for the nobler Social Order, where the hewn stones for the building of the Temple of Man? A great despair would oppress me as I sought for such a movement and found it not. Not only so: but since 1886, there had been slowly growing up a conviction that my philosophy was not sufficient; that life and mind were other than, more than, I had dreamed.\(^{732}\)

Notably Besant’s tone has changed in this second autobiography to become much more concerned with the immaterial and spiritual. It is also ironic that she would paint the Theosophical Society as being more anti-materialistic than any of the other left-wing political associations she had been involved with. In many ways, it was with this very “materialist” society, driven by often power-hungry

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\(^{731}\) Miller, *Slow Print*, p. 233.  
actors that Besant chose to pursue what she called her new anti-materialist philosophies. She was the most politically astute of them all and history has been kind to her in that regard. She is long remembered for her role as president of the Theosophical Society and the Indian National Congress.

Besant states that she became convinced that there was ‘some hidden thing, some hidden power, and resolved to seek until I found’.733 She maintains that by the early spring of 1889 she had grown determined to find ‘all hazards’ she sought. Besant describes how she heard a Voice bidding her to ‘take courage for the light was near’. Trying to demonstrate the alignment of universal occult laws in her favour, Besant says that within a fortnight, Mr. Stead asked her to review The Secret Doctrine.734 These quotes show Besant was playing to her occult constituency with her second autobiography by demonstrating her new belief in the hidden powers of the universe that brought her to The Secret Doctrine.

George Bernard Shaw provides another reason for her turn toward Theosophy in his autobiographical writings. Shaw discusses how he was asked by the literary editor of the Pall Mall Gazette to review the Secret Doctrine and this led to the task being passed to Besant:

Just then Mrs. Besant told me that she was in serious want of money, as her writing for the National Reformer and her lecturing for the National Secular Society had ceased with her conversion to Socialism. Could I get her some reviewing to do for the Pall Mall Gazette? I immediately thought of the Secret Doctrine, and of what Archer had done for me. I gave her the book to review. Not long after I called at the office of the Star, and saw among the proofs that littered the editor’s table an article head “How I Became a Theosophist”. I turned to the signature. It was Annie Besant. I was utterly confounded.735

733 Besant, An Autobiography, p. 340
735 Weintraub, Shaw: An Autobiography 1856-1898, p. 142
While Miller paints many aspects of the Theosophical press as a radical reaction against the commercialization of the nineteenth-century press, the numbers of editions and translations of Besant’s books speak for themselves in terms of her engagement with widespread printing activity.

**Publications by Annie Besant**

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<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Editions</th>
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<tr>
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<td><em>A Spiritual Life</em></td>
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<td>42</td>
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<td>French (3) Polish (2) Undetermined (2)</td>
<td>1892</td>
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In a meeting chaired by Besant, a new meeting room of the British Section was inaugurated in 1890. A report was provided in *Lucifer* on 3 July that the new headquarters at 19 Avenue Road, London would soon be ready. In this meeting Blavatsky nominated herself president of the Theosophical Society in Europe, including Britain. According to the report in *Lucifer*, the continental lodges had made an appeal to be put under Blavatsky’s authority. Each lodge was to have a corresponding secretary in London and a permanent proxy for the lodge on the council for the British section. The secretaries of the British Council stated that:

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736 ‘Opening of the Head Quarters’, *Lucifer* 6 (July 1890), 431-432.
737 ‘British Section, Council Meeting’, *Lucifer* 6 (July 1890), 429.
...and now that many European branches of the society have been formed, by persons having no actual acquaintance with the Head Quarters of the Society at Adyar, Madras, or Colonel Olcott, the President of the whole Society, it may be more agreeable for the officers of such branches to correspond with a European rather than an Indian central office.\(^{738}\)

In this we see the idea that European chapters were not comfortable with the Indian influence that was present in the society.

Demonstrating the global reach of the society, Blavatsky claimed that in making this move she had approval from the following lodges and presidents to shift the leadership from continental Europe to the British Section: A.P. Sinnett of the London Lodge; M.A. Arnould of the Hermès Lodge in Paris; Dr. G. Zander of the Swedish Theosophical Society, Stockholm; M.E. Coulomb, Société Altruiste, Nantes; M. Otho Alexander of the Corfu Theosophical Society; Count José Xifré of the Spanish Theosophical Society, Madrid; Gustav Zorn of the Odessa Group; and all the Presidents of the Lodges of the British Section.\(^{739}\)

A letter from Olcott, as the international president, appeared in the September edition of \textit{Lucifer}.\(^{740}\) It stated that 19 Avenue Road was turned into the headquarters of the European Section. This office became responsible for the issue of all charters and diplomas for the European Section, the transaction of all business of the section, and the transmission of all official documents to the headquarters in Adyar.\(^{741}\) This was also Blavatsky’s residence.

By 1890 Besant had moved into 19 Avenue Road with Blavatsky. She moved Blavatsky onto the ground floor and set aside conference rooms in the house for meetings of the Blavatsky Lodge (established over Olcott’s objections

\(^{738}\) ‘British Section, Council Meeting’, p. 429.
\(^{739}\) ‘British Section, Council Meeting’, p. 431.
\(^{740}\) ‘To the Theosophists of Europe’, \textit{Lucifer} 7 (September, 1890), 77.
\(^{741}\) ‘To the Theosophists of Europe’. \textit{Lucifer} 7 (September, 1890), 78.
soon after Blavatsky had arrived back in London). The new residence became the meeting place of certain privileged associates such as the editor of *The Secret Doctrine*, Bertram Knightley, and his brother Archibald, the Countess Wachtmeister, and George Robert Stow Mead, who was becoming one of the leading figures in the Theosophical Society in England.\(^\text{742}\) This group represented the core of the elite circle of Theosophists in London – namely the infamous Esoteric Section (ES) – founded by Blavatsky shortly after she settled in London. Membership of this elite group was viewed by the main membership as a privilege because it involved direct instruction from Blavatsky.\(^\text{743}\) New members who joined the ES had to sign an application form that included a commitment to complete confidentiality.\(^\text{744}\) The July 1889 edition of the *Theosophist* details the existence of the ES. It states that:

> There have been recently some noteworthy defections from the Theosophic body in England; some previously prominent members have developed a personality feeling not in harmony with theosophic principles, and have abandoned or been read out of the fold—they were not at all unexpected, and the explanation for them is particularly interesting. A few months since, a class was formed, under the instruction of Mme. H.P. Blavatsky for the prosecution of study in occultism known as the ‘Esoteric section,’ and a considerable number of the most earnest and devoted Theosophists of Europe and America are included in it. When that class was formed the warning was given to all who entered it that an inevitable effect of occult studies, and an early one, would be the animating and bringing to the surface the utmost irresistible force of all the most powerful impulses, desires, purposes, and traits of character in the student.\(^\text{745}\)

Presumably the high profile resignation refers to William Butler Yeats who defected to the more esoteric Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn.\(^\text{746}\) It is also clear that a new class of learned magicians was emerging and that it is an elite

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\(^\text{742}\) Lubelsky, *Celestial India*, p. 216.
\(^\text{743}\) Lubelsky, *Celestial India*, p. 216.
\(^\text{744}\) Lubelsky, *Celestial India*, p. 216.
\(^\text{745}\) A. Knightley, ‘Dr. Knightley Speaks’, *The Theosophists* 10 (July 1889), 596.
within the Theosophical Society. Furthermore, there was concern about dealing in black magic. Undoubtedly, some Theosophists would have seen all high magic as black magic or magic that tries to create unnatural connections in nature. However, the Theosophical Society was prepared to engage in high or ceremonial magic to prevent any further high profile defections. It was responding to a demand for a more elite ceremonial magic within its ranks, which will be further discussed in the chapter on the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn. This would have been a good reason for Blavatsky to prefer the dominance of more naturalistic philosophies rather than Hindu philosophies. In the July 1889 edition of The Theosophist Knightley states:

The most prejudiced materialist, if he is not grossly ignorant, cannot deny that the possibility of such abnormal powers has been amply proved by innumerable isolated instances. It is, therefore, not difficult to conceive their spread among the generality of the race, suitable for such development. If the Theosophical Society succeeds in its mission and does not fall away from it, as similar efforts have fallen away in past centuries, there will be a development of such powers of knowledge during the next century, as will in great measure destroy the material considerations of the present day and direct science toward the study of the occult rather than the phenomenal and the physical.  

Demonstrating exactly how shrewd Besant was, she would use her time as part of the Esoteric Section and the connections she made there to eventually gain the international presidency of the Theosophical Society. Drawing on her background as a social reformer, Besant was able to combine her understanding of internal politics with the esoteric in a way that had eluded other occultists.

The end was near for Blavatsky and upon her deathbed she made a move that virtually assured Besant’s ascendancy to the presidency. Blavatsky died from complications from influenza on 8 May 1891, a few days before

747 Knightley, 'Dr.Knightley Speaks', p. 601
Besant returned from the American conference and speaking engagements in Washington D.C. One of her last instructions was to appoint Besant as general secretary of the inner circle of the Esoteric Section.\textsuperscript{748} The Theosophical wars of succession were about to begin. One of Besant’s main competitors for power would be William Judge, the President of the American section of the Theosophical Society. The American section had become the largest section of the society. In 1896 there were 108 Theosophical lodges across the United States. At the American conference -- at which Besant represented Blavatsky -- Judge and Knightley read two letters from the founder, which called him her dear Brother. In letter three, she encouraged Judge to increase rather than relax his efforts.\textsuperscript{749}

During the last two years of Blavatsky’s life, she seems to have chosen Besant over Olcott as her successor. However, Blavatsky was shrewd enough not to rely on Besant alone. She also renewed her ties with Judge. Lubelsky argues that both Besant and Judge were eager to expand the esoteric (Hermetic) aspect of the Theosophical doctrine, while Olcott was trying to cast the society in a more rationalist, respectable, and established light, with strong tendencies towards Buddhism.\textsuperscript{750} This helps to explain why the synthesis of Eastern doctrines into nineteenth century was superficial at best. Blavatsky tended toward the continued influence of the Western esoteric tradition rather than toward more Eastern beliefs and practices. It is likely this was driven at least in part by the 1888 appearance of the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn and internal pressure for a more ceremonial form of magic. Blavatsky’s desire to

\textsuperscript{748} Lubelsky, \textit{Celestial India}, p. 222.
\textsuperscript{750} Lubelsky, \textit{Celestial India}, p. 220.
prevent Olcott’s takeover of the society was expressed in *Lucifer* between 1889 and 1891. She noted a distinct preference for not wanting to keep the Theosophical Society headquartered in Adyar. As we shall see, she chose successors that she thought would carry out those wishes. However, the move would backfire.

### 3.5.2 The Battle For Leadership and Doctrine

The dispute over who would be Blavatsky’s successor culminated in two high profile disputes: the split of the American section from international headquarters in Adyar and eventually the demise of the German section. There were many agendas and many who were vying for power within the ranks of the Theosophical Society, in India, America, and Britain. Lubelsky holds that ‘from the moment Besant decided to cooperate with Olcott her doctrine grew increasingly pro-India, clashing with the mindset of American and German sections’.751 Hornung argues that Steiner and the German section never really accepted the influence of Indian doctrines on the philosophies of Theosophy:

> Since the turn of the century, Steiner had given ongoing lectures, in particular on mystical experiences, to the theosophical circle in Berlin, and later in other places as well, and from October 1902 on, he had served as the secretary of the German Section of the Adyar society. In his book *Theosophie* (1904), he fully adopted its concepts regarding reincarnation and karma, but the “eastern way” of the Anglo-Indian movement was not practicable for him, especially after the “discovery” and propagation of Krihnamurti.752

The World’s Parliament of Religions met in Chicago in 1893. This was an important event that was part of a series of exhibitions that contributed to the globalization of the period. In the same year, the World Columbian Exhibition (Chicago World’s Fair) also opened its exhibits. In a display of imperialism the

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751 Lubelsky, *Celestial India*, p. 224.
event was designed to celebrate the 400th anniversary of the arrival of Christopher Columbus in America. Forty-six countries provided exhibitions. The World’s Parliament of Religions was part of a series of smaller parliaments and congresses that were developed in conjunction with the World Columbian Exhibition. Speaking to the importance of religion in the period, it was by far the largest of the congresses organized. Today it is widely recognized as the first gathering of representatives from Eastern and Western religious traditions. It is also seen as the birth of global interreligious dialogue. In terms of Theosophical Society participation in the parliament, Judge attended as Olcott’s representative and Besant attended as the spokesperson for the organization. Judge gave a lecture about the principles of Theosophy. He maintained that it did not claim to be a religion but proposed a new method of looking at the world religions. In their reports to The Theosophist and Lucifer the representatives of the society to the conference described it as a huge success. The October 1893 edition of Lucifer describes the new openness to Eastern religion that was evidence at the Parliament. It states that:

> What caused the most surprise was the lofty spirituality that shone forth in the Eastern conceptions of religion; while these conceptions were strong from the Eastern standpoint, subtle and profound, they were illuminated so brilliantly with the light of spirit that the Western minds were a little dazzled by the unaccustomed radiance.

Furthermore, it went on that ‘if the Parliament did no other work than that of opening the public mind to the knowledge of the existence of spiritual treasures of the East, it rendered a service to human progress for which profound thanks

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755 ‘Theosophy at the Parliament of Religions’, Lucifer 7 (October 1893), 96.
are due.\textsuperscript{756} In response to her presence at the World’s Parliament of Religions in 1893 and the new societal openness to Eastern philosophies, Besant was soon to be on an upward trajectory.

After the World’s Parliament of Religions Besant distanced herself from Judge and travelled to India for the first time with Olcott. The American Section was the biggest in the world and as influential as the Indian movement. India was the perceived homeland of the Aryan race but America was the location where the Aryan race was evolving. It must have been a difficult decision for her, in terms of deciding whether to support Judge or Olcott. However, the best she could have hoped for in the United States was to be a second in command to Judge. Olcott was 19 years older than Judge and likely to be in need of a successor sooner. The decision to support Olcott was arguably a political move based on her best chances for advancement within the society in the future.\textsuperscript{757} Ironically Olcott outlived Judge.

Upon her arrival in India, Besant spent several months addressing mixed audience of Indians and Europeans. When she reached Adyar the first annual conference of the Theosophical Society was held there on 21 December 1893. There Besant addressed representatives of many lodges, which by that time numbered 352.\textsuperscript{758} From there she and Olcott travelled to Bengal, Benaras, Agra, Delhi, Punjab, Lahore, and Lucknow. According to Olcott, she addressed more than 100,000 people in 121 lectures.\textsuperscript{759} After Besant’s trip to India the stage was set for the breaking apart of the international Theosophical Society.

The trip seems to have cemented certain alliances that had previously been

\textsuperscript{756} ‘Theosophy at the Parliament of Religions’, p. 96.
\textsuperscript{757} Lubelsky, _Celestial India_, p. 235.
\textsuperscript{758} Lubelsky, _Celestial India_, p. 236.
\textsuperscript{759} Henry Steele Olcott, _Old Diary Leaves: The Only Authentic History of the Theosophical Society_, Volume 5 (Adyar, 1932), pp. 52-162. Banaras is also known as Benares and today it is more commonly called Varanasi.
forming. The Theosophical Society’s presence in India became key to the battle between East and West as its leaders began to act in a manner that was distinctly not spiritual. Throughout 1893 Olcott tried to collect proof that Judge had deceived the members of the society by forging letters that were supposedly written by Blavatsky’s Mahatmas. Toward the end of the tour of India Besant presented Olcott with an official demand to submit the issue of the forgeries to an internal commission of inquiry. On the 27 April Olcott announced the formation of a commission of inquiry. The commission interviewed both Besant and Judge. The decision was published on the 10th of July. They maintained that although Judge might have committed the acts of which he was accused, the commission was not empowered to examine it. The Judicial Committee resolved:

That although it has been ascertained that the member bringing the charges and Mr. Judge are both ready to go on with the enquiry, the Committee considers, nevertheless, that the charges are not such as relate to the conduct of the Vice President in his official capacity, and therefore are not subject to its jurisdiction. On the question of whether the charges did or did not involve the declaration of the existence and power of the Mahâtmâs, and it would be a violation of the spirit of neutrality and the unsectarian nature and Constitution of the Society.

Judge now realized that Olcott was not his ally. Judge and Besant had been jointly in charge of the Esoteric Section. Now Judge was trying to appoint himself Blavatsky’s sole successor. In a letter dated 4 November 1894 he argued that ‘in full all the functions and powers given to me by H.P.B., after her passing that came to me by orderly succession after her passing from this life’. He further maintained that ‘Hence under the authority given me by the Master and H.B.P., and under Master’s direction, I declare Mrs. Annie Besant’s

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headship in the E.S.T. at an end’. At the time, Besant was on tour in Australia and New Zealand where she founded the Australian section. It would grow in the coming years to be one of the biggest sections of the Theosophical Society. Besant countered with a letter of her own on 19 December which she circulated among the members of the ES in England and the United States, stating that Judge’s accusations were delusional, and that Blavatsky’s legacy was inherently tied to India, the birthplace of the Masters. She rejected her dismissal by Judge and stated ‘we have come to a parting of the ways. I recognize no authority in Mr. Judge. Not from his hands did I receive my work, not into his hands may I surrender it’. 

Judge responded in an article that appeared on the front page in the April 1895 issue of The Path, the Theosophical Society monthly in America. He argued that Besant’s interpretation of the “East” was erroneous. Under the heading ‘The East Not India’:

Let us once for all give up the notion that the East is India. India is but a small part of it. There are China, Japan, Persia, Arabia, Turkey, Russia in Asia, Tibet, Mongolia, Ceylon, and other parts. India has been regarded carelessly as “the East” among Theosophists, because it is under English rule and hence more heard of than other parts. Were Tibet open and under English and French rule, we would speak of the East as much as, if not more than, we have done of India. And when we examine into what, if anything, India has done for the great East of which she is a part, we find that for hundreds of years she has done nothing whatever, and apparently has no intention of doing anything. Her dominant religion – Brahmanism – is crystalized and allows for no propaganda. Other nations may die in their sins, unless, perchance, they are fortunate enough to be born among the Brahmins for good conduct.

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762 Olcott, Old Diary Leaves 1932, Vol. 5, p. 258
763 Lubelsky, Celestial India, p. 239.
Judge was smartly tying Besant’s desire to have the Theosophical Society managed from India to British imperialism. In this we see none of the veneration of India that is ordinarily present either in the texts of Blavatsky, Besant, or Müller. Judge even makes an allusion to the strong communications infrastructure between Britain and India, and hearing more about it because it is under British rule. As already established (in the introduction) this was a period of a strong and growing British presence in India. Shortly after this newsletter came out, the last week of April 1895, at the annual conference of the American Section in Boston, Judge succeeded in passing a formal decision to sever the connections with Adyar. Demonstrating how divisive the issue was for the society, some of the American members, who were loyal to Olcott, started a new section in the United States, which remained subordinate to Adyar. The American Theosophical Society sprang from Judge’s American Section. After his death Katherine Tingley succeeded Judge as head of the breakaway section.\(^{766}\) In order to assert herself and take action Tingley soon announced that she and other members of the American section would embark on a worldwide crusade including England, continental Europe, Egypt, India, Australia, New Zealand, and Samoa.\(^{767}\) This again speaks to the global nature of the society as its leaders waged their public relations wars with international speaking tours. Lubelsky argues that Tingley also preferred the Egyptian Hermetic tradition to Hindu esoterica. She maintained that America, and not Asia, was the spiritual centre of the world.\(^{768}\) However, it is interesting that she choose to visit India on her global tour. Of course with the international

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\(^{766}\) Tim Rudbøg, ‘Point Loma, Theosophy, and Katherine Tingley,’ *The Handbook of the Theosophical Current*, Olav Hammer and Mikael Rothstein (eds.) (Leiden, 2013), 54.

\(^{767}\) Rudbøg, ‘Point Loma’, 36

\(^{768}\) Lubelsky, *Celestial India*, p. 224.
headquarters being maintained in Adyar, she could hardly avoid it. On the 13
February 1900, she relocated the American society’s international headquarters
to Point Loma, California. Tim Rudbøg maintains that this was part of her
‘ambitious plans for constructing a Theosophical community’. Rudbøg
succeeded. There she started the Raja Yoga School and the Theosophical
University, which was accredited by the US Department of Labour as an
institution of higher learning in 1928.

In 1896, three years after Besant’s first visit to India she decided to open
a new Theosophical Society centre in Benares (now Varanasi), northern India.
The centre would grow and subsequently become Besant’s power-base in
India. This was far from the headquarters in the Adyar, in southern India.
Despite her decision to collaborate with Olcott against Judge, she continued to
have ideological differences with Olcott in that he tended toward Buddhism
while she was increasingly adopting Hinduism. Certainly Besant was viewed
well in some quarters in India. The Theosophical Society was seen as having
played a positive role in placing India within high esteem within the global
environment and Besant was seen as having played a positive role in the
history of India. In the words of B. Pattabhi Sitaramayya in *The History of the*
Indian National Congress (1935) as published by the Working Committee of the
Congress:

The Theosophical movement, while it extended its studies and
sympathies to the wide world, laid special emphasis on a
rediscovery, as well as a rehabilitation of all that was great and
glorious in the Oriental culture. It was this passion that led Mrs.
Besant to start a college in Benares, the holy city of India. The
Theosophical activities, while developing a spirit of international
brotherhood, helped to check that sense of rationalist superiority of
the West and planted anew a cultural centre in India which attracted

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769 Rudbøg, ‘Point Loma’, 59.
the servants and the scholars of the West once again to this ancient land.\textsuperscript{772}

It would seem that Besant’s campaigning in India had worked reasonably well. Clearly she had her own agenda for her rise within the society and for the society itself.

During the final decade of the nineteenth century Besant published a number of occult publications. In 1895 Besant edited \textit{First Steps in Occultism} for the Theosophical Publishing Society in London. It was a small book in size and essentially reprinted three articles that had been published in \textit{Lucifer}. They were ‘Practical Occultism’ by H.P.B. (as Blavatsky was often called in Theosophical circles), ‘Occultism v. the Occult Arts’, by H.P.B., and ‘Comments on “Light on the Path” by M.C. In the preface Besant states ‘these articles are so valuable for all who would fain prepare themselves for Chelâship, that I am glad to reprint them from Lucifer and to place them within easy reach of all students’.\textsuperscript{773} In 1899 and again in 1903, Besant provided a forward to \textit{The Doctrine of the Heart: Extracts from Hindu Letters}. No author’s name is provided. Besant states that ‘the letters are not given as being of any “authority”, but merely as containing thoughts that some of us have found helpful, and that we wish to share with others. They are intended only for those who are resolutely seeking to live the Higher Life…\textsuperscript{774} Again doing her part to create a vision of India and the East as spiritual leaders, she states:

\textsuperscript{774} \textit{The Doctrine of the Heart: Extracts from Hindu Letters} (London, 1899), p.3.
This Bhakti has nowhere found more perfect expression than in Hinduism, and the writers of these letters are Hindus, accustomed to the luxuriant richness of the Sanskrit, and tuning the harsher English into some faint harmony with the poetic sweetness of their mother tongue. The chill and reserved dignity of the Anglo-Saxon and his emotional reticence are wholly alien from the out-flowing of religious feeling that wells up from the Eastern heart as naturally as song from the lark.\textsuperscript{775}

In this she is arguing that Hinduism is the perfect devotional religion. She was again painting the people of the East as superior to the Anglo-Saxon race of the West in that the Hindus have more spiritual feelings. Like Blavatsky she was operating within the imagined vision of India that Müller presented. They all saw India as having a higher-grade approach to spirituality. The same preface appears in the 1903 edition.

When Olcott died in 1907 Besant succeeded him as President. The issue of Indian nationalism had occupied a minor place in Olcott’s reign. Under Besant it became the central issue for the Theosophical Society in India. However, she had to fight for her place in Theosophical history. The election for the new president of the society would expose something of a mutiny within the British branch of the society. Her opponents included George Mead, Bertram Knightley, Herbert Burrows, and Sinnett. The London leadership, which had formerly been Besant’s base, was rebelling against her.\textsuperscript{776} As was usually the case with Besant, however, she emerged triumphant. This would have tremendous consequences for the society in that it would continue to be headquartered in India. Henceforth, the society would join the local advocates of Indian home rule, which would peak in the coming years. It was also during those years that the society reached its summit as she served as both high priestess of Theosophy and one of India’s most prominent national leaders.

\textsuperscript{775} Besant (ed.), \textit{First Steps in Occultism}, p. 4.
\textsuperscript{776} Lubelsky, \textit{Celestial India}, p. 244.
Besant effectively combined the esoteric elements of Blavatsky’s legacy with the nationalist elements of Olcott’s legacy. In 1914, she founded two newspapers within a few months of each other – *The Commonwealth* and *New India*. These she used to build her power-base after her successful entry into the Indian national leadership. Her connections in India, combined with her knowledge of political organization, crowned her with election to the presidency of the Indian National Congress in 1917.

Despite Besant’s claims to finding spirituality and being an anti-materialist occultist, she was a woman who was making very calculated political decisions throughout the course of her career. From her initial joining with the Fabians, to her switch from atheism to Theosophy, to aligning herself with Blavatsky and the Esoteric Section, to switching sides from Judge to Olcott, to her move away from Olcott, and eventually her move toward Indian nationalism, she proved herself to be both politically ambitious and shrewd. She brought with her to the Theosophical Society her talents for publishing and political organization. Besant used those skills well to advance both the publishing and political activities of the society. Her work in India would have implications for Indian nationalism in that she was brought into the movement at a time when Indian citizens were learning how to protest against their imperial colonizers. Besant ensured the Theosophical Society an important place in the history of Indian and imperial history overall.

### 3.6 Conclusion

The Theosophical Society represents the coming together of the Hermetic and East traditions in the nineteenth-century occult. Britain’s presence in India and the networks Britain created with India were an important part of why this

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*Lubelsky, *Celestial India*, pp. 262–265.*
was able to take place. These networks facilitated Blavatsky and Olcott’s ability to headquarter the society in Adyar. However, the Eastern influence on Theosophy was not easily accepted by those who had been drawn to Theosophy through the Hermetic traditions of Freemasonry and Rosicrucianism. The debate over Eastern versus Western philosophies was an important aspect of the breakup of the international Theosophical Society as its branches in France, America, and Germany broke away from Adyar. The decision to continue Eastern dominance of Theosophical philosophies was largely a decision made by Olcott with the support of Besant. This had consequences for both the society and the future of Indian nationalist politics.

While it has long been held that Blavatsky had a Hermetic phase and an Eastern phase, as represented by her two signature texts *Isis Unveiled* and *The Secret Doctrine*, the reality is more complicated. Blavatsky was engaging with Eastern philosophies and reading Müller before she went to India. The fact that she was reading such material is likely to be a huge part of the reason she chose to pursue India as a spiritual homeland. *Isis Unveiled* engaged with many aspects of Eastern philosophies and *The Secret Doctrine* continued to engage with Hermetic philosophies. As such there was no clear dividing line. As the world became more aware of all of the many religious traditions across the globe, the Theosophical Society approach became a blend of many of them, making it a true product of literacy, the study of Comparative Religion, imperialism, and globalization.
4.0 Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn

In the forward of Ellic Howe’s *The Magicians of the Golden Dawn* (1972), Gerald Yorke makes the following assessment of the narrative of the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn. He calls it:

> A fascinating cautionary tale of all who try to develop their latent magical powers without using the protective techniques still taught in all the major religions. From it we see how the majority of those who attempt to tread the occult path of power become the victims of their creative imagination, inflate their egos and fall.\(^{778}\)

In this passage, Yorke is discussing the notorious antics of the members who fought for both control of the order and what its approach to magic should be. Without a doubt, the order synthesized into a coherent whole the vast body of disconnected and widely scattered material on magic texts from throughout the ages and melded it into an effective system of magic.\(^{779}\) However, it was not a populist engagement with occult texts in the same way that the Theosophical Society texts or the works of Edward Bulwer-Lytton were. Yet both Mathers and Crowley’s texts are in global circulation and translated into many languages today. This chapter will also demonstrate that the Golden Dawn represented a return to Hermetic magic and an engagement with Egyptian orientalism in British occultism. This engagement with “Egyptology” grew after McGregor and Moina Mathers traveled to Paris. As we have seen, there was already a strong engagement with Egyptian orientalism in France, as evidenced in the *Ordre Martiniste* periodical *L’Initiation*.

4.1 Magical Orders

The Golden Dawn grew out of Masonic and fringe Masonic orders that were operating in Britain in the final decades of the nineteenth century. Butler


maintains that the order found precedence in the *Fratres Lucis* or the Order of the Swastika, and the *Societas Rosicruciana in Anglia* (SRIA).\textsuperscript{780} The order also drew on the formation of the Royal Order of Sikha, the Sat B'Hai, the Hermetic Brothers of Egypt, and the Society of Eight.\textsuperscript{781} Howe too maintains that the Golden Dawn was a by-product of founder William Westcott’s connection with SRIA, which was more than a Masonic lodge. It was an esoteric society made up of Freemasons who were interested in occultism, the Cabbala, and Masonic symbolism. Both Westcott and Mathers were members of its high council. Some of the first members of the Golden Dawn were recruited from SRIA.\textsuperscript{782} Similarly, Owen argues that ‘its founders and leaders looked for inspiration to a centuries-old Rosicrucian tradition with its roots in Jewish-Christian mysticism and the “Egyptian” esotericism of Hermes Trismegistus – hence the use of Hermetic in the Order’s name’.\textsuperscript{783}

Demonstrating the German influence on nineteenth-century Freemasonic circles, Owen maintains that SRIA was based in part of the late eighteenth-century German Masonic order, the Order of the Gold and Rosy Cross. The membership was restricted to Master Masons.\textsuperscript{784} As such, to gain entry one had to demonstrate a strong interest in esoteric philosophies and have already passed through a number of levels of rituals to gain entry. This passage through the various levels demonstrated that the individual had already achieved a level of worthiness to gain access to this inner sanctum of Freemasonry. The individuals who were invited to become members of SRIA would have already had a high level of awareness of magical rituals. Owen claims that the society

\textsuperscript{780} Butler, *Victorian Occultism*, p. 2.
\textsuperscript{781} Butler, *Victorian Occultism*, p. 2.
\textsuperscript{783} Owen, *The Place of Enchantment*, p. 3.
\textsuperscript{784} Owen, *The Place of Enchantment*, p. 54.
increased its modest scope and activities during the mid-1880s at a time when occult activity in general was being stepped up. This was after the founding of the Theosophical Society had already taken place in 1875. SRJA would have also built on the long history of spiritualism, mesmerism, and esoteric engagement that was popular during the middle of the nineteenth century. Late Victorian Britain and fin de siècle France were ready to take the engagement with magic to whole new ceremonial levels. This textual engagement with magical manuscripts, the creation of inner orders and magical college systems was an elite reaction to the more democratic forms of magic that had emerged in earlier decades. Even the working class could engage with spiritualism, mesmerism, and the Theosophical Society, which seemed to want to grow its membership as widely as possible. Most people could afford the books of Edward Bulwer-Lytton. Not everyone could obtain an invitation to join in the magical rituals and ceremonial learning of the Golden Dawn. Certainly not everyone could get invited to the inner sanctum of the Second Order.

In the tradition of returning to a more ancient magic, it was a cipher manuscript that was the foundation of Golden Dawn magic, as discussed in chapter two. In 1887 the manuscript found its way into Westcott’s hands. Westcott claimed that the manuscript came from a woman named Fraulein Sprengel who was an eminent German Rosicrucian adept. He claimed that she had authorized him to found an English branch of a German occult order called ‘Die Goldene Dämmerung’ or the Golden Dawn. Westcott invited Mathers and Dr. W.R. Woodman to join him as the Chiefs of the new order. Together

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785 Owen, *The Place of Enchantment*, p. 54.
786 Butler, *Victorian Occultism*, p. 3.
they formed the first Isis Urania Temple, which seemingly had a link to a
German occult order.\(^788\)

Butler argues that the Golden Dawn was a move toward group magic that
represented a shift in how magical knowledge was transmitted. She maintains
that Golden Dawn abandoned the traditional method of transmitting magic from
one individual to another:

By incorporating a social structure into the tradition, it was natural
that transmission should take on a different format. Instead of a
solitary magician learning the tricks of the trade through a *grimoire* or
other similar texts, members of the Golden Dawn were assigned
lectures and homework in a school-type setting. In doing so the
Golden Dawn developed its own magical canon, composed of
traditional material drawn from grimoires, Renaissance texts,
alchemical manuscripts, contemporary works, and the original
lectures of its own members. The Order developed a system in which
this material was learned at various stages, and students were
expected to prove that they had studied the material before they
could progress to next level. Essentially, the Golden Dawn
developed the first large-scale magical school.\(^789\)

In many ways, it was an almost bureaucratic approach to magic. As previously
argued, this was not a unique phenomenon in the final decades of the
nineteenth century. The *Ordre Martiniste* also established a magical college
system through *L’Initiation* in France. Luhrmann argues for the continued
reliance on the Golden Dawn method of transmission in contemporary magical
societies.\(^790\) While it is arguable that this form of magical learning owes a debt
to the college system of the Golden Dawn, the evolution of magic during the last
two centuries owes greater debts to the more general widening of the printing
press, literacy, and education.

Within the Golden Dawn we see the strongest desire to create barriers to
access to the arcane knowledge of the occult. The irony is that in Mathers,


\(^{789}\) Butler, *Victorian Occultism*, p. 145.

Crowley, and Waite, the Golden Dawn created some of the most famous magicians in the history of the world. With an admission ceremony to the Inner Order of the Rose of the Ruby and the Cross of the Gold, based on the post-Reformation myth of Christian Rosenkreuz, the Golden Dawn drew on the magical texts and rituals of earlier periods in a way that eluded previous occult societies.\(^791\) The rituals of the Golden Dawn were not printed during its heyday, but copied by hand by its members.\(^792\) Today, a large number of manuscripts pertaining to the Golden Dawn are in the Gerald Yorke collection at the Warburg Institute of the University of London and a collection of rituals of the Stella Matutina are in the library of Freemason’s Hall Library, London.\(^793\)

The society existed from 1888 to 1901, bracketing the heyday of Victorian eccentricity, the *fin de siècle* or the final decade of the nineteenth century. The curriculum included astrology, the Tarot, numerology, geomancy, the adoption of god forms, scrying in the ‘spirit vision’ and travelling to the ‘astral plane’. They also practiced becoming invisible, not in the sense of disappearing, but in a way that people would not notice one’s presence.\(^794\) During the period, the order created five different temples, which have been sufficiently detailed by other scholars. The founders were joined by such high profile occultists as William Butler-Yeats, actress Florence Farr, Annie Horniman, Maud Gonne, Mina Bergson (sister of Henry Bergson), Arthur Machen, Constance Mary Lloyd, the wife of Oscar Wilde, and, of course, the notorious Aleister Crowley. The Isis-Urania temple in London proved to be both the most popular and the most controversial, attracting more initiates than any other temple. By 1896, the

\(^{792}\) Bogdan, *Western Esotericism and Rituals of Initiation*, p. 127.
\(^{793}\) Bogdan, *Western Esotericism and Rituals of Initiation*, p. 200, ftn 21.
Order had initiated more than 300 members at its five temples.\textsuperscript{795} Butler argues that, like the founders, most of the men it drew were already steeped in Masonic traditions.\textsuperscript{796} Despite their views on the oneness of all humanity on the Platonic levels of existence, the Golden Dawn was an exclusive and close-knit world. Applications for admission were vetted but many of the members already knew each other.\textsuperscript{797} It filled a need among those like William Butler Yeats, who were seeking a more exclusive and ceremonial magic. He had a high profile break from the Theosophical Society and Blavatsky for this very reason. Interestingly, within a few months of the Golden Dawn admitting its first member in 1888, the Theosophical Society established its Esoteric Section.\textsuperscript{798} This indicates that there was something of a rivalry between the two groups that shared many common members. It seems that the Theosophical Society created an Esoteric Section to compete with the Hermetic lore of the Golden Dawn.

After the Theosophical Society turned eastward, the Golden Dawn filled a void for those who wished to make a return to the Hermetic roots of the occult. In \textit{Arguing with Angels} (2012) Egil Asprem argues that Anna Kingsford and Edward Maitland formed the Hermetic Society in 1884 in response to what they considered to be the deliberate neglect of the Western esoteric traditions in the Theosophical Society. When Kingsford died prematurely in 1887, the activities of the Hermetic Society ceased, leaving the occultists who were inspired by the occidental tradition without a platform.\textsuperscript{799} Asprem maintains that ‘the G.D. presented itself as a decidedly Western alternative to the increasingly Oriental

\textsuperscript{795} Butler, \textit{Victorian Occultism}, p. 3.
\textsuperscript{796} Butler, \textit{Victorian Occultism}, p. 3.
\textsuperscript{797} Owen, \textit{The Place of Enchantment}, p. 59.
\textsuperscript{798} Owen, \textit{The Place of Enchantment}, p. 60.
\textsuperscript{799} Asprem, \textit{Arguing with Angels}, p. 46.
and anti-Christian Theosophical Society, reinstating Egypt as the wellspring of esoteric wisdom while claiming an ancient and “authentic” Rosicrucian heritage. 800

The Golden Dawn also represents what Godwin has called ‘the Parting of East and West’ at a time when Olcott and Besant were taking the Theosophical Society in new directions in India, following Blavatsky’s death. As a result, we see the Golden Dawn engaging extensively with Egyptian orientalism while at the same time blending it with Eastern philosophies in their own way. Owen maintains that, unlike the Theosophical Society, the Golden Dawn drew on modern interpretations of Rosicrucian traditions through the lens of eighteenth and nineteenth century “oriental” scholars in Egyptology. 801 Through the Golden Dawn we see the resurgence of Egyptian orientalism in British magic in contrast to the extensive Hindu and Buddhist influence engaged with by the Theosophical Society.

4.2 Samuel Liddell MacGregor Mathers

In the introduction to The Magical Mason R.A. Gilbert maintains that the task of controlling the Golden Dawn was beyond the abilities of Westcott and that it fell to Samuel Liddell MacGregor Mathers. He maintains that Mathers was the ‘magical genius’ who raised the order to its greatest glory. 802 Demonstrating his importance to the foundation of the occult order, it was Mathers who was initially responsible for writing up the Warrant for the Isis-Urania Temple and elaborating the rituals associated with the First Order. He was also instrumental

800 Asprem, Arguing with Angels, pp. 46–47.
801 Owen, The Place of Enchantment, pp. 52–53.
802 Westcott, 'The Magical Mason', p. 7.
in developing the Second Order as a training ground for magicians. Together with Woodman, he brought extensive knowledge of esoteric matters to the order.

Without a doubt it was Mathers who had the greatest talent for translating manuscripts and developing magical rituals for the Golden Dawn that was a synthesis of older approaches to magic. Yorke credits Mathers with reducing the incoherent mass of Dr. John Dee’s papers and diaries in the British Museum and the Ashmolean at Oxford into a coherent and valid system of Enochian magic which was worked by the members of the Inner Order and survives today through the Order of the Cubic Stone. Mathers also resurrected the Sacred Magic of Abramelin the Mage from a corrupt manuscript that he found in the Bibliothèque de l’Arsenal in Paris. Similarly, in William Butler Yeats Autobiographie (1926), he stated that he often saw Liddle Mather in the British Museum reading room. He described Mathers as ‘a figure of romance’. Yeats stated that Mathers had:

…copied many manuscripts on magic ceremonial and doctrine in the British Museum, and was to copy many more in Continental libraries, and it was through him mainly that I began certain studies and experiences, that were to convince me that images well up before the mind’s eye from a deeper source than conscious or subconscious memory.

Yeats claims it was Mathers at their first introduction who spoke of a society that sometimes called itself “The Hermetic Students”. He maintains that ‘it had a different name among its members’. Yeats was initiated in May or June of

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803 Owen, The Place of Enchantment, p. 55.
807 Yeats, Autobiographie, pp. 226-227.
Clearly, the order was not very secret if Mathers mentioned it during their first meeting. However, it was enough of a secret that Yeats was not given the full name. Perhaps the name was not so established during this early period and the members themselves had not agreed on the final version.

Westcott and Woodman commissioned Mathers to do the first English translation of Knorr von Rosenroth’s *Kabbalah Denudatta* (1684) that was a translation of a staple of the Hebrew cabalistic canon, the *Zohar*. This resulted in the first publication of the *Kabbalah Unveiled* (1887) in London. It was published by George Redway who also held copyright for his other works including *Fortune-telling Cards, The Tarot, its Occult Signification and Methods of Play* (1888), and *The Key of Solomon the King: Clavicula Solomonis* (1889). Kegan Paul, Trench, Trübner and Company published a second edition of *Fortune-telling Cards* in London in 1909. It continued to be published in English up to 1986. Redway also published the *Key of Solomon* in 1889 and it was republished by Kegan Paul, Trench, Trübner and Company in 1909, which would seem to indicate a resurgence of interest in the magic of Mathers in 1909.

A 1972 edition of the text with a forward by Richard Cavendish claims that ‘the Key of Solomon is the most famous, or infamous, of all magical textbooks and influenced many of the other European grimoires or “grammars” of magical practice.’ Similarly, a 2008 translation by Stephen Skinner and David Rankine suggests that it is ‘the most famous and infamous of all the

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810 World Catalogue Library System (Last accessed 11 August 11, 2015).
811 S. Liddell Macgregor Mathers, *The Key of Solomon the King (Clavicula Salomonis)* (London, 1972), p. v
grimoires and books of magic. They note that there has only ever been one English translation and Mathers completed that in 1889. In 1916 it was reproduced by L.W. de Laurence as The Greater Key of Solomon. They maintain that this ‘cannot be classed as an edition or anything other than gross literacy piracy of Mathers’ work. There have, however, been several printed editions in French. Similarly, in the preface written in 1888, Mathers himself stated that:

The Key of Solomon, save for a curtailed and incomplete copy published in France in the seventeenth century, has never yet been printed, but has for centuries remained in Manuscript form inaccessible to all but the few fortunate scholars to whom the inmost recesses of the great libraries were open. I therefore consider that I am highly honoured in being the individual to whose lot it has fallen to usher it into the light of day.

Mathers also claims that drawing on the Key of Solomon is a tradition within magic circles and he places himself within the ranks of Eliphas Lévi in doing so:

…The ‘Key’ has been ever valued by occult writers as a work of the highest authority; and notably in our own day Eliphas Lévi has taken it for the model on which his celebrated “Dogme et Rituel de la Haute Magie” was based. It must be evident to the initiated reader of Lévi, that the Key of Solomon was his textbook of study.

This is a familiar trope of an occultist trying to tie himself to other well-regarded magicians and to more ancient sources of magic. He is placing himself within the discourse of both a long history of magic and another high profile occultist, trying to establish himself as a credible source on the topic.

Skinner and Rankine argue that Mathers’ original edition did not sell well outside of the inner order of the Golden Dawn. Their first print run was only 500

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813 Skinner and Rankine, The Veritable Key of Solomon, p. 15.
815 Mathers, The Key of Solomon the King 1909, p. v.
copies and the members of the Golden Dawn were dismissive of the book.\textsuperscript{816} This is a very small print run suggesting no wide readership for the book. In all likelihood, this was a book by initiates, for initiates. This would make sense given the Golden Dawn’s desire for secrecy and advancement through the levels before receiving the truly secret information. For the Golden Dawn secrecy was defined as making information available to the initiated who had or were working their way through the grade system. The higher the level the initiate achieved within the grade system, the more information that would become available to him or her. Mathers in particular designed the grade system and guarded the doors to advancement through the levels as one of the senior chief.

There were inevitable debates among the members of the Golden Dawn and its followers regarding exactly what magical activities were acceptable and which were too dangerous to engage in. In many ways, this is an ancient debate. Perhaps that is why A.E. Waite stated in \textit{The Book of Ceremonial Magic} in 1898 that “it must be concluded that the \textit{Key of Solomon} is a grotesque combination of the pompous and ridiculous”.\textsuperscript{817} However, Skinner and Rankine argue that Waite was almost pathologically anti-magic.\textsuperscript{818} Given the in fighting and the turf wars that occurred between the members of the Golden Dawn, it is also conceivable that Waite was jealous of Mathers’ magical prowess and leadership position within the magical community. Given the desire for secrecy, one might wonder why Mathers chose to write anything

\textsuperscript{816} Skinner and Rankine, \textit{The Veritable Key of Solomon}, p. 15.
\textsuperscript{817} A.E. Waite, \textit{The Book of Ceremonial Magic: Including the Rites and Mysteries of Goetic Theurgy, Sorcery and Infernal Necromancy} (London, 1911), pp. 63-64.
\textsuperscript{818} Skinner and Rankine, \textit{The Veritable Key of Solomon}, p. 15.
down at all. However, magic has always been transmitted through books and there is a long tradition of magicians writing their spells down in books of magic.

While the number of published editions of the book are notably low, Skinner and Rankine maintain that there are a number of copies of the manuscripts in existence:

...many variant copies of the Key of Solomon in a range of languages can be found in libraries and private collections through the Renaissance and into modern times. The sheer volume of manuscripts we have been able to trace, which surely is by no means the sum total, demonstrates the significance of the Key of Solomon as the pre-eminent grimoire of the grimoire tradition, and assumes its place as the focus of a significant tradition of Solomonic magic. Knowing as we do that there were people actively copying and selling copies of this work at times, the number of copies which were destroyed or now sit in private collections can only be guessed at. 819

It is ironic that they are claiming that this was absolutely the preeminent grimoire of grimoires even though they could not trace how many copies of it were actually in existence. They do state that they searched through the libraries of Europe and America and located 144 manuscripts and its associated text the Hygromanteia, spanning the four centuries from 1440 to 1825. They list them in an Appendix and freely admit there are undoubtedly others that have not been located. 820 However, 144 manuscripts is a significant number. The authors do not provide any source material to demonstrate how they know that the first print run was 500 copies.

Skinner and Rankine maintain that Mathers synthesized the Key of Solomon from seven manuscripts. Of theses seven, five were in French, another was in Latin, and another was in Italian. The Italian manuscript “Esperimentos d’Amore”, they argue is largely missing from Mathers final product. 821 Mathers

819 Skinner and Rankine, The Veritable Key of Solomon, pp. 15–16.
820 Skinner and Rankine, The Veritable Key of Solomon, p. 16.
821 Skinner and Rankine, The Veritable Key of Solomon, p. 15.
himself listed the manuscripts he used in the preface of the 1888 edition.\textsuperscript{822} Undoubtedly, they are drawing on the list of manuscripts that Mathers provided. In fact, in many ways, their preface is a recitation of his. A text such as \textit{The Key of Solomon} might have been very technical and over the heads of many members of the public and even the members of the lower orders of the Golden Dawn. A text of high-level philosophy, translated from older texts and languages would have originally been developed by and for an educated elite.

Of the manuscripts they did locate, Skinner and Rankine state that more than one-third (51) were in French.\textsuperscript{823} Interestingly, they maintain that one of the French editions (Wellcome MS 4670) is mentioned in Bulwer-Lytton's \textit{Zanoni}.

Indeed at the beginning of Book 2, Chapter 4 of \textit{Zanoni} does quote \textit{Le Clavicules de Rabbi Solomon} (Latin for \textit{The Key of Solomon the King}). Even in the English version, the quote is in French. It states:

\begin{quote}
Les Intelligences Célestes se front voir, et se communiquent plus volontiers, dans le silence, et dans le tranquillité de la solitude. On aura donc une petite chamber ou un cabinet secret, etc. – “Les Clavicules de Rabbi Salomon,” chap. 3; traduites exactement du texte Hebreu par M. Pierre Marissoneau, Professeur des Langues Orientales, et sectateur de la Philosphie des Sages Cabalistes.\textsuperscript{825}
\end{quote}

Skinner and Rankine argue that Wellcome MS 4670 is the only one they found with such a reference.\textsuperscript{826} This demonstrates the British occult influence on the English edition. The Wellcome Collection bought this manuscript in 1932.\textsuperscript{827}

Notably in \textit{The Book of Ceremonial Magic} (1911) Waite states that ‘the Key of

\begin{enumerate}
\item Mathers, \textit{The Key of Solomon} 1910, pp. vi-vii.
\item Skinner and Rankine, \textit{The Veritable Key of Solomon}, p. 16.
\item Edward Bulwer-Lytton, \textit{Zanoni} 1888, p. 60.
\item Bulwer-Lytton, \textit{Zanoni} 1888, p. 60. Translation: Celestial intelligences see the future and communicate more willingly in silence and in tranquil solitude. There will therefore be a small chamber or secret cabinet, etc. -"The Keys of Rabbi Solomon," chapter 3; translated exactly from the Hebrew text by Mr. Pierre Marrissoneau, Professor of Oriental Languages and follower of the philosophy of the Kabbalistic Elders.
\item Skinner and Rankine, \textit{The Veritable Key of Solomon}, p. 16.
\item Skinner and Rankine, \textit{The Veritable Key of Solomon}, p. 17.
\end{enumerate}
Solomon proper is familiar to scholars in Latin, French, Italian, and one or two German MSS. The oldest codex used by the English editor is contracted Latin, and belongs to the sixteenth century. It is preserved in the British Museum.\footnote{Waite, \textit{Book of Ceremonial Magic}, p. 59.}

These books were all part of what became the Golden Dawn focus on magical synthesis that would be the hallmark of the order. Without Mathers’ translation abilities and this coming together of magical texts from earlier periods, the Golden Dawn would not have evolved as the special brand of a synthesis of ancient and Renaissance magic. In many ways, without Mathers, the Golden Dawn would have been just another nineteenth-century occult society but his translations of magic texts from across time and cultures made the Golden Dawn synthesis of magic possible. His influence on the occult world in doing so has been immense. His texts have been translated into Japanese, Spanish, German, Italian, French, Danish, Czech, Modern Greek, and Croatian (see table).

As much as magicians like to tie themselves to ancient traditions, Bogdan argues that the Golden Dawn were largely drawing on secondary sources in reconstructing Kabbalistic rituals:

\footnote{Bogdan, \textit{Western Esotericism Rituals of Initiation}, pp. 122-123.}

\ldots the particular form of kabbalah that flourished in esoteric circles during this period had drifted away considerably from the originally Jewish Kabbalah and its Christian counterpart. Even though literary kabbalah still held a prominent position within the Occultist Kabbalah, the emphasis was no longer on interpreting the Holy Scripture, but rather to reduce significant words into numbers and thereby reach a fuller understanding of their import by relating them to the words of similar numerical value. Far more significant, however, was the use of the Tree of Life as a model of the universe to which every conceivable phenomenon whatsoever could be applied. In a sense, the linear scheme of the Tree of Life became a method whereby it was possible to reach order out of an apparently chaotic kabbalistic doctrine. The knowledge of kabbalah, which the chief exponents of Occultist Kabbalah possessed, was to a large extent secondary sources.
One of the most important contributions of the nineteenth-century occult was in tying the Kabbalah to the Tree of Life of the Jewish esoteric tradition. The Tree of Life represents a map of the universe, as it was viewed by occultists. This symbolism was central to the Christian cabalistic emphasis of the First Order and the Golden Dawn, which drew heavily on Christian D. Ginsburg’s interpretive treatise on the subject.\(^\text{830}\)

The Second Order was open to initiates by invitation only – in reality invitations from Mathers.\(^\text{831}\) It was Mathers who in 1892 single-handedly instituted the *Ordo Roseae Rubeae et Aureae Crucis* (R.R. et A.C.) as an inner sanctum dedicated to the training of magicians. This order was created after Mathers returned from Paris bearing an authorized 5° = 6° ritual supplied by Frater L.E.T., a continental adept. Essentially, Mathers was creating a supreme secret elite, within a secret elite.\(^\text{832}\) The inner Second Order was to the Golden Dawn what the Esoteric Section was to the Theosophical Society. While the concept of correspondences had been a vital part of the Theosophical Society doctrine, it was expressed within Golden Dawn circles as the Cabalistic idea that all things in the universe are interconnected and find expression in the symbolism of the Tree of Life.\(^\text{833}\)

Butler maintains that it was during Mathers stay in Paris that Egyptian magic became central to his interest and fully developed. It was there that both MacGregor and Mona Mathers began theatrical performances of the Rites of Isis.\(^\text{834}\) Mona Mathers told New York writer Frederick Less that they became interested in Egypt after French poet Jules Bois told MacGregor Mathers about

\(^{830}\) Owen, *The Place of Enchantment*, p. 73.

\(^{831}\) Butler, *Victorian Occultism*, p. 11.

\(^{832}\) Owen, *The Place of Enchantment*, p. 71.

\(^{833}\) Owen, *The Place of Enchantment*, p. 73.

\(^{834}\) Butler, *Victorian Occultism*, p. 57.
the Abramelin manuscript and asked the Mathers to give a public demonstration of the ceremony. They agreed to present the ceremony only after the appearance of Isis appeared to Mona in a dream:

We made the acquaintance of M. Jules Bois, who, being interested, as you know, in religions and religious revivals, asked us if we could give an Isisic ceremony at the Bodiniere Theatre. He had already lectured there on Buddhism, and arranged for a Buddhist mass, so he thought it would interest the public to know something about Isis. But we were very much disinclined to appear in public. We refused, therefore, and the matter would have dropped but for the intervention of the goddess Isis herself. One night she appeared to me in a dream, and sanctioned any efforts we might make in Paris, her ancient city. Our scruples were swept aside. That is how we came to appear at the Bodiniere, first, when M. Bois delivered a lecture on Egyptian magic, and introduced us to the public, again when we celebrated masses there.\footnote{835}

However, the importance of Egyptian magic also grew within the London temple while Mathers was in Paris. Owen argues that under the guidance of Florence Farr, the Second Order (and especially her own "sphere" group) became more attuned to ancient Egyptian magic. “The Sphere” was an elite group of adepts led by Farr who took the clairvoyant techniques taught within the Second Order to new heights.\footnote{836} By this time, Mathers was attracting the attention of the Parisian occult world with Rite of Isis, Farr had published \textit{Egyptian Magic} (1896). The book was first published as part of the series \textit{Collectanea Hermetica} by the London Theosophical Society.\footnote{837} The outside jacket of a 1982 softcover edition of the text paints it as:

\footnote{835}{Frederick Lees, ‘Conversations with the Hierophant Rameses and the High Priestess Anari’ \textit{The Humanitarian} 19 (February, 1900), found online at \url{http://www.golden-dawn.com/eu/displaycontent.aspx?pageid=143-isis-worship-in-paris}.}
\footnote{836}{Owen, \textit{The Place of Enchantment}, p. 84.}
\footnote{837}{\textit{Collectanea Hermetica} was an eight-volume sequence of occult tracts edited by Westcott. It was first published in 1893 but does not seem to have been in wide circulation. It was published in 1992 by Kessinger, and 1994 and 1998 by Weisner, again demonstrating the resurgence of interest in Golden Dawn magic in the final decades of the nineteenth century. World Catalogue Library system (Last accessed 17 February 2016).}
…directly linked to the ritual activities of the Golden Dawn as well as being a pioneering work on the occult practices of ancient Egypt. It examines, amongst other things, the rationale of Egyptian magic and the legend of Ra and Isis, and gives examples of spells and conjurations as well as extracts from Gnostic magical writings.838

As early as 1902, *Egyptian Magic* was in circulation in Spanish, published in Barcelona by the Bibliotheca Orientalista.839

*Egyptian Magic* was the eighth volume in the *Collectanea Hermetica* series.840 Interestingly, the entire series was published by the Theosophical Society Press. Given the Hermetic versus Eastern conflict between the two magical societies, it is noteworthy that the Theosophical Society would agree to publish the *Collectanea Hermetica*. Perhaps it demonstrates that the Theosophical Society was not as opposed to the influence of Egyptian magic as is often believed, despite the society’s perceived preference for Hindu philosophies. Of course, Westcott was a member of the Theosophical Society and this shows the continued links between the various societies of the period.

Farr published two “Egyptian” plays with her friend Oliva Shakespeare. *The Shrine of the Golden Hawk* and *The Beloved Hathor* were performed in 1901-1902.841 Demonstrating the kind of showmanship that Farr engaged with, *The Beloved of Hathor* takes place in the Temple of Hathor in 1500 B.C. In order that the great spiritual kingdom of Egypt might be restored through Hathor, his beloved has been watched over for many years by his High Priestess. The play delivers a spiritual message in that Aahmes’ choice is between either a great destiny or material victory.842 Demonstrating the extent

839 World Catalogue Library System (Last accessed 12 August 2015).
840 Owen, *The Place of Enchantment*, p. 81.
841 Owen, *The Place of Enchantment*, p. 275. Footnote 70.
842 *The Beloved Hathor*, Found online at
of Farr’s influence during the period, W.B. Yeats was convinced that George
Bernard Shaw had drawn upon the striking memory of Farr in her “Egyptian
period” when he wrote his own play, Caesar and Cleopatra.843

4.2.1 Mathers the Occult Author

Mathers produced a version of The Key of Solomon the King in 1889, and
two of the five books that make up the Lemegeton, or The Lesser Key of
Solomon: the first book, the Goetia, in 1898 and the fourth book, the Ars
Almadel, was published in the journal Occult Review in 1915. Butler maintains
that The Key of Solomon the King is one of the most well-known and well-used
texts in Western magic.844 Of course the data does not bear this out in that the
books of the Theosophical leaders and Crowley were in greater circulation, as
measured by editions and translations. Similarly, R.A. Gilbert was doubtful as to
exactly how much this magical text affected the magic of the Golden Dawn. In
the preface to the most recent edition, Gilbert suggests that the greatest
influence of this and other Solomonic texts on the order probably would have
been found in the pictoral symbols, the pentacles and sigils, which would have
been absorbed into the Order’s complicated structure of symbolism.845

In compiling his edition of The Key of Solomon, Mathers claims to have used
and translated seven manuscript versions in French, Italian, and Latin, all of
which he found in collections in the British Museum.846 In his edition, Mathers
attempted to steer the reader clear of Black Magic by advising against the use
of blood, even when it is instructed as such in the text, and by having omitted certain sections of the original manuscripts, which he thought were potentially too dangerous.\textsuperscript{847} In this we see some secrecy maintained around the more controversial aspects of Western magic.

Only two of the five books that make up the \textit{Lemegeton}, or \textit{Little Key of Solomon the King}, have appeared in published form under MacGregor Mathers’ name. The \textit{Goetia} is the first book of the Little Key of Solomon and MacGregor Mathers produced his version for circulation among members in 1898. Six years later Aleister Crowley published a copy without Mathers’ permission. The \textit{Goetia} and the \textit{Lemegeton}, as a compilation of five books of magic, date from the seventeenth century. The \textit{Goetia} is a Catalogue of 72 spirits that provides descriptions of each of these, their functions, their invocations, and the particular days of the week upon which these invocations should be performed.\textsuperscript{848} The other four books of the \textit{Lemegeton} are the \textit{Theurgia Goetia}, \textit{Ars Paulina}, \textit{Ars Almadel}, and the \textit{Ars Notoria}. Overall, Golden Dawn members did not put these invocations into practice. However, Butler argues that they would have found the grimoire useful for its images and languages in expanding upon their own complex symbolism, rituals, and invocations.\textsuperscript{849}

\textsuperscript{847} S.L. MacGregor Mathers (ed. and trans.), \textit{Key of Solomon The King (Clavicula Solomonis)}, (Cambridge, 2012), p. vi.
\textsuperscript{848} Butler, \textit{Victorian Occultism}, p. 50.
\textsuperscript{849} Butler, \textit{Victorian Occultism}, p. 50.
### Publications by MacGregor Mathers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Editions</th>
<th>Editions before 1914</th>
<th>Translations</th>
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<tr>
<td>The Kabbalah Unveiled</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>English (89)</td>
<td>1887</td>
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<td>The Tarot: Its occult signification, use in fortune telling, and method of play, etc.</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>English (14)</td>
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<td>The Key of Solomon the King: Claviculas Solomonis</td>
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<td>14</td>
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<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
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<td><strong>31</strong></td>
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The list above represents only Mathers more popular works and it does not include later editions of his work that were published under other titles. In keeping with the idea of a revival of occult philosophies through New Age religion, he seems to have undergone a revival in the late twentieth century. For example, *The Essential Kabbalah: A Treasury of Jewish Mysticism for Everyday Spiritual Guidance* was published in 2006, as edited by Dogobert D. Runes. *The Goetia: The Lesser Key of Solomon the King* was published in 1995 and 1997 by Weiser Books and Samuel Weiser respectively. *In New Age Religion*
and Western Culture Hanegraaff maintains that emphasis on meditation and other spiritual techniques as alternative means of expanding consciousness have been typical of New Age movements of the 1980s.\textsuperscript{850} Undoubtedly there was a shift in religion that took place with the further growth of commercial culture since the 1980s. The works of Mathers would have been a good fit with this shift toward a commercially driven approach toward religion, separate from any church.

Mathers was more engaged in translating material from French than he was in having his material translated into French. The Bibliothèque Nationale de France catalogue lists no French translations of his works. His material that was translated into other languages such as Spanish seems to have taken place in the late twentieth century. This was likely due to the secretive nature of the Golden Dawn and Mathers in particular. Undoubtedly his greatest contribution to British occultism was the material he translated and brought into the English speaking occult world. In terms of bringing ancient and Renaissance magic to the contemporary world, and creating exchanges between France and Britain, no occultist was more important than Mathers, both in terms of his ability to translate texts and creating modern magic rituals. In Mathers we see how the most secretive magician of all was engaging in publishing. He was simultaneously designing complicated grade systems for initiation to occultism and publishing this knowledge in occult texts. The creation of the inner order that he largely controlled, sits in opposition to his desire for fame and social mobility through his publishing activities. However, he had a strong desire to protect some of the secrets of magic while publishing magic texts himself. For

\textsuperscript{850} Hanegraaff, \textit{New Age Religion and Western Culture}, p. 11.
this, he has been remembered not only as a good magician but also as one of the most intriguing figures in the history of magic.

4.3 Aleister Crowley

The forward of the text *Aleister Crowley and Western Esotericism* (2012) includes the following passages:

Few personalities seem to represent the dark side of the occult more extremely than the English magus and enfant terrible Aleister Crowley. There is no doubt that during his life, he did everything he could to set himself up as the perfect opposite of mainstream Western society and all its traditional values. Crowley was the self-proclaimed Beast from the Abyss who preached an anti-Christian religion revealed by a pagan deity or demon; he was the paragon of sexual perversion who experimented with every conceivable form of immorality; and, in an age of science and rational progress, he was the prophet of “magick” who was apparently bent on reviving all the “superstitions” of the past.851

There is no figure more regularly associated with magic or the nineteenth-century occult than Aleister Crowley. In the introduction of the 1969 edition of *The Confessions of Aleister Crowley*, his editor John Symonds maintains that ‘he was in the tradition of the great magicians of the past – Dr. John Dee, Cagliostro, Count Saint-Germain, Eliphas Lévi, Madame Blavatsky’.852 More so than any of the other occultists covered previously, he lived his magic and this was reflected in his publishing activities. Like Madame Blavatsky and Annie Besant before him, he engaged with the magical philosophies of the East and West. His translations were on par with those of Madame Blavatsky, with texts in circulation in the following languages: German, French, Spanish, Slovenian, Croatian, Japanese, Serbian, Polish, Latin, Russian, Czech, Italian, Dutch, Hebrew, Danish, Finnish, Hungarian, and Swedish.

Crowley was a prolific writer, world traveler, and known to frequent political and artistic circles. His two greatest contributions to the world of occult publishing were *The Book of the Law* (1909) and *Magick* (1930). Yet Crowley was a writer throughout his life. He developed approaches to magic that continue to exist and influence esoteric societies to this day. That makes him an ideal exemplar of the direction that magic was taking in the *fin de siècle* and the years before the First World War. This can be traced through his books and engagement with literature.

In 1895, Crowley entered Trinity College, Cambridge. There he would make many of the connections and form many of the ideas that would influence his occultism. In 1896, at the age of 21, he inherited a significant fortune from his father and thus became financially independent. This fortune would finance his occult and publishing engagements for a number of years. This section will show that in the period leading up to the First World War he was interacting with some of the most important political and literary figures of the period. His occultism and writings would be informed by his travels to the near and far East, America, and continental Europe.

By all accounts, Crowley had long been a poet by the time he entered Trinity College. At Cambridge he began publishing these poems. His first book *Aceldama* was published in 1898. It was followed by *Songs of the Spirit* (1898) and *An Appeal to the American Republic* (1899). The later title reveals his lifelong engagement with politics through his writing. His first publisher was Leonard Smithers who had also published works by Oscar Wilde. As has become a common theme with this line of inquiry, it was a book that brought Crowley to the occult. His editor, John Symonds, attributes Crowley's

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movement toward a life of magic to *The Book of Black Magic and of Pacts* by Arthur Edward Waite. Symonds claims that Waite referred to certain occult sanctuaries that are run by a body of initiates who dispense Truth and Wisdom to the worthy postulant. Crowley wrote to Waite asking for more information. Waite replied by telling him to read *The Cloud Upon the Sanctuary* by Karl von Eckartshausen.\(^{854}\) The World Catalogue Library System lists 24 editions of *The Cloud Upon the Sanctuary*, which was first published in 1802 in München, Germany by an unknown publisher. The 1823 edition is associated with Lindauer. It was published by Redway in London in 1896, which likely would have been the edition read by Crowley. It was also published by Welby in London in 1903, the Floating Press in Auckland in 1909, and T. Little and Sons Printers in Leeds in 1910. It continued to be published up to 2012.\(^{855}\)

In November 1898, Crowley was initiated as a Neophyte in the Isis Urania Temple of the Golden Dawn in London. At this time, Mathers was still head of the order.\(^{856}\) In 1900, the internal crisis within the Golden Dawn exploded. This crisis has been sufficiently explored by historians including Butler and Owen and it requires no further elaboration here. However, it is noteworthy that the revolt against the Golden Dawn leadership was led by William Butler Yeats and actress Florence Farr (1860-1917) against Mathers, who lived in Paris at the time. What is most important for our purposes is that Crowley sided with Mathers and tried to bring the rebels back in line. He was not successful and the rebels expelled both Mathers and Crowley. According to

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\(^{854}\) Crowley, *Confessions* 1989, p. 16.  
\(^{855}\) World Catalogue Library System (Last accessed 8 August 2012).  
\(^{856}\) Pasi, *Aleister Crowley*, p. 11.
Crowley, Mathers had elevated him to the level of Adeptus Minor, although his rank was not recognized by the rebels.\textsuperscript{857}

Crowley’s interest in magic continued long after his break with the Golden Dawn. His Hermetic engagement was replaced by a fascination with yoga and Buddhism under Alan Bennett. Crowley began a period of world travelling and mountaineering that lasted a few years. In 1900 he travelled to Mexico and on to Ceylon (today Sri Lanka) where he met up with Bennett, who was living there. Crowley would soon convert to Buddhism. Crossing the Pacific, he visited Hawaii and Japan, before connecting with Bennett. Together they began the study of texts of Hindu and Buddhist traditions, and practiced various forms of meditation and yoga. In 1900 he met Oscar Eckenstein in Delhi. Eckenstein was a railway engineer whom Crowley had met in 1898.\textsuperscript{858}

In late 1902, Crowley settled in Paris. In true Bohemian fashion he mingled with artists and writers including Auguste Rodin (1840-1917). In the spring of 1903 he left Paris to spend time at his residence in Scotland. There he met Rose Kelly (1874-1932), the sister of painter Gerald F. Kelly (1879-1972). Crowley married her and together they went on a long voyage to the Orient. Crowley later claimed that while the couple was staying in Cairo, between the 8 and 10 April 1904, he “received”, from a superhuman entity, the text of \textit{The Book of the Law}.\textsuperscript{859} One day Rose informed her husband that the Egyptian god Horus was waiting for him. Crowley saw her intuition as a message and waited in his Cairo hotel room for the will of the gods. He engaged in three one-hour dictation sessions, on the eighth, ninth, and tenth of April 1904. He felt that the dictation came from Aiwass, his long sought after guardian angle or Higher Self.

\textsuperscript{857} Pasi, \textit{Aleister Crowley}, p. 12.  
\textsuperscript{858} Pasi, \textit{Aleister Crowley}, p. 12.  
\textsuperscript{859} Pasi, \textit{Aleister Crowley}, pp. 12–13.
He called the book *Liber AL vel Legis*.\(^{860}\) It was written in a biblical voice in the form of a prose poem. It proclaimed a truth by which Crowley was to live: ‘Do what thou wilt shall be the whole of the law’.\(^{861}\)

In Crowley’s view, the text was to be the fundamental sacred text of a new religion, of which he himself would be the prophet. That religion was what we have come to know as Thelema, which means “will” in ancient Greek.\(^{862}\) In Crowley’s view ‘the past Aeon of Osiris, manifested as patriarchal religion and society, was to be replaced by the coming Aeon of Horus, the divine child, an eidolon of individual freedom’.\(^{863}\) Osiris was a god who had died and was resurrected. He was to be replaced by the Aeon of Horus, a crowned and conquering child. Horus was the son of Isis, reborn after she retrieved all the body parts of her murdered husband Osiris. The dictation established that the ruling characteristic of the new Aeon of Horus would be the unification of the male and female as represented in the androgynous figure of Horus.\(^{864}\)

In his *Confessions*, Crowley stated that he went to no great trouble to publish *The Book of the Law* initially:

> I had the manuscript typed. I issued a circular letter to a number of friends, something in the nature of proclamation of the New Aeon, but I took no trouble to follow it up. I took a certain number of wide-reaching plans for assuming responsibility, but they remained in the stage of reverie. I dropped the whole business, to all intents and purposes. I completely abandoned my diary. I even neglected a really first-rate opportunity for bringing *The Book of the Law* into public notice, for Mrs. Besant was on a ship by which Ouarda and I returned to Europe, and I conversed a great deal with her about sacred subjects.\(^{865}\)

\(^{860}\) Owen, *The Place of Enchantment*, p. 213.

\(^{861}\) Owen, *The Place of Enchantment*, p. 212.


\(^{864}\) Owen, *The Place of Enchantment*, p. 212.

Crowley maintains in his *Confessions* that like Blavatsky he did not particularly like dealing with publishers or worrying about the financial implications of publishing. Therefore, he followed the same path as the Theosophical Society and began publishing his own works:

My activities as a publisher were at this time remarkable. I had issued *The God-Eater and The Star & Garter* through Charles Watts & Co. of the Rationalist Press Association, but there was still no such demand for my books as to indicate that I had touched the great heart of the British public. I decided that it would save trouble to publish them myself. I decided to call myself the Society for the Propagation of Religious Truth, and issued *The Argonauts, The Sword of Song, The Book of the Goetia of Solomon the King, Why Jesus Wept, Oracles, Orpheus, Gargoyles and The Collected Works*. I simply had no idea of business. Besides this, I was in no need of money; my responsibility to the gods was to write as I was inspired; my responsibility to mankind was to publish what I wrote. But it ended there. As long as what I wrote was technically accessible to the public through the British Museum, and such places, my hands were clean.\(^{866}\)

He seemed to think it was more important for his work reach the public than it was for him to make money from his publications. Yet he went on to state that he had engaged in promotional practices to encourage people to purchase his *Collected Works* in particular:

I printed a large edition of *The Star & The Garter*, and issued it at a shilling, with the idea of reaching the people who might have been unable to buy more expensive books. I printed a leaflet and circularized the educated classes. (I have no copy available.) The meat of the circular was the offer of one hundred pounds for the best essay on my work. The business idea was to induce people to buy my *Collected Works* in order to have material for the essay.\(^{867}\)

This passage demonstrates that he was very interested in gaining fame through his work. He was willing to give his work away at a small price or engage in promotional contests to achieve respect as a magician. Even though he professed to have no idea of business, he was clearly interested in the

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\(^{866}\) Crowley, *Confessions* 1979, p. 408

\(^{867}\) Crowley, *Confessions* 1979, p. 408.
circulation of his work and made a calculated choice to forego money in exchange for greater circulation of his ideas.

**Publications by Aleister Crowley**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Editions</th>
<th>Editions before 1914</th>
<th>Translations</th>
<th>First Published</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>The Book of the Law: Leibre Avel Legis</em></td>
<td>172</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>English (49) German (26) Japanese (3) Serbian (3) French (2) Latin (1) Slovenian (1) Hebrew (1) Italian (1)</td>
<td>1938*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Magick in Theory and Practice</em></td>
<td>46</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>English (33) French (3) Spanish (3) German (3) Italian (2) Undetermined (2)</td>
<td>1929</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>The Confessions of Aleister Crowley: An Autobiography</em></td>
<td>39</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>English (31) German (4) Undetermined (4)</td>
<td>1929</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Moonchild</em></td>
<td>16</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>English (6) German (4) Spanish (2) Undetermined (2) Japanese (1) Slovenian (1)</td>
<td>1929</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>The Works of Aleister Crowley</em></td>
<td>19</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>English (18) Japanese (1)</td>
<td>1905</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>The magical record of the beast: the diaries of Aleister Crowley 1914-1920</em></td>
<td>8</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>English (7) Undetermined (1)</td>
<td>1972</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>The diary of a drug fiend</em></td>
<td>45</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>English (40) French (2) Russian (1) Spanish (1) Undetermined (1)</td>
<td>1922</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
First produced in 1908, *The Book of the Law* does not seem to have been in mass circulation until 1938.

In September 1909, Crowley began to issue *The Equinox* periodical. It was intended to be printed every March and September for five years. Volume 1: Number 2 of *The Equinox* became the first printed edition of the rituals of the outer order of the Golden Dawn. It was a special supplement of the periodical entitled ‘The Temple of Solomon the King, Book III’. At the end of the article, Crowley announced the publication of the inner order rituals. Volume III was scheduled to include the ceremony of the Adeptus Minor. Israel Regardie argues that this was ‘the most important as well as the most beautiful of the grade rituals employed by the Golden Dawn’. Predictably, Mathers learned of the plan. Regardie believes that Crowley himself provided Mathers with this information, although he presents no clear proof of this. Regardie argues that if Mathers had ignored the matter, then few people would have learned anything of the Golden Dawn. However, in a age of growing print information combined with Crowley’s desire for fame, it is very likely that the public would have eventually learned of his occult roots in the Golden Dawn. Unlike the other members, Crowley was not so invested in keeping the rituals secret. Certainly, Crowley was not inclined to hide his occult history or information on the Golden Dawn. This was a break with the secrecy of the order in which access to the rituals had to be earned by advancement to the inner order. It was a sign of the times and the difficulty of keeping anything secret in an age of growth in print and literacy. Although one must question how different

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it really is from the publishing activities of Mathers, Westcott, and Waite. Mathers tried to stop Crowley from publishing the rituals by instigating legal proceedings. An injunction was granted but Crowley launched an appeal that set aside the injunction. This paved the way for the publication of the order’s rituals.\textsuperscript{872} Mathers attempts to stop the publication had failed.

The Equinox was ‘the official organ of the A.:.A.:.’. It claimed to use ‘the method of science – the aim of religion’\textsuperscript{873} The opening editorial explains its method for imparting information about the occult to its readers:

In this first number are published three little books; the first an account of their character and purpose, restored from the writings of von Eckartshausen; the second an ethical essay restored from the Cipher MSS. of the G.D. (of which MSS. a complete account will later be given); these two books chiefly for the benefit of those who will understand wrongly or not at all the motto “\textbf{THE METHOD OF SCIENCE — THE AIM OF RELIGION},” in which (if rightly interpreted) all is expressed; the third a series of scientific experiments, designed to instruct beginners in the groundwork of Scientific Illuminism, and to prevent them from falling into the self-deception which pride always prepares for the unwary.\textsuperscript{874}

Like \textit{L’Initiation} before it, \textit{The Equinox} demonstrates how occultists were starting to use printed material to help broaden initiation into the secrets of occultism. The controversy with Maters was not surprising given the elitist leanings of the Golden Dawn. Mathers had created extensive rituals and grade systems to guard the secrets of magic. Largely, the Golden Dawn founders saw magic as something that should only be attempted by those who had shown themselves worthy of initiation. Worth was proven by working one’s way through the grade system.

In \textit{The Books of the Beast}, D’Arch Smith makes the case that Crowley’s views on magic, and particularly his knowledge of Golden Dawn magic,
influenced how he approached publishing. He argues that Crowley approached
books of magic in the same way that he would approach any other talisman --
an object that is believed to hold sacred properties. For the Golden Dawn, the
cup, wand, dagger, pentacle, sword, Rose-Cross Lamen, and lotus-wand were
all subjected to the Neophyte ritual to imbue them with a magical current.
D'Arch Smith argues that as far as Crowley was concerned, books of magic
were religious symbols and endowed with sacred powers, as was any other tool
for creating magic in the world. He argues that this belief would be incorporated
into Crowley's approach to publishing. He maintains that Crowley saw the
publishing process as a process for giving birth to a sacred object. As such, he
treated the publishing process as a sacred ritual. For example, D'Arch Smith
maintains that Crowley preferred to publish at the exact moment of the spring
Equinox or on the summer and winter solstices. Even the publication of an
occult periodical became a magical ritual for Crowley. The ceremony of the
Equinox was for the nomination of new officers and was a biannual re-
affirmation of the aims of the order. D'Arch Smith argues that this was the
inspiration of *The Equinox* periodical. Crowley saw his publishing process as
talismanic, re-affirming his own aims and aspirations for magic and for the
world.\(^{875}\) Certainly, *The Equinox* in particular was published at the time of the
spring and fall equinox, in March and September of every year until 1919.

D'Arch Smith argues that Crowley would use certain typesetting to make
his books seem more popular than they actually were and that this was actually
a common tactic in the period. For example, there are five editions of *Orpheus: A Lyrical Legend* (1905) that were all published in the same typesetting to
impart to the purchaser a false idea of the book’s popularity. D'Arch Smith

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claims that ‘this was quite a common technique to promote sales, the most notorious example being Fergus Hume’s *Mystery of a Hansom Cab* (1888), the first -- probably the sole -- printing of which bears statements such as “One Hundred Seventy-Fifth Thousand” and other massive misleading print numbers’. However, we cannot say conclusively that this is what was happening in specific cases. D’Arch Smith maintains that this was done with Crowley’s *The Sword of the Song* (1904). He also maintains that the publishers claimed the book was published in Benares when it was actually published in Paris. D’Arch Smith also argues that the publisher divided a print run of one hundred copies into four separate editions. Finally, he maintains that Crowley used different colour bindings to create the impression of multiple editions of his books. Certainly, different binding would be enough of a difference to maintain that it was a new edition of the book. D’Arch Smith provides no conclusive physical evidences (for example from publishers’ archives) to prove that this was the case. Of course, it is conceivable that such a flamboyant character as Crowley would behave in this manner. This is certainly possible given that he was publishing many of his own books rather than deal with established publishers.

Richard Kaczynski has effectively made the case in ‘Continuing Knowledge from Generation unto Generation: The Social and Literary Background of Aleister Crowley’s Magick’ that the OTO’s chief innovation is found in its upper degree teachings on sexual magic. He maintains that ‘these teachings emerged amid a culture awash with literature on the phallic nature of religion’. Contrary to perceptions of the Victorian era as sexually repressive, it

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878 Kaczynski, ‘Continuing Knowledge’, p. 150
was actually a period of unprecedented discourse on sexual matters. In the words of Foucault, ‘what is peculiar to modern society, in fact, is not that they consigned sex to a shadow existence but that they dedicated themselves to speaking of it ad infinitum, while exploiting it as the secret’. Kaczynski maintains that Crowley would have encountered the Victorian fascination with sexuality in both the literature of the medical profession and of the decadents. This can be seen in the books that were published about the nineteenth-century and early twentieth-century occult. They give us some clues as to the kinds of discourse that Crowley would have been exposed to regarding sexuality in occult circles.

Hargrave Jennings’ *The Rosicrucians: The Rites and Mysteries* was published in 1870. The book distinguished itself by suggesting that not only religion but also Western mystery schools such as Rosicrucianism were based upon phallic worship. Blavatsky was noted for calling it ‘the ablest book that was ever written on Symbols and Mystic Orders’. OTO leader Theodor Reuss, in 1906, translated and published Jennings later work *Phallicism: A Description of the Worship of Lingam-Yoni in Various Parts of the World* (1889). Kaczynski maintains that *The Rosicrucians* was actually taken

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879 Kaczynski, ‘Continuing Knowledge’, p. 151.
884 OTO stands for Ordo Templi Orientis, a twentieth-century fraternal and religious organization that was originally modeled after Freemasonry. Crowley was the most famous of its members. Under Crowley it was reorganized around the Law of Thelema, draw from *The Book of the Law*. Found in the US Grand Lodge Ordo Templi Orientis http://oto-usa.org/oto/history/ (Last accessed 18 February 2016).
without credit from Georg von Welling’s *Opus Mago-Cabalisticum et Theologicum* (1719). The World Catalogue Library System lists 100 editions of *The Rosicrucians*, of which 26 were published in German. It was originally published by J.C. Hotten in London and republished by Chatto and Windus in London in 1879. It was published again by Nimmo in London in 1887. It was published in German by Barsdorf in Berlin in 1912 and 1920, and republished in German in 1977 by Ansata Verlag in Schwarzenburg.

In 1909, Crowley undertook a journey to Algiers with Victor Neuburg. Neuburg was Crowley’s chela or a novice initiate into the Magical Order of the Silver Star. Crowley had founded the order two years earlier. The two men made their way first by tram and then by foot into the North African desert to the southwest of Algiers. There they performed a series of magical ceremonies that prefigured Crowley’s elaboration of the techniques of sex magic, which he would later come to call Magick. Practitioners of this can be found throughout the world today. Crowley’s time in the desert was when he accepted the title of the Beast 666 or the prophet of this magic. He began to live by the ruling “There is no law beyond Do what thou wilt.” Owen argues that this took the Golden Dawn’s motto “Know Thyself” to its logical conclusion. The concept also flowed from the Greek view “Know Thyself and then Be Thyself”. These are concepts that continue to influence magical orders across the globe to this day. However, they are steeped in the occult lore of the final decade of the nineteenth century.

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886 The World Catalogue Library System (Last Assessed 16 November 2015).
Even though many of Crowley’s books only came into wide circulation in the twentieth century, their content was forged during his time with the Golden Dawn and his experiences during the early part of the twentieth century. Prior to that, his major publication efforts were The Equinox or books and poems that he self-published. Like Bulwer-Lytton before him, Crowley was dissatisfied with the respect he received during his lifetime. He adopted the mantel of a lone Romantic genius as a defence against his lack of popularity. One gets the sense that Crowley did not approve of the process of publishers mediating the work of writers. He felt that publishers held him back from fame by presenting only that which would be approved by the majority. However, what the majority accepts shifted over time. ‘Today the Golden Dawn and Crowley are household names to a whole generation seeking alternative ways of thinking’.

4.4 Conclusion

We have come full circle in the story of the nineteenth-century occult. The occult revival that started in France and drew influence from Egypt had made its way across the channel to Britain. Critical to this was Mathers’ time in Paris as he developed the Rite of Isis and brought Egyptian orientalism in occultism to Britain. This Egyptian influence can be seen through Florence Farr and her “Egyptian” plays. Obviously, they were engaging with a constructed vision of Egypt but it is significant that they chose Egyptian influence over Hindu or Indian influence for the Golden Dawn. Aleister Crowley, the most famous magician to come out of the Golden Dawn tradition, continued to travel all parts of the world and engage with all religious traditions.

890 Lévi, Letters to a Disciple, p. 10
There were not many editions of Golden Dawn texts published in multiple editions and translation in the late nineteenth or earlier twentieth century. However, the writings of Golden Dawn magicians experienced a surge in popularity starting in the late twentieth century. This lack of popularity for Golden Dawn texts was due to their express desire for secrecy and the grade system that acted as barriers to access to information about their philosophies and rituals. This magical college system was exclusive and ritualistic. This supports Owen’s point that the Golden Dawn were an elite counterpoint to more democratized forms of occultism such as spiritualism. However, as magic became increasingly democratized, the Golden Dawn texts would experience a new level of popularity. In an increasingly individualist world, with even more access to information about magic through television and the Internet, Golden Dawn magic would become part of the commercialized esotericism of the contemporary world. A quick You Tube search on the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn yields approximately 5,000 hits. Secrecy around magic has been redefined. Yet the process of the reification of occult texts as religious symbols has its roots in the nineteenth century. In the words of McIntosh, in the preface of Letters to a Disciple ‘the occult stream has swollen to a powerful current, and every self-respecting large bookshop now has an occult section’.891

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891 Lévi, Letters to a Disciple, p. 10
5.0 Final Conclusions

This thesis is fundamentally an examination of the imperial, global, and cultural factors that contributed to the growth and development of nineteenth-century occultism. It is a contribution to the trans-national turn in Victorian Studies. It demonstrates how the changes in print culture allowed for a diffusion of interest in the occult, mostly from the middle of the nineteenth century, up to the beginning of the First World War. It examines how growth in print culture generated alternative forms of religious experience. It is also an examination of the relationship between the occult and global connectivity. It attempts to determine the influences on the authors of various esoteric occult texts. This in turn builds up portraits of the international occult networks that developed in the nineteenth century.

The thesis demonstrates the importance of printing presses around the world but also the impact of the telegraph and steamships as factors in the diffusion of occultism. As such, it is trying to establish the dense network through which texts were diffused. The result was that occultism moved beyond a small exclusive coterie and found a broader audience. As such, occultism was shaped by empires including events such as Napoleon's expedition to Egypt and to a large extent the British presence in India, which helped create the Theosophical Society. Occult masters such as Aleister Crowley and Helena Blavatsky proved to be widely traveled and drew on different religious traditions. Globalization forced an awareness of different religious beliefs and traditions, and hence a discussion of how to fuse them. While the literature on the commercialization of religion has traditionally focused on the final decades of the twentieth century, this thesis demonstrates that the shift toward commercial
access to religion was very much a response to changes that were taking place in the nineteenth century.

I would propose a significant amount of further research for my immediate postdoctoral work. The most important research will be the development of a new database on the publication of occult texts. This will enable me, and other scholars, to further identify patterns across time, location, and publishing houses. The data that exist at present largely inform us on the dates of translations and editions. Information on the number and size of print runs would be more useful. The database I propose will include information on titles, dates of publication, translations, places of publication, printers, and publishers. Whenever possible I would like to collect information on the number of pages, cost, covers, plates, and print runs. While I have already compiled a significant amount of information using the World Catalogue Library (WCL) system, the WCL does not provide an exhaustive list of editions as it does not access all the libraries across the world. A more exhaustive search of libraries across Europe, America, Africa, and South America would provide additional information. I will also use the Copac National Academic and Specialist Library Catalogue, along with the catalogues of major international libraries to compile the necessary information. This will include the catalogues of the Bodleian and Cambridge University libraries, the British Library, the American Library of Congress, Library and Archives Canada, the National Library of Australia, the National Library of New Zealand, and the Bibliothèque Nationale de France. I will also draw on the catalogues of major libraries across Europe, India, China, Egypt, Africa, and South America. This new database will provide more information that will enable scholars to calculate solid data on the publication of
occult texts for the first time. I would develop this database and include the results before publishing this thesis as my first book.

In addition to the development of a database on occult texts, I will be doing new archival work. I would like to review the Golden Dawn manuscripts in the Gerald Yorke collection at the Warburg Institute and the Stella Matutina manuscripts at the Freemason’s Library in London. I would also like to visit the Kegan Paul Routledge archive at University College London to review letters from occultists to this important occult publisher. I will be examining all of these manuscripts for evidence of the use of international trade and publishing networks. I will also be seeking evidence of how occult texts were mediated by publishers.
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