



Philosophical  
History

A Quarterly Journal of Research

Volume VI, No. 8    October 1997

ISSN 0951-497X

# THEOSOPHICAL HISTORY

A Quarterly Journal of Research

Founded by Leslie Price, 1985

Volume VI, No. 8

October 1997

## EDITOR

James A. Santucci  
*California State University, Fullerton*

## ASSOCIATE EDITORS

Robert Boyd

John Cooper  
*University of Sydney*

John Patrick Deveney  
New York, NY

April Hejka-Ekins  
*California State University, Stanislaus*

Jerry Hejka-Ekins  
*Nautilus Books*

Robert Ellwood  
*University of Southern California*

Antoine Faivre  
*École Pratique des Hautes Études, Paris*

Joscelyn Godwin  
*Colgate University*

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

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

Leslie Price  
Former Editor, *Theosophical History*

Gregory Tillett  
*University of Western Sydney, Nepean*

Karen-Claire Voss  
*San Jose State University*

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

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

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

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

\* \* \* \* \*

## GUIDELINES FOR SUBMISSION OF MANUSCRIPTS

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

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

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

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

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

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

Copyright ©1997 by James A. Santucci

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

Printed on acid-free paper

**Contents**

October 1997  
Volume VI, Number 8

**Editor's Comments**

James Santucci ..... 271

**From the Newspapers**

Introduction ..... 275  
We are All Wrong ..... 277  
Mme. Blavatsky on Fakirs ..... 279  
We Reply to Mme. Blavatsky ..... 281  
Notes by James Santucci

**Articles**

Behind the Veil of "Cherubina de Gabriak"  
Kristi A. Groberg ..... 285

The Solar Temple Strikes Back:  
Comments and Interpretations  
after the Second Tragedy  
Massimo Introvigne ..... 298

**Review Notice**

Notes on *Madame Blavatsky's Baboon*  
W.T.S. Thackara ..... 309

**Book Notes**

*In Perfect Timing*  
Leslie Price ..... 317

*In the Name of the New World Order* and  
*The Case of Valentin Tomberg*  
Leslie Price ..... 318

# Editor's Comments

## In This Issue

Unlike recent past issues, in which one major article appeared, two articles appear herein: "Behind the Veil of 'Cherubina de Gabriak'" by Kristi A. Groberg, and "The Solar Temple Strikes Back: Comments and Interpretations after the Second Tragedy" by Massimo Introvigne. The first article examines that portion of the life of Elizaveta Ivanovna Dmitrieva (1887–1928), who, during 1909 and 1910, was known as "Cherubina de Gabriak," a pseudonym she used while publishing a series of poems in the journal *Apollo*, a journal edited by Sergei Makovskii. The poems were submitted while Dmitrieva was having a love affair with the writer Nikolai Gumilëv. Although one might expect this subject to be presented in a literary journal, the significance of the poetry at this time is the influence of Anthroposophy in Dmitrieva's life and work. These poems accordingly reveal a fusion of Symbolism—a significantly influential literary movement initiated in the late 1800s—and Anthroposophy and which were regarded by a member of the editorial board of *Apollo*, Innokentii Annenskii, as on a par with the French Symbolists Charles Beaudelaire and Joris-Karl Huysmans. Although this short period of 1909-1910—when she assumed the mysterious *persona* of Cherubina de Gabriak—ended as abruptly as it began, her life thereafter reveals a literary activity and a continuing influence upon her of Anthroposophical

ideas. As Dr. Groberg concludes: "It is Anthroposophy that will, I believe, ultimately provide a more true picture of the complexity of Dmitrieva's literary corpus." The author, Dr. Kristi Groberg is a member of the History Department at Moorhead State University (Minnesota). She received her Ph.D. in Russian History at the University of Minnesota in 1992 and has since written a number of articles, including eight entries in the *Dictionary of Russian Women Writers* (edited by Marina Ledkovsky, Charlotte Rosenthal and Mary Zirin [Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1994]).

The second article, "The Solar Temple Strikes Back," is an update of Massimo Introvigne's "Armageddon in Switzerland," which originally appeared in the October 1995 (V/8) issue of this journal. The initial tragedy of fifty-three individuals found dead in Switzerland and Quebec, Canada in 1994, followed by nineteen more bodies—sixteen members of the OTS or Ordre du Temple Solaire and three of their children—in December 1995 has led to extensive study and investigation by the police and academics. Dr. Introvigne has reviewed these studies and provides a threefold approach to the events at hand: reductionist interpretations, socio-psychological interpretations, and historical interpretations. Dr. Introvigne is the Director of the Center for the Study of New Religions (CESNUR) in Turin, Italy. He is a prolific writer of articles and books and certainly one of

the most knowledgeable scholars of new religious movements in the world today. His last contribution to this journal appeared in the January 1997 issue of the journal, “Witchcraft, Evil, and Memnoch the Devil: Esoteric and Theosophical Themes in Anne Rice’s New Orleans Fiction.”

W.T.S. Thackara’s “Notes on *Madame Blavatsky’s Baboon*” by Peter Washington is not so much a book review as a remedial essay. When *Madame Blavatsky’s Baboon* first appeared in the U.K. in 1993, many were dismayed at the number of inaccuracies in the author’s treatment of the Theosophical content of the book. It was hoped that when Schocken Books published it in the U.S., the necessary corrections would have been made. Such was not the case, however. As a result, Mr. Thackara of the Theosophical University Press (Theosophical Society, Pasadena) undertook the task of itemizing and correcting some of the more significant errors. Given the popularity of the book (there are numerous references on the Internet), it is important that readers be aware that although the book is entertaining (Robert Boyd in *THVI/6* wrote a more sympathetic review, highlighting the scope and ideas contained therein), it is important that readers—especially scholars—be made aware of the oversights and sometimes inexcusable errors that are scattered in Mr. Washington’s book. Of course, the question arises, “If the book has this many errors in reference only to Theosophy, how many more exist in the author’s treatment of the other movements?” Perhaps others will respond to this question.

Two more entries appear in this issue, Leslie Price’s book notes on three titles—two of which are published by Temple Lodge

(London) and one by Findhorn Press—and three items that originally appeared in the New York *Sun* in 1877.

\* \* \*

### **International Theosophical History Conference: 1997 (London)**

The Seventh International Theosophical History Conference was held at the headquarters of The Theosophical Society in England on July 11, 12, and 13 sponsored by the Foundation for Theosophical Studies and directed by the editor. Fifteen papers were presented by speakers from Canada, Finland, France, the U.K. and the U.S. Topics ranged from the early days of the T.S. to the mid-20th century. The Conference’s theme, “Issues and Personalities in the History of the Theosophical Society” dealt with such issues as the connection of the women in the suffragette movement and the Theosophical Society (Joy Dixon’s “Sex is Not a Freehold Possession”), Madame Blavatsky’s exoneration from writing the Mahatma Letters (Vernon Harrison’s “New Discoveries in *The Mahatma Letters*”), the original purpose of forming the Theosophical Society (“Astral Projection and the Early Theosophical Society” by J.P. Deveney), and the relation of Theosophy with socialism in Finland (“Theosophy and Socialism” by Tore Ahlback).

Personalities ranged from Charles Sotheran (“Charles Sotheran’s Description of Theosophy” by James Santucci), the astrologers Alan Leo (“Creativity and Conflict” by Nicholas Campion), Walter Old (“Walter Old: the Man Who Held Madame Blavatsky’s Hand” by Kim Farnell), Cyril Scott (“Cyril Scott and a Hidden School” by Jean

Overton-Fuller), Louis Jacolliot (“Jacolliot and the Influence of India” by Daniel Caracostea), Stainton Moses (“Stainton Moses, Masonry and Theosophy” by John Hamill), Edgar Cayce (“Theosophy in the Edgar Cayce Readings” by Paul Johnson), and John Thomas (“The Disappointed Magus: John Thomas and his ‘Celestial Brotherhood’” by Robert Gilbert), Robert Crosbie and B.P. Wadia (“The True Service of Humanity” by Judy Saltzman).

Also among the papers was Michael Gomes’ “Unveiling Isis,” an overview of the contents and findings of Madame Blavatsky’s first major work, *Isis Unveiled*, and a report on his preparation of an abridged version of the same.

The last contribution to the Conference was my own “The Point Loma Theosophical Society: 1897,” a slide lecture on the origins of the headquarters of the Theosophical Society at Point Loma (San Diego, California).

Conferences such as the International Theosophical History Conference are important for a number of reasons. First, it allows historians to come together and to share their research and discoveries. Furthermore, scholarly networks are either established or strengthened. One of the pleasant discoveries that came out of this Conference was the opportunity to meet with individuals who have been conducting research generally unknown to those connected with *Theosophical History*. Kim Farnell’s work on Walter Old represents part of a major study that will come out in book form sometime in 1998. Joy Dixon’s work on women’s rights in England gives new insights to the Theosophical contribution to the suffragette movement. Tore Ahlbäck’s “Theosophy and Socialism” offers insight into the role of the T.S. in Finland.

Another reason for holding conferences is to demonstrate the legitimacy of studying a topic

such as Theosophy and its offshoots. All too often, this subject, when it is discussed in scholarly circles, is presented in a most unscholarly fashion. Falsehoods are perpetuated and original research is not actively pursued. A renewed interest in Theosophy is appearing, however. One sees a sprinkling of articles on the subject in academic journals as well as in books published in academic presses. Recently, Stephen Prothero of Boston University and the author of *The White Buddhist* (reviewed in *THVI*/4 [Oct. 1996]) wrote a review essay entitled “Theosophy’s Sinner/Saint: Recent Books on Madame Blavatsky” in the *Religious Studies Review* 23/3 (July 1997): 257-62, giving his assessment of six recently published works. Such a review would not be possible or even accepted a few years ago. Dr. Prothero’s assessment of all the books offers promise for future research in this field. He writes:

The books reviewed here, especially when added to earlier related work, make a strong case for the claim that Blavatsky is as important as she is intriguing. They also make it painfully apparent that Blavatsky, despite the hundreds of books either celebrating or reviling her, still awaits a dispassionate historian of *religion* who will give her her due.

It is my hope that this will take place sooner rather than later. One way of doing so is for scholars to reevaluate—or perhaps read for the first time—Blavatsky’s principal writings in the light of nineteenth century scholarship. Readers will be surprised, in my opinion, at the depth and eclecticism that exists especially in her masterworks, *Isis Unveiled* and *The Secret Doctrine*.

\* \* \*

## **International Theosophical History Conference: 2000 (Point Loma)**

I am in the process of arranging the next Theosophical History conference at Point Loma. The site for the conference will be the same as that of the fifth International Theosophical History Conference: the Point Loma Nazarene College in San Diego, which is located on the land formerly held by the Universal Brotherhood and Theosophical Society under the leadership of Katherine Tingley (1897-1929) and Gottfried de Purucker (1929-1942). Although the Nazarene College has developed the campus since its purchase in 1973 and especially since the last conference in 1992, many of the old buildings still remain: Spalding House (now the Administration Building, to which see Richard Robb's "Getting on the Ball" in *TH* VI/7), North House (now the Alumni House), the Greek Amphitheater, the Casa Rosa (now the Student Health Center), and Madame Tingley's house. The campus overlooks the Pacific Ocean and still retains its beauty.

Housing at the residence halls on the campus will be arranged, although motels and hotels in town are an option. The San Diego Airport is only a few minutes away, so the expense will be minimal in getting to Point Loma.

The conference is planned for two days. In addition, there will be opportunities to visit the sites of San Diego, including the University of California, San Diego archives and the San Diego Historical Society's collections.

Should you be interested in attending the Conference and should you have any questions about transportation, tours, or special events,

please write or fax me. I will in turn include additional information in future issues to keep you updated on the planning.

\* \* \*

## **Change of Departmental Name and Other Changes**

This past summer, the Department of Religious Studies of the California State University at Fullerton has undergone a name change. It is now called the **Department of Comparative Religion**. My address is now as follows:

Department of Comparative Religion  
P.O. Box 6868  
California State University  
Fullerton, CA 92834-6868

The University is also changing its e-mail system. As a result, I have been without e-mail for the past few weeks and do not know when all the changes will be made and problems resolved. The best way to reach me, therefore is either through telephone (714-278-3727) or fax (714-693-0142).

\* \* \* \* \*

# From The Newspapers

## We Are All Wrong.

[Editorial, *The New York Sun*, Wednesday, March 28, 1877: 2, col. 2-3]

## MME. BLAVATSKY ON FAKIRS.

**She has Seen them Both Levitated and  
Disembowelled—Magnetic Attraction.**

[*The New York Sun*, Sunday, April 1, 1877: 4, col. 6]

## We Reply to Mme. Blavatsky.

[Editorial, *The New York Sun*, Thursday, April 5, 1877: 2, col. 3]

Introduction and Notes by James A. Santucci

Towards the end of March 1877 and in early April 1877, a series of articles and editorials on Madame Blavatsky and her views on magic, and letters from Blavatsky and Col. H.S. Olcott, appeared in the New York *World* and New York *Sun*. The impetus for these entries was Blavatsky's much anticipated *Isis Unveiled*, announced in the January 23, 1877 issue of the *World*. Many of the articles, all from the *World*, have been reprinted in *Theosophical History*<sup>1</sup> and elsewhere.<sup>2</sup> The current entries all derive from the *Sun*.

The first entry, "We Are All Wrong," is the *Sun's* editorial response to "The New York School of Magic," a letter written by Col. Olcott, who attempted to correct what he considered to be a false impression based on a statement by Madame Blavatsky.<sup>3</sup> She, according to Col. Olcott, did not mean that natural laws could be broken but rather wished to emphasize that all the laws of nature are not known by Western scientists; only Eastern magicians or "fakirs" understand "the real laws and limitations of nature."<sup>4</sup> The editorialist writing in the same

issue of the *World* understood her drift but added that the ability to levitate, one of the examples Olcott cited in his letter, was not so much the result of an understanding of a “real” law of nature as it was an example of trickery. The fakir demonstrating levitation, the editorialist claimed, was found to have an “iron chair in the seat of his baggy trousers, and that an iron rod attached to it, and bent to follow the shape of his arm, ran down the palm of his hand and fitted over the top of the pole upon which he was poised.”<sup>5</sup> As for the example of continued life despite disembowelment, the editorialist was of the opinion that it would be best to retain the “bowels and their employment.” Indeed, “the most abusive epithet we apply to a person is to say that he is a man of no bowels.”<sup>6</sup>

One day later, the *Sun*'s amusing editorial, “We Are All Wrong,” takes off on both Madame Blavatsky and Col. Olcott, displaying mock surprise at the possibility that the laws of nature are not so fixed and unerring. Unfortunately for the two Theosophists, since the *Sun* does not put much faith in their pronouncements, it therefore does not see any reason not to make them the object of its raillery.

As would be expected, such an editorial—what is described by Madame Blavatsky as a “satire metaphorically thrust through my back”—provoked a response that further elucidated her position. Her letter, written on the 28th of March but published in the April 1 issue, adds further clarity to her original statement that Olcott sought to clarify.

It is not the principle of the law of gravitation, or the necessity of a central force acting toward the sun, that is denied, but the assump-

tion that behind the law which draws bodies toward the earth's centre, and which is our most familiar example of gravitation, there is not another law, equally immutable, that under certain conditions appears to counteract it.

What is of interest is the number of scientific minds she marshals to demonstrate, in her opinion, that we still have much to learn before any definitive and unfaltering statement on gravitation can be elicited. As for levitation being a possibility, one should not dismiss it so readily unless and until the judgements and testimonies of such illustrious scientists as Crookes, Thury, Gray and Warner are taken into account. But what of the charge that the feat of levitation by a fakir was nothing but mere trickery? Blavatsky rebuts the argument based on the editorial writer's ignorance of Hindu dress. Hindu fakirs do not wear “baggy breeches in the exercise of their religious functions”; rather, they wear—at least this is what she implies—far less, a “*dboti*, a cloth about the loins: only that and nothing more.” As for the light-hearted reference to disembowelment, Blavatsky claims that she was eyewitness to such a feat.

In order to get a last word in, an editorial appearing in the April 5th issue of *The Sun* replied to the preceding. Despite the compliments paid to her, the *Sun* still takes a somewhat disapproving position of her claims and concludes that its rival, the *World*, “seems to have the best of it up to this moment.”

\* \* \*

# We Are All Wrong.

[Editorial, *The New York Sun*,  
Wednesday, March 28, 1877:  
2, col. 2-3]

We have always hitherto taken solid comfort in the thought that this world is governed by fixed and unerring laws, and that all things, whether moral or material, must and do render strict obedience to these immutable decrees. If we were not sure that a cause would produce its effect, what trouble would ensue! If it was never certain that when you added two and two together the sum would be four, what derangements would occur in commerce! Suppose that eight was not invariably one more than seven, what would have become of the trick to count in HAYES.<sup>7</sup> Suppose that sometimes water ran up hill and sometimes down, would not the hydraulic engineers be in a quandary? Suppose the sky occasionally fell, wouldn't it be disagreeable, even if you could catch larks, especially as they would be of no use to you when you got them?

Thus we see how much our happiness, our prosperity, and our general well-being depend on natural laws and our faith that they are unchanging and unchangeable. Therefore, when Mme. BLAVATSKY, one of Hierophant OLCOTT'S theosophists, enlightening a *World* reporter, spoke with disrespect, and even contempt, of the law of gravitation, with which the name of NEWTON will be connected through all time, we felt as if a near and very dear friend

had been abused by that iconoclastic lady. But yesterday a defender of Mme. BLAVATSKY argued her cause in that journal, and if we are not mistaken in the style of the letter, that chivalric defender is no other than our ponderous friend, Hierophant OLCOTT himself. So thinking, we have perused the letter with great absorption of interest and profound regard for the arguments advanced. Hierophant OLCOTT'S specialty is Eastern lore, particularly all that concerns the mysteries of Buddhism. His theosophical religion he has culled from that store, and he it was who discovered that the earliest ancestors of the Aryans, that is, the people who lived somewhere near the time of ADAM and EVE, had furnished to the Buddhist priests that long-sought prize, the true and perfect religion. When, therefore, Hierophant OLCOTT talks about the mysteries of the infinite, we lay aside all other occupations and listen to his words with respectful attention.

If this *World* writer is he, our Oriental friend sustains Mme. BLAVATSKY in her opposition to the law of gravitation with zeal and ponderousness. He speaks of the "current notions" concerning that law, and instances many cases where solid bodies have totally disregarded its decrees, and poised themselves in mid air, with nothing to support them but the ambient ether. Hierophant OLCOTT says that the Prince of WALES and his staff saw a fakir in India sit calmly in the air in broad daylight, with nothing to support him, while gravitation in vain tried to bring him down. If this did really happen, it was a very extraordinary thing, and we shall await with eagerness the forthcoming official history of the Prince's experiences in the East, in order to read about this marvellous

occurrence at length and in detail. We must remember, however, that Hierophant OLCOTT was not himself present at the performance, and so gets his information regarding it from mere hearsay. Mr. BULL RUN RUSSELL<sup>8</sup> can tell us about it more accurately. Still, we do not yet discredit the story, for possibly Dr. Dix<sup>9</sup> may some day lift himself to the top of Trinity steeple by his boot straps.

There are many reported instances of human bodies floating about in the air, as if their substance was imponderable, but we regret never to have seen the feat performed. Mr. HOME<sup>10</sup>, the spiritualist, it is asserted, thinks nothing of sailing about the room, and he has no fear of starting forth in the air from the topmost window of the highest house. When next he attempts either of those things we hope we shall be there to see.

The *World* writer, after disposing of the law of gravitation, attacks that other "natural law, supposed fixed and untransgressable, that a man cannot live when cut open and disembowelled." It has been held since the time of ÆSCULAPIUS<sup>11</sup> and GALEN<sup>12</sup> that to keep this human machine running you must give it fuel, or food; that the bowels are the furnace of the steam machinery of man, and as essential to his existence as the furnace of a steamboat to its locomotion. They are a very delicate part of the human organism, and surgeons would hesitate about removing them, even if they were diseased, except from a cadaver. Yet, this *World* writer, whom we assume to be Hierophant OLCOTT, agrees with Mme. BLAVATSKY and that entertaining French priest, the Abbé HUC<sup>13</sup>, that it is "no uncommon thing for the lamas to cut themselves open, expose their entrails, and then, bringing the

severed edges together, with a few passes of the hand to cause the wound to heal instantaneously, without leaving a scar." If this is so, it is wonderful, and we advise all our surgeons to go at once to Asia and learn how it is done. Perhaps Dr. WILLIAM A. HAMMOND<sup>14</sup> will see the propriety and wisdom of journeying with Hierophant OLCOTT to the Buddhist monasteries where this thing is done, and so start a new departure in medical science and veracious reporting.

We shall not deny that people can float in the air, or that they can cut open their bowels and bring the wound together again without its leaving a scar. The economy of nature is a subject to which not only one man, but also countless generations of men may profitably give their thought; and to our perception miracles occur every day, because we yet fail to understand marvellous laws which govern the universe. There is enough in the world to keep men investigating for thousands of years to come. Still, it is remarkable that a man can cut open his bowels and close the wound again without leaving a scar, and we should not have believed it could be done if Mme. BLAVATSKY and Hierophant OLCOTT had not said so.

We hope to see these things practically tested in the New World, where we all can see. If a barbarian fakir can sit calmly in the air and disembowel himself without inconvenience, why may not these extraordinary operations be performed in the metropolis of America? We therefore call on Hierophant OLCOTT to attest the faith that is in him. Let him mount the tall tower, and when he gets near the clock project himself into the ether which surrounds that abode of Thought, and then give himself a few cuts in mid air. We guarantee that Printing

House square will be full of observers, and that the reporters will record the success of the experiment with minute accuracy, for among the best informed and conscientious members of the newspaper fraternity, in New York, are those enterprising gentlemen whose work is as honorable as it is efficient.

\* \* \*

## **MME. BLAVATSKY ON FAKIRS.**

**She has Seen them  
Both Levitated and  
Disembowelled—Magnetic  
Attraction.**

**[The New York Sun, Sunday,  
April 1, 1877: 4, col. 6]**

TO THE EDITOR OF THE SUN—*Sir*: How ever ignorant I may be of the laws of the solar system, I am, at all events, so firm a believer in heliocentric journalism that I subscribe for THE SUN. I have therefore seen your remarks in to-day's SUN upon my "iconoclasm."

No doubt it is a great honor for an unpretending foreigner to be thus crucified between the two greatest celebrities of your chivalrous country—the truly good Deacon Richard Smith of the blue gauze trousers, and the nightingale of the willow and the cypress, G. Washington Childs, A.M.<sup>15</sup> But I am not a Hindoo fakir, and

therefore cannot say that I enjoy crucifixion, especially when unmerited. I would not even fancy being swung around the "tall tower," with the steel hooks of your satire metaphorically thrust through my back. I have not invited the reporters to a show. I have not sought notoriety. I have only taken up a quiet corner in your free country, and, as a woman who has travelled much, shall try to tell a Western public what strange things I have seen among Eastern peoples. If I could have enjoyed this privilege at home, I should not be here. Being here, I shall, as your old English proverb expresses it, "tell the truth and shame the devil."

The *World* reporter who visited me wrote an article which mingled his souvenirs of my stuffed apes and my canaries, my tiger heads and palms, with aërial music and the flitting *doppelgängers* of adepts. It was a very interesting article, and certainly intended to be very impartial. If he made me appear to deny the immutability of natural law, and inferentially to affirm the possibility of miracle, it was, I am sure, unintentional, and wholly due to my faulty English.

There are no such uncompromising believers in the immutability and universality of the laws of nature as students of occultism. Let us then, with your permission, leave the shade of the great Newton to rest in peace. It is not the principle of the law of gravitation, or the necessity of a central force acting toward the sun, that is denied, but the assumption that behind the law which draws bodies toward the earth's centre, and which is our most familiar example of gravitation, there is not another law, equally immutable, that under certain conditions appears to counteract it. If but once in a hundred

years a table or fakir is seen to rise in the air, without a visible mechanical cause, then that rising is a manifestation of a natural law of which our scientists are yet ignorant. Christians believe in miracles; occultists credit them even less than pious scientist—Sir David Brewster,<sup>16</sup> for instance. Show an occultist an unfamiliar phenomenon, and he will never affirm *a priori* that it is either a trick or a miracle. He will search for the cause in the region of causes.

There was an anecdote about Babinet,<sup>17</sup> the astronomer, current in Paris in 1854, when the great war was raging between the Academy and “waltzing tables.” This skeptical man of science had proclaimed in the *Revue des Deux Mondes* (January, 1854, p. 414) that the levitation of furniture without contact “was simply as impossible as perpetual motion.” A few days later, during an experimental seance, a table was levitated, without contact, in his presence. The result was that Babinet went straight to a dentist to have a molar tooth extracted, which the iconoclastic table, in its aerial flight had seriously damaged. But it was too late to recall his article.

I suppose nine men out of ten, including editors, would maintain that the undulatory theory of light is one of the most firmly established. And yet, if you will turn to page 22 of “The New Chemistry,” by Professor Josiah P. Cooke, Jr.,<sup>18</sup> of Harvard University, (New York, 1876), you will find him saying: “I cannot agree with those who regard the wave-theory of light as an established principle of science. \* \* \* It requires a combination of qualities in the ether of space which I find it difficult to believe are actually realized.” What is this but iconoclasm?

Let us bear in mind that Newton himself

received the corpuscular theory of Pythagoras and his predecessors, from whom he learned it, and that it was only *en désespoir de cause* [*i.e.*, as a last resource] that later scientists accepted the wave theory of Descartes<sup>19</sup> and Huyghens.<sup>20</sup> Kepler<sup>21</sup> maintained the magnetic nature of the sun. Leibnitz ascribed the planetary motions to agitations of an ether. Borelli<sup>22</sup> anticipated Newton in his discovery, although he failed to demonstrate it as triumphantly. Huyghens and Boyle,<sup>23</sup> Horrocks<sup>24</sup> and Hooke,<sup>25</sup> Halley<sup>26</sup> and Wren,<sup>27</sup> all had ideas of a central force acting toward the sun, and of the true principle of diminution of action of the force in the ratio of the inverse square of the distance.

The last word has not yet been spoken with respect to gravitation; its limitations can never be known until the nature of the sun is better understood. They are just beginning to recognize (see Prof. Balfour Stewart’s<sup>28</sup> lecture at Manchester, entitled “The Sun and the Earth,” and Prof. A. M. Mayer’s<sup>29</sup> lecture, “The Earth a Great Magnet”) the intimate connection between the sun’s spots and the position of the heavenly bodies. The interplanetary magnetic attractions are but just being demonstrated. Until gravitation is understood to be simply magnetic attraction and repulsion, and the part played by magnetism itself in the endless correlations of forces in the ether of space—that “hypothetical medium,” as Webster terms it—I maintain that it is neither fair nor wise to deny the levitation of either fakir or table. Bodies oppositely electrified attract each other; similarly electrified, repulse each other. Admit, therefore, that any body having weight, whether man or inanimate object, can be any cause whatever, external or internal, be given the

same polarity as the spot on which they stand, and what is to prevent their rising?

Before charging me with falsehood when I affirm that I have seen both men and objects levitated, you must first dispose of the abundant testimony of persons far better known than my humble self. Mr. Crooks<sup>30</sup> (*sic*), Prof. Thury<sup>31</sup> of Geneva, Louis Jacolliot,<sup>32</sup> your own Dr. Gray and Dr. Warner, and hundreds of others have, first and last, certified to the fact of levitation.

I am surprised to find how little even the editors of your erudite contemporary, the *World*, are acquainted with Oriental metaphysics in general, and the trousers of the Hindo (*sic*) fakirs in particular. It was bad enough to make those holy mendicants of the religion of Brahma graduate from the Buddhist Lamaseries of Thibet; but is it unpardonable to make them wear baggy breeches in the exercise of their religious functions. This is as bad as if a Hindoo journalist had represented the Rev. Mr. Beecher<sup>33</sup> entering his pulpit in the scant costume of the fakir—the *dboti*, a cloth about the loins; “only that and nothing more.” To account, therefore, for the oft-witnessed, open-air levitations of the *swamees* and *gurus* upon the theory of an iron frame concealed beneath the clothing, is as reasonable as Monsieur Babinet’s explanation of the table tipping and tapping as “unconscious ventriloquism.”

You may object to the act of disemboweling, which I am compelled to affirm I have seen performed. It is, as you say, “remarkable;” but still not miraculous. Your suggestion that Dr. Hammond should go and see it as good one, Science would be the gainer, and your humble correspondent be justified. Are you, however, in a position to guarantee that he would furnish

the world of skeptics with an example of “veracious reporting,” if his observations should tend to overthrow the pet theories of what we loosely call science?

Yours, very respectfully,  
NEW YORK, March 28. H.P. BLAVATSKY

## **We Reply to Mme. Blavatsky.**

**[Editorial, *The New York Sun*,  
Thursday, April 5, 1877: 2, col. 3]**

**W**e should before this have given attention to the letter Mme. BLAVATSKY did us the honor to address to THE SUN, and which we printed on Sunday. We undertake a reply with the more pleasure because we observe that she is an intelligent person, with an evident appreciation of fun, good temper, and a just admiration for THE SUN, which shines for all from the remotest Buddhist lamasery to the nearest congregation of the saints. Mme. BLAVATSKY seems to have been an attentive reader, and we believe she is an extensive traveller. She has the Russian facility of acquiring languages, and writes English with ease, force, and directness. The Theosophical society has in her an admirable secretary, and we doubt not that, so far as learning goes, she overtops them all, Hierophant OLCOTT included.

Let us at once assure Mme. BLAVATSKY that it has not occurred to us to doubt her veracity. We believe her when she says she has seen

“both men and objects levitated”—that is, remain in the air without support, and in opposition to the law of gravitation. Nor do we doubt her word when she adds that she has seen men in India disembowel themselves without losing their lives. No one who has read the history of India but is aware that such things are done there by the ascetic devotees, or at least seem to be done; and no one who knows the extraordinary things performed by men and women under the influence of hysteria, as the doctors call it—a form of nervous excitement about which little is known even by those who say they know a good deal about it—will question the truth of her words. Nor do we deny that there are laws of nature about which we know nothing and the discovery and exploration of which will occupy the time and thought of our descendants through all time. The history of these mysteries is full of things seemingly marvellous, and their study is one of the most fascinating in which a man can engage. Any one who denies that things have been done which are startling to our conceptions of the laws governing matter, has failed to read authentic history with care and thoroughness. Still, we do not believe that a man can float in the air without support, or cut out his bowels without inconvenience, even though Mme. BLAVATSKY thinks she has seen people do it.

Our Russian friend finds fault with the *World's* notions regarding fakirs, but perhaps she has too poor an opinion of the Oriental learning of our clever contemporary. We have ourselves sometimes been obliged to point out and correct the blunders of the *World* in its discussions of questions social, gastronomical, and ethical, but if Mme. BLAVATSKY will excuse us, we will

withdraw entirely from the fakir controversy, merely expressing the opinion that the *World* seems to have the best of it up to this moment. Still, there is much to be said on the lady's side, and we thank her for projecting so interesting a discussion into our matter of fact journalism, just now occupied with the treatment of the grave questions of politics which arise out of the anomalous condition of affairs in this country due to the existence of a Fraudulent President and his efforts to cast overboard the party which made him, and create a new party of his own. It is a relief to turn from such topics to the serene contemplation of Oriental asceticism, always an engaging subject for thought and study, notwithstanding the unwashed habits of its Brahman or Mohammedan practitioners.

We thank Mme. BLAVATSKY for her polite and interesting letter, which our readers must have perused with care and profit. We all love the marvellous, and listen with eagerness to the stories of performances out of the range of ordinary human experience, though we may question the facts related, and adhere to the doctrine that the eye of man may prove deceitful. Mme. BLAVATSKY, we believe, is writing a book about her strange and varied observations. When it appears we shall read it thoughtfully, and doubtless with advantage, for we discover that she is really a clever woman.

\* \* \* \* \*

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> "A Lamasonry in New York" (March 26, 1877) and the editorial "Lamaseries" (March 26, 1877) both appeared in *Theosophical History* III/6 (April 1891): 174-79; "The New York School of Magic" (March 27, 1877) and the editorial "Levitation and Other Light Matters" (March 27, 1877) both appeared in *Theosophical History* III/7-8 (July-Oct. 1891): 224-28; "Mme. Blavatsky Again" (April 2, 1877) appeared in *Theosophical History* IV/2 (April 1892): 51-55.

In *Theosophical History* VI/6 (April 1897): 203-214 appeared two articles challenging Blavatsky's views on magic and the Theosophical Society's monopoly on magical knowledge and display: "Lampsakanism" (April 1, 1877) and "The Illuminated Lampsakenoi" (April 8, 1877).

<sup>2</sup> "Madame Blavatsky Protests" (April 6, 1877) in *H.P. Blavatsky Collected Writings: 1874-1878*<sup>2</sup>, vol. I, compiled by Boris de Zirkoff (Wheaton: The Theosophical Publishing House, 1977), 238-241.

<sup>3</sup> *Theosophical History* VI/6 (April 1897): 204. Blavatsky's statement was made in "A Lamasonry in New York," cited on page 175 of *Theosophical History* III/6.

<sup>4</sup> "The New York School of Magic," in *Theosophical History* III/7-8: 224.

<sup>5</sup> "Levitation and Other Light Matters," *Theosophical History* III/7-8: 227.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, 227-28.

<sup>7</sup> Rutherford B. Hayes (1822-1893), the nineteenth president of the U.S. (1877-1881). There was much written at this time about the manner in which he was elected president. In fact, the lead editorial of the March 28th issue of *The Sun* is entitled "A Bargain which Made Hayes President." According to the editorial, the "Bargain" was between the representatives of Hayes, Charles Foster and Stanley Matthews, and a number of Southern Democrats not to filibuster in the House of Representatives so that the electoral count could continue, thus allowing Hayes to be declared elected as president. In return for the Southern Democrats cooperation, Hayes agreed to withdraw U.S.

troops from South Carolina and Louisiana, to cease all interference of the Federal government with these two states, and to approve a Southern railroad to the Pacific by means of a loan from the U.S.

It appears that Hayes' opponent, Samuel J. Tilden, actually received a greater number of popular and electoral college votes, but a challenge to the validity of returns from South Carolina, Florida, Louisiana, and Oregon led to the establishment of a special fifteen member election commission, leading to a 185 to 184 victory for Hayes on March 2, 1877. This did not sit well with the press, especially *The Sun*, which called him a "Fraudulent President" in its editorial of May 8, and which also published a picture of Hayes on the front page of the June 27, 1877 issue, with the caption "FRAUD" blazoned across his forehead.

<sup>8</sup> I have not been able to identify this person.

<sup>9</sup> This person is also unidentified.

<sup>10</sup> Daniel Dunglas Home (1833-1886), the Scottish Spiritualist medium.

<sup>11</sup> Asclepius, the Greek god of medicine. Æsculapius is the Latin form of the name.

<sup>12</sup> Galen (129-199), the distinguished Greek physician and founder of experimental physiology.

<sup>13</sup> Evariste Régis Huc (1813-1860), a French missionary who wrote a widely known account of his travels to the East, *Souvenirs d'un voyage dans la Tartarie, le Thibet et la Chine pendant les années 1845, 1845, et 1846*.

<sup>14</sup> William Alexander Hammond (1828-?) was a prominent physician in New York at the time.

<sup>15</sup> Deacon Richard Smith, the editor or publisher of the *Gazette* in Cincinnati, and G. Washington Childs, the editor or publisher of the *Public Ledger*, were both mentioned on the editorial page along with Madame Blavatsky's letter. "Deacon Richard Smith as an Art Educator" appears in column 2; the untitled notice mentioning Childs appears in column 5.

<sup>16</sup> Sir David Brewster (1781-1868), a physicist noted for his work in optics and polarized light and for the law named after him. He is mentioned in *Isis Unveiled* I, 137 and 282.

<sup>17</sup> M. Jacques Babinet (1794–1872), the author of *Etudes et lectures sur les sciences d'observation et leur applications pratiques*. He is mentioned *Isis Unveiled*, I, 60, 101, 104–105, 107–108. The article in the *Revue des Deux Mondes* is discussed on pages 104 and 105.

<sup>18</sup> See *Isis Unveiled*, I, 137, 190–91.

<sup>19</sup> René Descartes (1596–1650). He is mentioned in *Isis Unveiled* I, 71 and 206.

<sup>20</sup> Christiaan Huygens (1629–1695), the mathematician, astronomer, and physicist who introduced the wave theory of light.

<sup>21</sup> Johannes Kepler (1571–1630), the astronomer who maintained that the earth and planets traveled in elliptical orbits around the sun. He is mentioned in *Isis Unveiled*, I, 207–208 and 253 (note).

<sup>22</sup> Giovanni Alfonso Borelli (1608–1679), the physiologist and physicist who first explained muscular movement according to the laws of statics and dynamics.

<sup>23</sup> Robert Boyle (1627–1691), known for Boyle's law, explaining the relation between the compression and expansion of a gas at constant temperature.

<sup>24</sup> Jeremiah Horrocks (1617–1641) applied Kepler's elliptical orbits of the planets to the moon.

<sup>25</sup> Robert Hooke (1635–1703) demonstrated that the force of gravity could be measured by using a pendulum. He also attempted to demonstrate that the earth and moon were in elliptical orbits around the sun.

<sup>26</sup> Edmond Halley (1656–1742).

<sup>27</sup> Sir Christopher Wren (1632–1723).

<sup>28</sup> He is mentioned in *Isis Unveiled* I, 422–24, 510.

<sup>29</sup> Professor A.M. Mayer is identified in *Isis Unveiled* I, 282 as a member of the Stevens Institute of Technology. "The Earth a Great Magnet" was delivered before the Yale Scientific Club in 1872.

<sup>30</sup> Sir William Crookes (1832–1919), chemist and physicist. He is frequently mentioned in *Isis Unveiled* (I, 44–49, 112–13, 195, 196, 199, 202–203, 281).

<sup>31</sup> Mentioned in *Isis Unveiled* I, 99, 109, 110, 112, 113. He is identified as a professor of natural history in Geneva (109).

<sup>32</sup> Louis Jaccoliot (1837–1890), the author of *La Bible dans l'Inde*. He is mentioned many times in *Isis Unveiled* (I, 139, 583–87, 616–17; II, 47–48, 70, 103–105, 262, 321, 584–85).

An excellent overview of Louis Jaccoliot's life was presented by Daniel Caracostea at the International Theosophical History Conference in London (July 11–13, 1997) entitled "Jaccoliot and the Influence of India." The complete version of his paper, "Louis-François Jaccoliot (1837–1890): A Biographical Essay" will be published in a future issue of *Theosophical History*.

<sup>33</sup> Henry Ward Beecher (1813–1887), the popular liberal Congregational preacher who took the position of opposing slavery and advocating women's suffrage, was the object of a negative editorial in the March 28 issue of the *Sun*. Therein, the newspaper gave its opinion of an article appearing in the *American Socialist*, the organ of the Oneida Community, which praised Beecher's recent lecture tour. The gist of the editorial was that it was no surprise that the members of the Oneida Community, "an association of men and women who openly advocate and practice free love, and look upon marriage as an institution which has outlived its usefulness," should respond enthusiastically to the words of Mr. Beecher, since he practiced what they preached, a reference to the charge of adultery brought against him by his former protégé, Theodore Tilton, in 1874. Thus the editorial states: "Of course its members are enthusiastic admirers of Mr. BEECHER, and they have invented new phrases to describe the practices which have given the pastor of Plymouth Church [in Brooklyn, New York] his greatest notoriety. They call the seduction by a minister of a female member of his church 'religious love', or 'church familism'."

\* \* \*

# Behind the Veil of “Cherubina de Gabriak”

Kristi A. Groberg

Elizaveta Ivanovna Dmitrieva (1887-1928) is virtually unknown among Russian women poets and writers beyond her brief *succès de scandale* as “Cherubina de Gabriak” in 1909-10,<sup>1</sup> and most certainly few of her literary fans are aware of the importance of Anthroposophy in her life and work. The current renewal of the Anthroposophy movement in Russia has generated interest in Dmitrieva and her Anthroposophical work, which began in 1908.<sup>2</sup> In turn, this information sheds new light on Dmitrieva as a writer and can provide a fresh interpretation of her literary *corpus* as a whole. The key to her contributions to Russian literature stem from her mastery of the Russian language and her knowledge of French and Spanish Medieval Philology and Literature, but it was her intense interest in occult spirituality that informed those contributions.

Little is known of Dmitrieva’s early years beyond what she recorded. She was born in St. Petersburg on March 31, 1887 (o.s.); her father was a schoolteacher of Swedish extraction, her mother was Ukrainian; she had a brother and a sister, both highly imaginative; as a child she was bedridden with tuberculosis. She stated in her brief “*Autobiography*” that poetry was the joy of her childhood, and that she loved the Petersburg imagery—such as the Bronze Horse-

man, the Neva Sphinx, and the Kazan Cathedral—immortalized in Russian literature.<sup>3</sup> From 1904-08, Dmitrieva studied Medieval French Literature and History at the Women’s Imperial Pedagogical Institute, from which she graduated. When the Imperial University opened its doors to women, she enrolled to study Medieval French Philology and Medieval Spanish Literature with the outstanding Professor of Comparative Literature Aleksandr Veselovskii; at the same time, she taught at the Petrovskii Women’s Gymnasium, a girls’ high school. In 1909, she went to Paris to study at the Sorbonne, a program which she then abandoned in the spring of 1910 to return to Petersburg.

During the period 1908-09, Dmitrieva formally joined the Anthroposophical movement. The official Russian Theosophical Society had been established in 1908 and the Russian Anthroposophical Society in 1913, although there were study circles and groups of both Blavatsky’s and Steiner’s followers in Russia before these dates. The Russian Anthroposophical Society, which Dmitrieva was instrumental in founding, was not the result of a secession from the Russian Theosophical Society, but grew out of intellectual circles within the framework of the musician Emilii Medtner’s Symbolist publishing house *Musaget*, whose members included the writer

Maksimilian Voloshin, his wife the artist Margarita Sabashnikova, the poet Andrei Belyi, and many others. Russian Anthroposophists avidly organized a variety of courses, lectures, addresses, and publications between 1908 and 1923, at which time the Society officially became illegal and was closed down by the Soviet government.<sup>4</sup> During this period, they tried to evaluate Russian and Soviet realities, provide new dimensions for Russia's historical development, and to offer to Russians one more alternative basis for the development of cultural work in their country.

In Dmitrieva's time, Russia was "both subject and object of Anthroposophy": its advocates embraced a concept of the world that was an action-oriented philosophy with an emphasis on spiritual and physical health and humanistic education.<sup>5</sup> Steiner saw the Russian spiritual capability—which he interpreted as a profound capacity in the Russian people for holistic thought—as the bearer of the next cultural epoch. He believed that Russia kept its soul open to the "continuous influx of the Christ-impulse."<sup>6</sup> To him, the Russian philosopher Vladimir Solov'ev (1853-1900) was the embodiment of the Russian tendency to fuse philosophy and religion.

Anthroposophy's goal remains the revelation of a complex physical-spiritual cosmos to the individual initiate, and, in the process, to transcend the limitations of the self and achieve a state of enlightenment through meditation and action. Steiner outlined the nature of this path in his first major work, *The Philosophy of Freedom* (1894). He soon came to believe that the spiritual world maintains a permanent record of all that has ever occurred; in his writings, he claimed to have derived his cosmogony from this "Akashic Record" and taught that the prop-

erly prepared adept can do the same.<sup>7</sup> The trained initiate, with the help of meditative symbols, can read the "Akashic Record" with great accuracy, and thus can examine a personal past through meditation. *Imagination* is the first cognitive step that the initiate achieves through meditation on symbols or leitmotifs. The second step is *Inspiration*, which provides the initiate with "points of rest" that are absent from cognitive *Imagination*. Without cognition through inspiration, Steiner wrote, "the imaginative world would remain like writing at which we stare but which we cannot read."<sup>8</sup> The third and highest stage is *Intuition*—a true understanding of the inner nature of those beings of the higher world that the adept has come to know through *Inspiration*. In the final stage of cognition, the adept can research previous lives, but the highest level of *Intuition* is the recognition of one's own unity with Christ. Here the "I" dissolves in Christ and, therefore, into the ultimate mystery of existence.<sup>9</sup> The Anthroposophist fully expects to suffer a Christ-like passion as part of the human spiritual education and quest for the *Mysterium*.

In Dmitrieva's "*Confessions*," she recalled that she was brought to Anthroposophy by Maksimilian Voloshin, who had begun to follow Steiner as early as 1906.<sup>10</sup> When she met Voloshin in 1908, she was only nineteen; yet at that time she was profoundly certain that even as a child she could remember her previous incarnation in detail. The connection to childhood—which would prove valuable throughout her life and literary career—is very important to the Anthroposophical schema. For Steiner, the "occult science" of Anthroposophy retroactively revealed the physical and spiritual sides of

infancy and childhood. The adult's *clairvoyance* (clear vision) can retrieve, order, and then illuminate the infant's and child's spiritual experiences. The adept who has achieved this clairvoyance "beholds his newborn self as another being standing before him."<sup>11</sup>

Dmitrieva's literary career began in 1908 with the publication of her translation of sixteenth century Spanish poetry in *Journal of Theosophy*, the organ of the St. Petersburg Theosophical Society.<sup>12</sup> The *Journal of Theosophy* frequently serialized translations of Steiner's work, even after he broke free from the Theosophical movement to lead his own followers in Anthroposophy. Dmitrieva was likely a Theosophist before she was an Anthroposophist—the logical progression at that time—and she was attracted to a particular type of poetry that reflected these belief systems. Her first published translation was of the poetry of St. Teresa of Ávila (1515-82), a Roman Catholic monastic figure who experienced unity with Christ through a series of eroticized mystical visions. Rich in the ecstatic imagery of Catholic mysticism, Dmitrieva's translation placed this within the feminine sphere, as did the poetry of the Russian writer Mirra Likhvitskaia, whose verses Dmitrieva idolized.<sup>13</sup> On the other hand, the vocabulary of Christ's Passion was everywhere a part of Anthroposophical iconography, and so it is hard to determine if Dmitrieva was drawn to this poetry because it reflected the Symbolist vocabulary common to the popular verses of Likhvitskaia and others, or because the symbolic experience of Christ is Anthroposophical. Symbolism and Anthroposophy, however, need not be viewed as mutually exclusive, and each certainly held a prominent role in Dmitrieva's

life. The well-known Symbolist writer Andrei Belyi, a follower of Solov'ëv known to Dmitrieva—and whose literary *corpus* was deeply Anthroposophical—noted the association of Russian Symbolism and Steiner's thought in his treatise *Why I Became a Symbolist* (1928).<sup>14</sup>

In 1909, while still a student at the University, Dmitrieva made her brief scandalous appearance on the Symbolist literary scene with a series of poems published in the journal *Apollo* under the pseudonym "Cherubina de Gabriak." The story begins with the initial rejection of some of her poems by Sergei Makovskii, the editor of *Apollo*. In the spring of 1909, Dmitrieva began a brief love affair with the writer Nikolai Gumilëv, whom she had met earlier (1907) in Paris at the salon of the painter Sebastian Gurevich (then at work on her portrait). Towards the end of May 1909, she and Gumilëv (whom she called "Gummi") went to the Crimean Black Sea coast to vacation at Koktebel', the home of Maks Voloshin. Dmitrieva fell in love with Voloshin and asked Gumilëv to leave, which he did.<sup>15</sup> At this time, she and Voloshin decided to submit some of her poetry to *Apollo* under a pseudonym and to present it as the work of a beautiful eighteen-year-old *infanta*—a wealthy Catholic aristocrat, half-French but raised in Spain—who had been "cast by fate into an alien Russia."<sup>16</sup> The story goes that Voloshin, who collected books on the occult, chose the name of a minor demon (Gabriok) from his copy of the French jurist Jean Bodin's *De la démonomanie des sorciers* (1580), altered it, and then added the "de" for aristocratic flavor. Dmitrieva supplied the given name Cherubina, after the heroine of a favorite Bret Harte story, "A Secret of Telegraph Hill."<sup>17</sup> Thus, the "Holy Name of Cherubina" was born.<sup>18</sup> In

September of 1909, she sent her poems to the *Apollo* office on the embankment of the Moika Canal, “in an elegant envelope sealed with black wax and imprinted with a coat of arms and the motto *Vae victis*.”<sup>19</sup> The poems were in Russian, but the letter that accompanied them was composed in refined French on paper with a black border; the return address was a post office box. Makovskii was thrilled with the poems, but after the initial correspondence on Dmitrieva’s part, she conducted her relationship with him by telephone only. Apparently he fell in love with her poetic image and her mysterious disembodied voice.

The ruse was successful, for the editorial board of *Apollo* (Makovskii, Innokentii Annenskii, Viacheslav Ivanov, Mikhail Kuzmin, Gumilëv, and Voloshin) enthusiastically accepted a cycle of twelve poems by Cherubina de Gabriak for the second volume of 1909.<sup>20</sup> Her poems “*The Golden Bough*,” dedicated to Voloshin (“to my teacher”), and “*Sang de Jésus-Christ, envoyez moi*” were typical of poems in the cycle as a whole. Not only did Dmitrieva incorporate Symbolist and Anthroposophist iconography into her poetry, but she composed her poems in forms common only in twelfth to sixteenth century European poetry. The ability to apply the Russian language to closed poetic forms such as the *lai*, *villanelle*, *rondeau*, and *rondel* revealed great skill on the part of the poet, and Dmitrieva made this appear effortless.<sup>21</sup>

In the same issue of *Apollo*, Voloshin’s article, “*The Horoscope of Cherubina de Gabriak*,” traced her poetic genealogy to the French Symbolists Villiers de l’Isle Adam and Barbey d’Aureville, to the Russian romantic poet Mikhail Lermontov’s passion, and to the Russian Symbolists: Konstantin

Bal’mont’s temperament and Valerii Briusov’s character. Voloshin stressed her use of the vocabulary of Catholic mysticism, as well as the occult influences of Rose + Cross (Rosicrucian) leitmotifs; he suggested that these were at one and the same time decadent and spiritualistic. He described the poet as possessed by an ancient soul—a spiritual stranger who struggled to express the Self.<sup>22</sup> In the next volume of *Apollo*, Annenskii wrote that the poet is pseudonymous, neither French nor a woman, and “thinks in Russian”; yet he equated the quality of the poetry with that of the innovative French Symbolists Charles Beaudelaire and Joris-Karl Huysmans.<sup>23</sup>

Dmitrieva must have had a mischievous sense of humor, for once the poetry had been published, she refused to meet with Makovskii, thereby heightening the general fascination with Cherubina de Gabriak.<sup>24</sup> Only Voloshin, the Anthroposophist poet Lidiia Briullova, and the German translator and poet Johannes von Günther knew of Cherubina de Gabriak’s true identity.<sup>25</sup> Dmitrieva was a small, plain woman with a distinct limp; her appearance did not match the general intrigue surrounding Cherubina de Gabriak who, it was said, “rose above Russia like the new moon.”<sup>26</sup> Nonetheless, she frequented the *Apollo* editorial office, made vicious fun of Cherubina, and wrote witty parodies of her poetry that incensed Makovskii—all under the guise of visiting her friend Briullova, who was Makovskii’s secretarial assistant. Dmitrieva’s ability to parody her own work indicated—as it did in Solov’ëv’s parodies of his own poetry—the high level of her skill as a poet. As with all literary hoaxes, the parody had to be carried off with apparent ease and the hoax reflected trends that already exist on the current literary scene.

When Dmitrieva's identity was revealed, Makovskii vented his anger on Voloshin, and the other male editors and contributors (von Günther was the sole exception) went out of their way to expose her as a fraud, even though she came to the *Apollo* office to apologize. Gumilëv, who was himself cross-eyed and homely, made remarks about her looks and behaved so badly—but, we can assume, not solely on the basis of Dmitrieva's literary ruse—that Voloshin challenged him to a duel with pistols in November of 1909. The site chosen was that of Aleksandr Pushkin's duel with d'Anthes; Voloshin's second was the occult novelist Aleksei N. Tolstoi,<sup>27</sup> Gumilëv's was Kuzmin. No one was injured, but the newspapers printed lurid headlines and the participants were fined.<sup>28</sup> Dmitrieva was so mortified by this male spectacle that she withheld her poetry from further publication in *Apollo*. A chagrined Makovskii urged her to recapitulate, but she had already left for Paris—where she had friends in the Anthroposophical movement and had made plans to study at the Sorbonne. In the September 1910 issue of *Apollo*, a cycle of fifteen Cherubina de Gabriak poems was published, followed by one poem "A Meeting" attributed to Dmitrieva.<sup>29</sup> The short poem "Crucifixion" from the De Gabriak cycle was most typical of Dmitrieva's fusion of Symbolism and Anthroposophy:

### The Crucifixion

A wreath woven of sharp thorns  
 Encircles your poor brow like a crown,  
 And from your eyes—dark shadows.  
 Before you, on my knees  
 I bow, as if at vesper's sacrifice;  
 Onto my dress, drops of blood

Like garnets drip from your feet . . .

\* \* \*

Still no one has yet guessed  
 Why my gaze is so troubled,  
 Why from Sunday mass  
 I've long since been returning last,  
 Why my lips tremble,  
 When the cloud of incense hovers  
 Like barely bluish lace.

\* \* \*

Let the monks mutter curses,  
 Let hell fire await the sinners—  
 Before Easter, in spring, at the new moon  
 From a wizard known to me,  
 I bought the bitter stone of love—the astarote.  
 And today you will descend from the cross  
 At the hour preceding earth's sunset.

After this, "Cherubina de Gabriak" ceased to exist. However, even though Dmitrieva's peers—Marina Tsvetaeva for one<sup>30</sup>—believed that she had simply stopped writing, this was not the case.

Dmitrieva stayed in Paris until late in 1910, when she returned to Petersburg to marry (1911) her long-standing—and one assumes long-suffering—fiancée Vsevolod N. Vasil'ev (1883-1940), an engineer-hydrologist whose specialty was land improvement.<sup>31</sup> Each was a dedicated Anthroposophist—they had met one another through Anthroposophy, it was the common denominator of their life's work, and it would hold their marriage together. They temporarily left Petersburg in 1911 for Turkestan for reasons connected to Vasil'ev's work. I have seen no evidence that Dmitrieva published again until 1913 and 1915 respectively, when her poems were printed in two literary almanacs as the work of De Gabriak.<sup>32</sup> Dmitrieva stated in her "Confessions" that she did continue

to write, but felt her work was limited and difficult; when her poetic gift returned in 1918, it was not Cherubina's voice but her own that emerged.<sup>33</sup> A selection of her poems from the period 1921-27 was published in 1988. These verses corroborated Dmitrieva's assessment that her own poetic voice emerged in 1918; they were Anthroposophical (and no doubt autobiographical) in tone, although several were written in Medieval poetic forms.<sup>34</sup>

After leaving Petersburg for a stay in Turkestan in 1911, Dmitrieva appears to have devoted most of her creative energies to Anthroposophical pursuits. Had the "Cherubina" incident spoiled the Symbolist milieu for her, had she chosen between her talent as a Symbolist poet and her goals as an Anthroposophist, or had she merged the two? A merger is the most likely scenario, since Dmitrieva did continue relationships with some of the Symbolists (in general those who were Anthroposophists) and later wrote about them with great affection. Although living in Turkestan, she frequently traveled to Moscow and Petersburg, where she was active in mystical circles and attended *séances*. She proselytized regularly for Anthroposophy, attended meetings in cities all over Russia, and traveled to establish branches of the Anthroposophical Society in Germany, Switzerland, Greece, and Finland.<sup>35</sup> With her friend Boris Alekseevich Leman (Lehmann, pseudonym Boris Diks, 1880-1945), she co-chaired the *Russian Anthroposophical Society* (Benedictus Lodge) in Petersburg/Petrograd, which they had established in 1913 after her return.<sup>36</sup> From 1914 the group met at Dmitrieva's apartment in Petrograd, studied lecture cycles by Steiner,

and supported a small book shop that sold mostly books published by *Spiritual Knowledge*, a press established by the Moscow Steinerians connected to the Symbolist publishing house *Musaget*.<sup>37</sup> From 1919-24, the Petrograd branch of the Russian Anthroposophical Society maintained a public forum for the discussion of a spiritual resolution to the political praxis of the socialist revolution. This was the *Free Philosophical Association* or *Vol'fila*, through which Anthroposophical thought was discussed and disseminated.<sup>38</sup> Members maintained high hopes that Russia's spiritual strength could transcend the problems caused by World War I (1914-18), the Russian revolutions of 1905 and 1917, and the Russian Civil War (1918-20). Russian Anthroposophists generally received the revolutions in good faith, hoping that they could implement Anthroposophical ideas through social work.<sup>39</sup> Such work was often carried out with a high degree of enthusiasm, and the Anthroposophists held before them the Christ-like ideal of suffering. From 1917-20, frictions within the Anthroposophical Society arose over how to deal with political changes in the new Soviet Union. Many Anthroposophists, including Dmitrieva, became dissatisfied with groups that appeared to be dedicated only to a sect-like perfection of the self.<sup>40</sup> They then established the *Mikhail Lomonosov Group* and pursued a hands-on enlightenment of the Russian people through the spread of Anthroposophy. The Lomonosov Group maintained close contact with the Christian community and also with Lev Tolstoi's disciples; its members founded the *Free Community of Spiritual Movements* in 1922 and met

at a vegetarian café.

In the meantime (by 1920), the Vasil'evs had settled in Ekaterinodar (now Krasnodar), the capital of Krasnodar Region in the North Caucasus, where in 1920 Dmitrieva began to work with the Jewish playwright Samuil Marshak. Together she and Marshak helped to organize the *Children's Village*, a center for children made homeless by the Revolutions and Civil War. Near-starvation conditions prevailed; often the adults gave up bread rations, at the expense of their own health, to feed the children.<sup>41</sup> In essence an orphanage, Children's Village included a variety of workshops, a library, and a children's theater. Dmitrieva and Marshak, with the help of members of the local theater, first produced a play based on Oscar Wilde's *"The Young Prince."*<sup>42</sup> They hoped to continue this experiment, yet had no funding and no tradition of Russian children's theater to fall back on, so they decided to create an entire repertory for themselves. They wrote a number of children's plays based on Russian folklore and published them in 1922 as *Theater for Children*.<sup>43</sup> Dmitrieva worked under the Steinerian theory that the Slavic folk soul served as an important spiritual bridge between East and West.<sup>44</sup> We can also discern Steiner's other pivotal theories at work, including his emphasis on the importance of the physical and spiritual development of children, the arts as crucial to education, and the vital need for drama in the human psyche. With Voloshin and the Theosophist and Futurist poet Elena Guro (1877-1913), Dmitrieva shared an intense interest in the psychology of the myth-making of children and saw it as part of an age-old healing process.<sup>45</sup>

In 1922, the Vasil'evs and Marshak returned to

Petrograd, where Dmitrieva continued her educational efforts at the newly-founded *Theater for Young Spectators (TiuZ)*. With her as his assistant, Marshak became head of the literary section of *TiuZ*; both contributed to the astounding success of the theater.<sup>46</sup> Dmitrieva and Marshak collaborated on a play entitled *"The Golden Wheel,"*<sup>47</sup> which was based on folk motifs and calls for audience participation. Here again we can see the profound influence of Steiner's ideas on Dmitrieva's work: he routinely emphasized the place of drama in the education of children, and believed that in their early years, children could relate most easily to the presentation of folk motifs and the repetition of symbols on the stage. Closed after a few performances, *"Golden Wheel"*—apparently the victim of "intractable pedologists"<sup>48</sup>—was not published until after Marshak's death. In 1924, Dmitrieva's prose appeared in the Leningrad children's magazine *New Robinson [Crusoe]*, which was edited by Marshak and others and drew into its circle some of the best writers of its time.

1926 found Dmitrieva at work on a novelette for children about the world-traveler *Miklukha-Maklai*, which she published under the title *The Man from the Moon*.<sup>49</sup> She continued to translate French and Spanish medieval literature and poetry, but did not publish the translations. Obviously, like other Russian writers under the Soviet regime, she was forced to support herself as best she could; so, in 1926, she completed Library Science courses at the Saltykov-Shchedrin Public Library in Leningrad and was employed as a librarian by the Library of the Academy of Sciences.

By this time most Russian anthroposophists were under surveillance by the Soviet secret police. A search warrant for Dmitrieva's home

was issued and carried out by the OGPU (secret police) in 1927.<sup>50</sup> All of her books, writings, diaries, letters, and photographs were confiscated. She was summoned to OGPU headquarters, arrested, charged, and then she and Vasil'ev were driven under military escort to a three-year exile in Tashkent. Sources do not explain the reason for Dmitrieva's arrest, but by 1926, the mounting persecution of members of the Anthroposophical Society (former and otherwise) had begun to result in many such arrests.<sup>51</sup> She would have been a natural target because she openly continued her Anthroposophical work even after *Vol'fila* was officially closed in 1924. Fortunately, she loved Turkestan, and her letters to Voloshin from 1927 on were cheerful descriptions of her works in progress, her life with Vasil'ev, and her friendship with Leman.<sup>52</sup>

Later that year (1927), Dmitrieva wrote to Voloshin that she knew it was the last year of her life because her tuberculosis had been diagnosed as active. She kept herself intellectually occupied by translating, from the Spanish, Miguel de Cervantes' classic novel *Don Quixote*. In her opinion, Cervantes' character Dulcinea was the embodiment of the Beautiful Lady [Sophia or the Eternal Feminine] as She was understood by Solov'ev, the Russian Symbolists, and Anthroposophy. Steiner, like Solov'ev, made much of the Christological Sophia, and he believed that *Don Quixote* was an epic literary example of the human quest for spiritual enlightenment.<sup>53</sup> Dmitrieva was also at work on a cycle of philosophical poems—about the supposed life of “*Lian Sian Tszu*” with translations of “his” Chinese poetry—entitled “*Hut under a Pear Tree*.” All that remains of the original one hundred forty-seven poems are a few frag-

ments.<sup>54</sup> In a letter to Voloshin dated January 3, 1928, Dmitrieva—accepting her fate—addressed the “apocalypticism of the times.”<sup>55</sup> She died on December 5, 1928 from tuberculosis.

The remainder of Dmitrieva's papers, diaries, autobiographical material, poems, and photographs were deposited by the poet, prose writer, and bibliographer Evgenii Arkhipov (1882-1950) in his own archive at Pushkin House in St. Petersburg. Among these is her unpublished “*History of My Soul*,” written at Koktebel' in the summer of 1909.<sup>56</sup> Arkhipov acquired these papers at Koktebel' in 1931. He was a friend of Voloshin—who had first introduced him to the phenomenon of “Cherubina” in correspondence during the 1910s and early 1920s—and initiated a highly informative correspondence with Dmitrieva that lasted from 1921-28.<sup>57</sup> In 1974, Voloshin's widow (his second wife Mariia Zabolotskaia, d. 1976) gave her husband's letters from Dmitrieva to Vladimir Glotser for publication. Glotser published a selection of these in 1988, along with some of Dmitrieva's letters to Arkhipov, poems dated 1907-27, and her brief “*Autobiography*” in *New World*. Although Dmitrieva apparently wrote under the pseudonyms E. Li, and E., D., and V. Arkasova, I have not seen evidence of this.<sup>58</sup> Some of her poetry has been published by I. Kuprianov, V. Lidin, and others in *Memorial Data* (Pamiat'naia data, 1980), *Seventh Copybook* (Sed'moi tetradi, 1988), and *River Neva* (Neva, 1988).

In Dmitrieva's “*Autobiography*,” she discussed the influence on her work of the poets Karolina Pavlova (d. 1893), Vera Merkureva (d. 1943), Lokhvitskaia (d. 1905), and Guro (d. 1913) [both Lokhvitskaia and Guro died from tuberculosis]. She stated that she loved Guro's

character the “*Poor Knight*,” an archetypal wise child figure who acts as a spiritual intermediary. Guro was deeply interested in Theosophy, and her *Poor Knight*—an “occult diary” begun in 1910—was peppered with references to Christ and Don Quixote. Since *Poor Knight* remained in diary form until 1988, Dmitrieva could not have known about it unless she had known Guro personally.<sup>59</sup> Dmitrieva also emphasized that she loved Belyi’s writings very early on, and of course that connection too is Anthroposophical (even familial). Another influence was that of the Decadent poet Aleksandr Dobroliubov’s *From the Book Invisible* (1905). Dobroliubov was an early (to Russia) Symbolist who from 1895 claimed to worship Satan, then experienced the religious conversion described in his book, and finally formed his own Christian sect.<sup>60</sup> Dmitrieva wrote about her attraction to the sophiological writings of the mathematician and theologian Fr. Pavel Florenskii, especially his *The Pillar and Foundation of Truth* (1908).<sup>61</sup> She may have met Florenskii, a follower of Solov’ev, at Viacheslav Ivanov’s “Tower” penthouse; the pinnacle of the Petersburg Symbolist scene until 1907 (after 1907, it was the headquarters of Anna Mintslova, Steiner’s emissary to Russia).<sup>62</sup> Dmitrieva stated that she never liked the work of Valerii Briusov or that of Zinaida Gippius, both of whom were educated, energetic critics of the lifestyles and writings of their friends and acquaintances.<sup>63</sup> Dmitrieva’s poetry as “Cherubina de Gabriak” in turn influenced Tsvetaeva (who acknowledged her debt to the “Epoch of Cherubina de Gabriak”),<sup>64</sup> Anna Akhmatova, and Sofiia Parnok. Dmitrieva frequently referred to Voloshin’s influence on her writings and her influence on his, and

stressed the importance of his erudition to her work. Temira Pachmuss and Vadim Kreyd intimate that Voloshin wrote the Cherubina poems, but I prefer to accept Dmitrieva’s claim—particularly in light of her educational background—that her poetry was her own.<sup>65</sup>

The poetry that Dmitrieva wrote as “Cherubina de Gabriak” is rich in an iconography that can be interpreted from a variety of approaches. We can look at it as Symbolist, even as Decadent, and make good arguments for that approach.<sup>66</sup> We can read her imagery as Western and Roman Catholic, and argue undeniably that this reflects a trend among Symbolists (particularly women poets) for the vocabulary of Catholicism, in ecstatic and/or chivalric terms, with Christ or the Eternal Feminine as the pivotal figure. This is particularly true for the work of Dmitrieva’s idol Lokhvitskaia, whose martyrological palette runs red with blood imagery.<sup>67</sup> Dmitrieva also turned to elements of the Passion expressed in ecstatic religious terms; both poets used Christ or a sorceress/goddess as a primary symbol. A third approach to Dmitrieva’s poetry, which this paper touches upon, is to read it as profoundly Anthroposophical; this can be done by tracing just the Christological and/or Rosicrucian imagery in her verses. We should also bear in mind that her poetry is markedly different from the body of work that she produced on behalf of children; yet the two genres have Anthroposophy as a common denominator.

Through Anthroposophy, Dmitrieva chose a serious life of work on behalf of her deep-seated beliefs in Steiner’s concept of Russia’s important place in history. Maybe too much has been made of the “Riddle of Cherubina de

Gabriak.”<sup>68</sup> It was brief—an episode of less than a year—and strongly colored by Dmitrieva’s study of Roman Catholic-oriented French and Spanish medieval poetry and by her dedication to Anthroposophy. In her letters and in the texts of her “*Autobiography*” and “*Confessions*,” she gave the impression (as did Voloshin in his recollections) that while the episode was a great lark, the verses themselves were the product of serious endeavor. As early as 1916, for example, she wrote to Voloshin insisting that “Cherubina was never a game.”<sup>69</sup>

The poetry of “Cherubina de Gabriak” was a Symbolist literary *tour de force*; yet it governed neither Dmitrieva’s private life nor the body of her literary work for the remaining twenty years of her life. Perhaps, therefore, it was no more than a very sophisticated sort of prank—an exercise that revealed at the time (but has since overshadowed) her linguistic and literary skills, religious sensitivity, and occult interests. It is Anthroposophy that will, I believe, ultimately provide a more true picture of the complexity of Dmitrieva’s literary corpus. As Maria Carlson has recently written, we should remember that in Russia, Theosophy and Anthroposophy “left an indelible mark on the intellectual history” of Russia’s brilliant literary and artistic Silver Age.<sup>70</sup>

## Notes

NOTE: I have used standard Library of Congress transliteration for all Russian words throughout the text and notes; also, I have used Dmitrieva’s various names and pseudonyms as they appear on the publications cited.

<sup>1</sup> See Temira Pachmuss, “Cherubina de Gabriak,” in *Women Writers in Russian Modernism: An Anthology*, ed. and trans. Temira Pachmuss (Urbana, 1978), 243-49; Vadim Kreyd, “Cherubina de Gabriak,” in *Modern Encyclopedia of Russian and Soviet Literature*, ed. Harry R. Weber (Gulf Breeze, 1987), 80-84; Elis. [sic] Vasil’eva (‘Cherubina de Gabriak’), “Dve veshchi v mire dlia menia sveгда byli samymi sviatymi: stikhi i liubov,” *Novyi mir* 12 (Moscow, 1988), 132-70, with a foreword by Vladimir Glotser, 132-37; Maksimilian Voloshin, “Rasskaz o Cherubine de Gabriak” and “Istoriia Cherubiny,” in *Pamiatniki Kul’tury. Novye otkrytiia 1988*, ed. Zakhar D. Davydov and Vladimir P. Kupchenko (Moscow, 1989), 41-52, and Cherubina de Gabriak, “Isповed’,” in *Ibid.*, 53-61 (pieced together by the editors from Dmitrieva’s letters [1921-28] to E. Ia. Arkhipov).

<sup>2</sup> See Renata von Maydell (Marburg Univ.), “Anthroposophy in Russia,” a paper read at the conference *The Occult in Russian & Soviet Culture* (Fordham Univ., 1991); *Idem.*, “Anthroposophy in Russia,” in *The Occult in Russian and Soviet Culture*, ed. Bernice G. Rosenthal (Ithaca, 1997), 153-67; Natal’ia Bonetskaia (Academy of Sciences, Moscow), “Die russische Sophiologie und Anthroposophie,” a paper read at a symposium at the Academy of Sciences in 1993.

<sup>3</sup> Elizaveta Vasil’eva, “Avtobiografiia,” *Novyi mir* 12 (Moscow, 1988): 137.

<sup>4</sup> See Maria Carlson, “The Russian Anthroposophists: Steiner and Russia,” “*No Religion Higher than Truth*”: *A History of the Theosophical Movement in Russia, 1875-1922* (Princeton, 1993), 94-104.

<sup>5</sup> Von Maydell, “Anthroposophy in Russia” (typescript), 2.

<sup>6</sup> Rudolf Steiner, *Geschichtliche Symptomatologie*, Vol. 185 of *Rudolf Steiner Gesamtausgabe* (Dornach, 1987), October 20, 1918, 72. In English as *New Spirituality: From Symptom to Reality in Modern History* (London, 1976).

<sup>7</sup> See Rudolf Steiner, *The Fifth Gospel* (London, 1968), 30, 41; and *An Outline of Occult Science*, trans. Maud and Henry B. Monges (Spring Valley, 1972), 105.

<sup>8</sup> Steiner, *An Outline of Occult Science*, 271-72, 303-11.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, 345.

<sup>10</sup> De Gabriak, "Ispoved'," 59, n. 71. Voloshin and Margarita Sabashnikova attended Steiner's Russian lectures in Paris in May-June of 1906 on their wedding trip—see Carlson, "No Religion Higher than Truth", 96.

<sup>11</sup> Steiner, *An Outline of Occult Science*, 338-39.

<sup>12</sup> Elizaveta Dmitrieva, "Oktavo sviatoi Terezy," *Vestnik teosofii* 3 (St. Petersburg, 1908): 67 f.

<sup>13</sup> On Dmitrieva's idolization, see Vasil'eva, "Ispoved'," 139. On Lokhvitskaia's imagery, see Kristi Groberg, "Mirra Lokhvitskaia," in *Dictionary of Russian Women Writers*, ed. Marina Ledkovsky, et al. (Westport, 1994), 381-84.

<sup>14</sup> Andrei Belyi, *Pochemu ia stal simbolistom i pochemu ia ne perestal im byt' vo vsekh fazakh moego ideinogo i kbudozhestvennogo razvitiia* (Ann Arbor, 1982); also see Belyi's *Rudolf Shteiner i Gete v mirovozzrenii sovremenosti* (Moscow, 1917), and *Vospominaniia o Shteinere*, ed. Frédéric C. Kozlik (Paris, 1982). On Belyi and Anthroposophy see Frédéric C. Kozlik, *L'Influence de l'anthroposophie sur l'oeuvre d'Andréi Biélyi*, 3 vols. (Frankfurt am Main, 1981).

<sup>15</sup> See Stephen D. Graham, "A Concourse of Poets: Unpublished Sonnets by Gumilev and E. I. Dmitrieva ('Cherubina de Gabriak')," *Scottish Slavonic Review* 1 (Edinburgh, 1983):54-56, which includes two sonnets, one each by Gumilëv and Dmitrieva, that are the result of a *bouts rimés* contest. In the severely-edited Vasil'eva, "Avtobiografiia," 139, she writes that she "met" Gumilëv in 1907 and 1909; on page 138, she states that Voloshin was her best lifelong friend, whom she loved very much. De Gabriak, "Ispoved'," 53, describes her love of these two men; she reveals that if she had to choose the great love of her life, it would be Voloshin.

<sup>16</sup> Kreyd, "Cherubina de Gabriak," 81.

<sup>17</sup> See Voloshin's piece, published by A. Tiurin, "Vospominaniia o Cherubine de Gabriak," *Novyi zbornal* 151 (Moscow, 1983): 188-208. Bret Harte (1836-1902) was an American writer of popular regional fiction (westerns). Dmitrieva took the name Cherubina from Harte's, "A Secret of Telegraph Hill," *The Writings of Bret Harte* (Boston, New York, 1902), Vol. IV, 417-60.

<sup>18</sup> See the untitled poem in *Apollon* 2 (St. Petersburg, 1909): 3, final line.

<sup>19</sup> Solomon Volkov, *St. Petersburg*, trans. A. W. Bouis (New York, 1995), 169.

<sup>20</sup> Cherubina de Gabriak, "Stikhotvoreniia," *Apollon* 2 (St. Petersburg, 1909): 3-10, illus. Evgenii Lanseré.

<sup>21</sup> M. A. Voloshin, "Liki tvorchestva. Goroskop Cherubiny de Gabriak," *Apollon* 2 (St. Petersburg, 1909): 3, notes this skill, as does Pachmuss, "Cherubina de Gabriak," 247.

<sup>22</sup> Voloshin, "Goroskop Cherubiny de Gabriak," 1-4. See also A. Markov, "Maksimilian Voloshin o Cherubina de Gabriak," *Druzhba narodov* 7 (1975): 283.

<sup>23</sup> I. Annenskii, "O sovremennom lirizme," *Apollon* 3 (St. Petersburg, 1909): 27-29.

<sup>24</sup> See Sergei Makovskii, *Portrety sovremennikov* (New York, 1955), 335-58; Marina Tsvetaeva, "Zhivoe o zhivom," *Sovremennye zapiski* 52 (Paris, 1933):249-54; *Idem., Proza* (New York, 1953), 148-63.

<sup>25</sup> See Johannes von Günther, *Ein Leben im Östwind: Zwischen Petersburg und München, Erinnerungen* (Munich, 1969), 284-91, for an assessment of De Gabriak's poetry.

<sup>26</sup> Anastasiia Tsvetaeva, *Vospominaniia* (Moscow, 1971), 404.

<sup>27</sup> See A. N. Tolstoi, "N. Gumilëv: Poslednie novosti (Parizh), Oct. 23, 1921—To zhe (pod zaglaviiem 'Iz dnevniki')," *Figaro* (Tiflis, Feb. 6, 1922); and, V. Karpov, "Poet Nikolai Gumilëv," *Ogonëk* 36 (Moscow, 1986): 21.

<sup>28</sup> See, for example, "Epidemiia duelei," *Russkoe slovo* (St. Petersburg, Nov. 9, 1909). For a more complete picture, see N. Samvelian, "Ob algebre, garmonii, gore Karadag i dueli, na kotoroi pogibla Cherubina de Gabriak," *Literaturnaia Rossiia* (St. Petersburg, July 11, 1986).

<sup>29</sup> Cherubina de Gabriak, "Stikhi," and Elizaveta Dmitrieva, "Vstrecha," *Apollon* 10 (1910): 3-14. For the questions surrounding the publication, see I. Kuprianov, "Literaturnaia mistifikatsii v 'Apollone'," *Raduga* 2 (Kiev, 1970): 168-73.

<sup>30</sup> M. Tsvetaeva, "Zhivoe o zhivom," 249-54; *Idem., Proza*, 147-48, 152, 163.

<sup>31</sup> Vasil'ev, his brother Pavel, and Pavel's wife Klavdiia N. Vasil'eva (later Andrei Belyi's second wife Klavdiia Bugaeva) were original members of the Russian Anthroposophical Society. See Klawdija Bugaeva, *Wie eine russische Seele Rudolf Steiner erlebte*, trans. Elisabeth Ohlmann-v. Pusirewsky (Basel, 1987).

<sup>32</sup> Cherubina de Gabriak, "Vsem mertvym," *Zilant* (Kazan, 1913), 30, and "Smert Veroniki," *Tsvetnik* (Moscow, 1915), 18.

<sup>33</sup> De Gabriak, "Isproved'," 61, n. 86.

<sup>34</sup> See Elizaveta Vasil'eva, "Stikhovoreniia," *Novyi mir* 12 (Moscow, 1988): 162-68.

<sup>35</sup> Steiner frequently addressed the Russian Anthroposophists in Paris and Helsinki, and his spiritual headquarters was the Goetheanum in Dornach, Switzerland, which many Russians helped to build. He preferred not to travel into Russia.

<sup>36</sup> Mariia Zhemchuzhnikova, Vospominaniia o Moskovskom Antroposofskom Obshchestve (1917-1923 gg.)," *Minusbee* 6 (Paris, 1988): 106.

<sup>37</sup> See Natalia Griakolova, "Stikhovoreniia E. I. Vasil'evoi, posviaschennye Iu. K. Shutskomu," *Russkaia literatura* 4 (1988): 200-05; Margarita Woloschin, *Die grüne Schlange: Lebenserinnerungen einer Malerin* (Frankfurt, 1987), 309.

<sup>38</sup> Nina Gagen-Torn, "Vol'fila: Volno-Filosofskaia Assotsiatsiia v Leningrade v 1920-1922 gg.," *Voprosy filosofii* 4 (St. Petersburg, 1990); Aaron Shteinberg, *Druz'a moikh rannikh let (1911-1928)* (Paris, 1991), 46-47.

<sup>39</sup> Andrei Belyi, "Die Anthroposophie und Russland," *Die Drei* 5 (Stuttgart, 1922): 384; in English as *Anthroposophy and Russia*, trans. Linda Maloney (Spring Valley, 1983). On Belyi's involvement, see John E. Malmstad, "Andrei Belyi i antroposofii," *Minusbee* 9 (Paris, 1990): 473-81.

<sup>40</sup> See von Maydell, "Anthroposophy in Russia," in Rosenthal, ed., *Occult*, 161.

<sup>41</sup> For an eyewitness account, see Anna Bogdanova, "Detskii gorodok," in *Ia dumal, chuvstvoval, ia zbil. . .* (*Vospominaniia o S. Ia. Marshbaka*), ed. Boris E. Galanov, et al. (Moscow, 1971), 128-47; and, *Idem.*, "Samuel Marshak

and His 'Children's Town' Theatre," in *Through the Magic Curtain: Theatre for Children, Adolescents, and Youth in the USSR*, ed. and trans. Miriam Morton (New Orleans, 1979), 10-17.

<sup>42</sup> On the influence of Wilde on Dmitrieva's work, see Vasil'eva, "Avtobiografiia," 138.

<sup>43</sup> E. I. Vasil'eva and S. Ia. Marshak, *Teatr dlia detei. Sbornik p'es* (Leningrad, 1922); Introduction by Boris Leman. This popular collection was published in at least four editions in the 1920s (1922, 1924, 1926, 1928).

<sup>44</sup> Carlson, "No Religion Higher than Truth," 102.

<sup>45</sup> See M. A. Voloshin, "Otkroveniia detskikh igr," *Zolotoe runo* 11-12 (Moscow, 1907):68. On Guro see Vera Kalina-Levine, "Through the Eyes of the Child: The Artistic Vision of Elena Guro," *Slavic and East European Journal* 25, no. 2 (1981): 30-43, and Kristi Groberg, "Elena Guro," in *Dictionary of Russian Women Writers*, 238-42.

<sup>46</sup> For a history of the theater see S. Druzhina and N. Mer'volf, eds., *Leningradskii teatriumykh zritelei* (Leningrad, 1972).

<sup>47</sup> Fragments of "Zolotoe koleso" can be found in *Zbizn' i tvorcestvo Marshbaka (Marshak i detskaia literatura)*, ed. Boris Galanov, et al., (Moscow, 1975), 454-56.

<sup>48</sup> Elena Sokol, *Russian Poetry for Children* (Knoxville, 1984), 97.

<sup>49</sup> Elizaveta Vasil'eva, *Chelovek s luny (Mikhluka-Maklai)* (Leningrad, 1926; reprint Leningrad, Moscow, 1929).

<sup>50</sup> Glotser's introduction, *Novyi mir* 12 (Moscow, 1988): 136.

<sup>51</sup> See Lazar Fleischman, "Bely's Memoirs," in *Andrey Bely: Spirit of Symbolism*, ed. John E. Malmstad (Ithaca, 1987), 216-41, which discusses how the Anthroposophical movement "went underground" in the 1920s.

<sup>52</sup> See, for example, her letter to Voloshin of 10/30/1927 in Vasil'eva, "Pis'ma k M. A. Voloshinu," *Novyi mir* (Moscow, 1988): 158.

<sup>53</sup> See Rudolf Steiner, *In Search for the New Isis: Divine Sophia* (Spring Valley, 1983), and, Bonetskaia, "Die russische Sophiologie und Anthroposophie." On Solov'ev's Sophia, see Samuel D. Cioran, *Vladimir Solov'ev and the Knighthood of the Divine Sophia* (Waterloo, Ont., 1977), and Kristi A. Groberg, "The Feminine Occult Sophia in the Russian Religious Renaissance," *Canadian American Slavic Studies* 26, nos. 1-3 (1992): 197-240.

<sup>54</sup> Elizaveta Vasil'eva, "Domik pod grushevym derevom," *Novyi mir* (Moscow, 1988): 168-70.

<sup>55</sup> Vasil'eva, "Pis'ma k M. A. Voloshinu," 158.

<sup>56</sup> According to Davydov and Kupchenko, in the Arkhipov papers, IRLI (Pushkinskii dom, St. Petersburg), fond 562, op. 1, no. 442, 75-79. Other materials are in Voloshin's papers at TsGALI (Moscow), fond 1458.

<sup>57</sup> See the notes by Davydov and Kupchenko that follow De Gabriak, "Isповed'," 60, n. 81.

<sup>58</sup> See Kristi Groberg and Catriona Kelly, "Cherubina de Gabriak," in *Dictionary of Russian Women Writers*, 144-46. Kelly and I, and our editor Charlotte Rosenthal, were unsuccessful in tracing these pseudonyms, even in Russian archives.

<sup>59</sup> Vasil'eva, "Avtobiografiia," 139. "Bedyi rytsar," ed. Zoia Ender, in *Elena Guro: Selected Prose and Poetry*, ed. Anna Ljunggren and Nils A. Nilsson (Stockholm, 1988), 131-42. For more on Dmitrieva and Guro see note 45.

<sup>60</sup> Vasil'eva, "Avtobiografiia," 139. See Joan D. Grossman, "Aleksandr Dobroliubov and the Invisible Book," her introduction to a reprint of Aleksandr Dobroliubov, *Iz knigi nevidimoi* (Berkeley, 1983), vii-xxv.

<sup>61</sup> Vasil'eva, "Avtobiografiia," 140, 141, n. 11, mentions Florenskii's *Stolp i utverzhdienie istiny* (Moscow, 1914), published earlier, same title, in *Voprosy religii* 2 (St. Petersburg, 1908): 223-384. In the 1914 edition, see ch. 11, "Sofiiia," 319-93, published earlier in *Bogoslovskii vestnik* 2, no. 5 (St. Petersburg, 1911): 135-61 and 2, no. 7 (1911): 582-613.

<sup>62</sup> See Maria Carlson, "Ivanov-Belyj-Minclova: The Mystical Triangle," in *Cultura e Memoria: Atti del terzo Simposio*

*Internazionale dedicato a Vjaceslav Ivanov*, ed. Fausto Malcovati (Florence, 1988), Vol. II, 63-79.

<sup>63</sup> Vasil'eva, "Avtobiografiia," 139. See V. Ia. Briusov, "Budushchee russkoi literatury: antologiia k-va 'Musaget'," *Russkaia mysl'* 8, no. 3 (Moscow, 1911): 18, for his take on de Gabriak's poetry. Gippius, who met Steiner in Paris, strongly disliked him.

<sup>64</sup> Marina Tsvetaeva, *Sochineniia* (Moscow, 1980), Vol. II, 202-03.

<sup>65</sup> Kreyd, "Cherubina de Gabriak," 83; Pachmuss, "Cherubina de Gabriak," 249, n. 18; De Gabriak, "Isповed'," 61, n. 86.

<sup>66</sup> See, besides her other contemporaries that I refer to, "Cherubina de Gabriak," in *Pisateli sovremennoi epokhi*, ed. B. Kozmin (Moscow, 1928), 65-66; Il'ia Erenburg, *Liudi, gody, zhizn'* (Moscow, 1961), 181-82; Boris Smirenskii, *Pero i maska* (Moscow, 1967), 73-75; V. Lidin, "Druz'ia moi—knigi," *V mire knig* 9 (Moscow, 1970):45-46; V. N. Bunina, "Besedy s pamiat'iu," *Literaturnoe nasledstvo* 84 (Moscow, 1973), Vol. II, 172; Evgeniia Gertsyuk, *Vospominaniia* (Paris, 1973); Lidiia Chukovskaia, "Zapiski ob Anna Akhmatovoi," *Parizh* 1 (Paris, 1976):152; Aleksandr Blok, *Literaturnoe nasledstvo* 92 (Moscow, 1982), Vol. III, 18.

<sup>67</sup> See R. Christine Greedan, "Mirra Lokhvitskaia's 'Duality' as a 'Romantic Conflict' and Its Reflection in Her Poetry" (Ph.D. diss., Univ. of Pittsburgh, 1982), and Rudolf Steiner, *On the Occult Significance of Blood* (London, 1967).

<sup>68</sup> See N. Samvelian, "Zagadka Cherubiny de Gabriak," *V mire knig* 6 (Moscow, 1975): 89-90.

<sup>69</sup> (Letter of March 26, 1916 to Voloshin) Vasil'eva, "Pis'ma k M. A. Voloshinu," 156.

<sup>70</sup> Carlson, "No Religion Higher than Truth," 104.

\* \* \* \* \*

# The Solar Temple Strikes Back: Comments and Interpretations After the Second Tragedy

Massimo Introvigne

On October 4 and 5, 1994, fifty-three people were found dead in Switzerland and Quebec. Their bodies were found in the incinerated centers of the Order of the Solar Temple (Ordre du Temple Solaire, OTS). On December 23, 1995 the bodies of other sixteen members of the OTS and of three of their children were found in the French region of the Vercors, in what amounted to an astonishing remake of the 1994 tragedy. Having dealt extensively elsewhere with the history of the OTS<sup>1</sup> I will limit my purpose here to review some of the interpretations of the tragedies and their meaning advanced by public authorities, the press, the scholars and the anti-cult movement.

## 1. Exegesis of a Tragedy: Law Enforcement Perspectives

Narratives of tragedies, like all narratives, are open to both exegesis and hermeneutics. While exegesis evaluates the degree of analogy between the narratives and reality, hermeneutics deals with their interpretation. From the point of view of exegesis, primary narratives of the

OTS tragedy are found in the police reports, some of them quite simple and other more elaborated, including the final report released in November 1994 by the Sûreté du Québec, the Quebec police.

There are no real survivors who have been eyewitnesses of the tragedies. One former member of the OTS, Thierry Huguénin, who visited shortly the group before the first tragedy identifies himself as a “survivor” and claims that, in order to secure a magical contact with the spirits of 54 Knights Templar burnt at the stake in the 14th century, the victims should have been 54 (including himself) rather than 53, as they were in fact due to his lucky escape.<sup>2</sup> The number 54 does not represent the Templars burnt at the stake with their Master, Jacques de Molay, in 1314 but those who died in another among several 14th century executions.<sup>3</sup> Huguénin’s story, however, is disputed by other former members and at any rate he was not present at the Swiss tragedy, although he may have been one of the last persons to have seen the leaders of the OTS alive. Thus, notwithstanding the recent discovery of videos made by the OTS in the last day before the 1994 tragedy, without any eyewitness it is very possible that many

questions will remain without answers. The two Swiss “juges d’instruction” (a figure typical of continental European law: a judge, not a prosecutor, but with investigating powers typical of a prosecutor in the United States) may or may not release a final written report. They remain among those most interested in the exegesis of the tragedy. The same is true for the French “juge d’instruction” of Grenoble handling the 1995 incident.

Although new discoveries are still a possibility, at the exegetical level a number of authorities have tried to determine whether the tragedies have been primarily suicides or homicides. As noted by Anson D. Shupe<sup>4</sup>, this is particularly relevant for hermeneutics as well, when we are confronted with the prevailing immediate anti-cult and press interpretation calling the event a “collective suicide” and making comparisons with Jonestown and Waco (where the category of “collective suicide” is also difficult to apply).<sup>5</sup> On the other hand, at least outside Switzerland and Quebec, the OTS first tragedy had generated less continuing media interest, and appeared to have been almost forgotten one year later, when it was revived by the second tragedy. However the second tragedy itself did not generate an enormous interest in the U.S. Here there were no questions of political responsibilities like in Waco, or possible threats to society at large like in the case of Aum Shinri-kyo, and the American press—whose attitudes are often reflected by the international mainline press at large—quickly lost interest.

The exegetical efforts by a number of different agencies have now concluded that, in fact, in 1994 a small number of OTS members

(probably more than five, but less than fifteen) committed suicide. It seems probable that similar conclusions will be reached for the 1995 incident in France. It would be, however, too immediate a conclusion to argue that all the others were victims of murder. Some of them, in fact, may have been actually willing to die in order to undertake the “transit” to the Great White Lodge of Sirius promised by the OTS mythology, and may have actually asked the leaders to “help” them. The documents left by the OTS to explain its fiery end (the so called “Testament”) seem to imply that there are, in fact, three categories of members involved: the leaders, capable of fully understanding the OTS mythology and ready to leave their body in what the documents call “not a suicide in the usual sense of the term,” the traitors, killed for good; and the “weak” members with a limited understanding of the mythology, in need of a charitable “help” in order to successfully accomplish the “transit.” It seems, accordingly, that in the tragedies there has been a continuum between suicide and homicide, with some clear cases at the edges (the leaders Di Mambro and Jouret committing suicide and people like the Dutoits in Canada clearly included in the traitors’ list and mercilessly slaughtered), but also with cases more hard to classify.

## **2. Hermeneutics of the Tragedy: Three Waves of Interpretations**

Police authorities and judges have largely confined themselves to the exegesis of the tragedies, without venturing too much into herme-

neutics. The fact that there is nobody to prosecute also explains this attitude. Other actors—the media, the anti-cult movements and the scholars—have however entered the hermeneutic field and have proposed what we could summarize as three waves of interpretations.

### ***The First Wave: Reductionist Interpretations***

The first interpretations by the media have almost invariably been of a reductionist character. The day after the Swiss tragedy many media immediately applied to the tragedy the anti-cult stereotype (anti-cult activists were also quick to introduce themselves as experts, although it was abundantly clear that most of them knew very few, if anything, about the OTS). Roland Campiche has analyzed the main op-eds of six leading Swiss French-language daily newspapers in the week after the tragedy, and has found a number of common elements. All newspapers have called the OTS a “cult” (“secte,” being in French the derogatory word with the same function as the English “cult,” rather than the softer word which would be translated by the English “sect”). Members were characterized as “weak,” “marginal,” “naifs,” “sheep-like” and even “sweet idiots (doux dingues).” The OTS doctrine was dismissed as the “manipulative ideas of a guru” (believed in the immediate aftermath of the tragedy to be Luc Jouret), “fanaticism” or “delirium.” The context was the “danger of the cults,” and the lack of appropriate reaction to this “danger” by the Swiss mainline Churches and the State. The more conservative newspapers suggested anti-cult

laws, more police activity in watching the “cults” or, simply, “empowering prosecutors so that cult leaders could be jailed for good” (as proposed by the respected *Journal de Genève*). Liberal newspapers insisted on education as a way for preventing young people from joining “irrational cults.”<sup>6</sup> Similar reactions appeared in Switzerland and in France after the 1995 tragedy, the more so because the incident happened when a Commission of the French Parliament was ready to publish a report on the “danger of the cults” (in fact published on January 10, 1996).

The problem, however, was that there were very few “young people” involved. In a couple of weeks the media had realized that most victims were middle-aged higher middle class solid Swiss and Canadian citizens, with some members of the Geneva jet set also involved. Among the latter was Camille Pilet, recently retired as director and international sales manager for the Swiss multinational watch corporation Piaget, who was in the process of launching his own brand of designer watches, and Patrick Vuarnet, son of the president of an international fashion company and former olympic ski champion Jean Vuarnet, who survived (but did not witness) the first tragedy because Joseph Di Mambro asked him to act as the “mailman” posting the “Testament” to a number of newspapers and scholars, and died with his mother, his partner Ute Verona, and the baby daughter of the latter, Tania, in the 1995 French drama. Among the former were Robert Falardeau, chief of a (minor) Department of the Ministry of Finances of Quebec; Joyce-Lyne Grand’Maison, a reporter for the daily *Journal de Québec* who had worked for eight years as a contributing editor for the financial page; Robert Ostiguy, mayor of

Richelieu, Québec; and many others. They did not match the typical profile of the “deluded cult member.” Some of them (including Pilet) were well-known as astute businessmen and were connected to influential Geneva families, making it more difficult to dismiss them as “sweet idiots” or brainwashed cultists. Still more difficult to brand as an “idiotic cultist” was Michel Tabachnik, the famous conductor who—although he now claims was never a member—was at any rate closely associated to the OTS; one of the presidents of the Golden Way Foundation (the legal structure for Di Mambro’s esoteric activities); and a prominent speaker at the last public meeting of the OTS, held in Avignon on September 24, 1994, where the future reorganization of the OTS as the ARC (Alliance Rose Croix, Rosicrucian Alliance) was announced to some 120 OTS members. Whether the establishment of ARC was a red herring intended to fool any suspicion of the forthcoming massacre, the preparation of a structure that could survive the OTS after its fiery end, or a group preparing a second massacre for 1995, remains a matter of dispute. Tabachnik’s involvement, however, could not fail to puzzle the press. The media, thus, went on to suggest that the OTS was not “really” a religious movement but a front for something else: a huge money-laundering enterprise, right-wing terrorist plans, organized crime, or illegal big business. It is now recognized that exaggerated figures of the OTS bank holdings originated with a misreading of a telefax by the Quebec public radio. Unwillingly, I contributed myself to the reductionist interpretations by telling some reporters that some neo-Templar movements, predecessors of the OTS, had a history of connections with the French SAC (Service d’Action Civique), a private right-wing organization with

ties to the Gaullist party, half-way between a private secret service and a parallel police. Since the French Interior Minister Charles Pasqua had been in turn notoriously connected with SAC, I suggested that the fact that Di Mambro ordered Vuarnet to send his and his wife’s passports to Pasqua after the tragedy may have implied an allusion to those old stories (explicitly mentioned in a letter to Pasqua included in some of the packages including the Testament), the more so because Di Mambro had been already involved in the neo-Templar milieu when the SAC connections were very much talked about in the 1970s. Leaking this information to the press immediately led to widespread reports that the undersigned had confirmed that OTS was connected to secret services and organized crime. While it is not impossible that Di Mambro had maintained some connections in the milieu originally connected with SAC after the latter had been officially disbanded in 1982 following a French parliamentary investigation, and he may have used these connections for acquiring some of the sophisticated systems that incinerated the OTS centers in 1994, I will be surprised should the Swiss judges find anything more substantial in this direction. At the present status of the official investigations, it is clear that the reductionist interpretations have not been confirmed, and that there is no hard evidence that the OTS was not what it purported to be but a front for a secret service or an international criminal organization.

### ***The Second Wave: Socio-Psychological Interpretations***

The anti-cult movement was quickly able to produce something more than the most trivial

reductionist interpretations. It claimed that the OTS was part of a more general millenarian milieu awaiting the end of the world sometime before the year 2000, and that millenarian or apocalyptic cults are particularly dangerous and should be watched by law enforcement agencies while we approach the end of the millennium. Anti-cult warnings about the dangers of millennialism may easily be combined with simpler reductionist interpretations in order to build a catch-all model and generate innuendoes that many new religious movements may be “just like the OTS.” A good example is the combined anti-cult and press reaction in Quebec to the alleged prediction by spiritualist healers Yves Bianchi and Monique Forgues—who live with some 100 followers in the village of Val-David, Quebec—that a gigantic flood would destroy most of the planet on September 28, 1995. While Bianchi’s and Forgues’ group follows the tradition of Edgar Cayce (1877-1945), whose spirit they claim to channel) and has nothing to do with neo-Templarism or the OTS, local opponents in the village and the Montreal anti-cult organization Info-Cult declared after September 28 not only that the two healers operate “a secretive cult where they have brainwashed vulnerable members” but also that “the couple’s solid core of unquestioning supporters represents the worst cult threat to hit Quebec since the Order of the Solar Temple.”<sup>7</sup> The category of the “apocalyptic cults” (reinforced by the Aum Shinri-kyo incident in Japan) implies, however, a number of problems. What is exactly an “apocalyptic” or “millenarian” cult? The anti-cult movement tried to have the shadow of the OTS (and later of Aum Shinri-kyo) cover all unpopular groups who

regard the end of this world as near, including The Family and many fundamentalist groups in the United States (“fundamentalist” having become in the process another derogatory label liberally applied). The problem is, however, that a large number of Americans regard the end of this world as not far off, or embrace one or another form of premillennialism. They will be surprised to hear that they are all members of “dangerous cults.”

When scholars have produced the first comments—slowly, as usual (a disadvantage towards the spokespersons for the anti-cult movement, who may be prepared to speak well before they have all the facts on file)—they have often adopted some sort of neo-Weberian interpretation, trying to determine what kind of charisma may be attributed to the OTS leaders. They were initially confused by the impression that Luc Jouret (1947-1994), the homeopathic doctor, was the main leader. This impression may have been initially confirmed by reading the only scholarly study of the OTS, based on the participant observation by the Swiss scholar Jean-François Mayer, where Jouret figures prominently.<sup>8</sup> Subsequently, from police sources it became clear that the main character was Joseph Di Mambro (1924-1994), whom Jouret regarded as the chief, although it is probably exaggerated—following Huguénin—to regard Jouret as a simple straw man or puppet for Di Mambro. Jouret brought to the movement connections and insights of his own, besides being an able speaker in the alternative medicine and New Age circuit. It is also possible that disagreements between Di Mambro and Jouret persisted to the end. Some of the versions of the “Testament” were supplemented by a short note

accusing “the barbarian, incompetent and aberrant behavior of Dr. Luc Jouret” (comportement barbare, incompétent et aberrant du Docteur Luc Jouret) of having transformed into a “real carnage” (véritable carnage) what should have been “a Transit performed with Honor, Peace and Light” (un Transit effectué dans l’Honneur, la Paix et la Lumière). The short note is a curious document. It was sent at the same time as the Testament to some of the people who received the latter. It should obviously have emanated from Di Mambro’s circle. Was it written, like the Testament, before the 1994 tragedy? Or—more likely—during the same tragedy, after the homicides in Morin Heights and Cheiry and before the “mercy killings” and the suicides in Salvan? At any rate, it shows that Jouret and Di Mambro were not necessarily agreeing between themselves on all and everything.

Once Di Mambro was discovered to be the “real” leader, socio-psychological interpretations focused on him. When information was released that Di Mambro was seriously ill in the last couple of years of his life, was compelled to wear diapers, and had seen his authority threatened by the rebellion of his own son and by the discovery that the alleged “manifestations” of the Masters were produced by Antonio Dutoit and others through sophisticated electronic tricks, scholars concluded that Di Mambro was threatened by loss of charisma. Rather than seeing his charisma evaporate, Di Mambro chose to use what charisma he may have had still left and lead the OTS to the final tragedy. In killing others and themselves, loyal OTS members in October 1994 were acting out the paranoid delusions of one man. Although this interpretation—advanced by Susan Palmer in unpublished papers read at various sociological

conferences, and by others—has its merits, and certainly contributes to explaining the tragedy, it still leaves some questions open. Why did people commonly regarded as extremely intelligent and articulate in their business life like Pilet and Grand’Maison fail to detect the deadly nature of Di Mambro’s charisma? Why did they remain loyal even after it should have been abundantly clear to them all that Di Mambro was not above resorting to deception and stage-managing bogus “apparitions” of the Masters? The publication of the book by Huguénin—which included some useful information but, as Campiche has written, “[left] many questions without an answer”<sup>9</sup>—has not made the scholars’ task any easier. Huguénin, who in recent interviews is increasingly translating his narrative into the common anti-cult rhetoric, insists on the cheap frauds performed by Di Mambro and his associate Jouret. But did astute businessmen, reporters and politicians in the OTS detect the frauds? If yes, why did they decide to continue in the OTS? Could cognitive dissonance alone explain it all?

After the second tragedy of 1995 it is still more clear that Di Mambro’s manipulative behavior could not be the only explanation for the OTS tragedy. Di Mambro’s problems explain why he gave certain kinds of orders in 1994. But why did the OTS members comply? Why did some of them continue to execute the orders in 1995, when Di Mambro had been dead and buried for more than a year?

### ***The Third Wave: Historical Interpretations***

The most recent works by scholars have insisted on the need to trace the history of the OTS back

to the occult tradition of ancient wisdom and neo-Templarism. When the OTS was founded, Di Mambro was in his early 60s and had spent his whole life in the Rosicrucian and occult milieu. Although younger, Jouret was a homeopathic doctor of international renown and a prominent member of the neo-Templar Renewed Order of the Temple (ORT) headed by right-wing extremist Julien Origas (1920-1983). Origas, prominent in the neo-Templar subculture, had been a collaborator of the Nazis during the German occupation of France and as a consequence had spent four years in jail following a trial held in Brest in 1948. In the ongoing scholarly discussion of the OTS I have particularly insisted on this sort of antecedent. While he is not in any way involved with the tragedy—and has successfully avoided any interview in connection therewith—French esoteric author Jacques Breyer seems to have exerted a crucial influence on the OTS worldview. Breyer's esoteric works<sup>10</sup> remain in my opinion required readings for anyone willing to study the apocalyptic occultism of Di Mambro and Jouret. According to a former member interviewed in 1994 by Canadian reporter Bill Marsden—whose findings have been compiled by Susan Palmer in an unpublished manuscript—in the very first years of the OTS in Geneva (possibly even before its formal establishment as an organization independent from Origas's Renewed Order of the Temple) “Origas, Breyer and Di Mambro were the three chums who spoke of esoteric things.”

Origas' Renewed Order of the Temple was in turn rooted in the Rosicrucian tradition of AMORC (of which both Origas and Di Mambro had been members), in the Theosophical tradi-

tion, and in a sequel of neo-Templar schisms dating back to the establishment of the first neo-Templar organization by Bernard-Raymond Fabré-Palaprat (1773-1838) in 1805 in Paris. In fact, there are few really new elements in the OTS. The idea that the world is ruled by the Masters and that only some initiates are in touch with them is of course a common Theosophical theme (and Madame Blavatsky, although electronics was not available to her, was similarly accused of stage-managing fraudulent apparitions of the Masters one century before Di Mambro). The idea of a female Messiah as World Teacher (the future role assigned in the OTS to Di Mambro's daughter, Emmanuelle) is a key element of the French esoteric tradition of the 19th and 20th century.<sup>11</sup> Assigning to prominent members of an esoteric group positions (and even mates in “spiritual marriages”) based on their previous incarnations as exalted figures or members of the inner circle of Jesus Christ was a common practice in European occult orders as early as the 18th century.<sup>12</sup>

In a book published (before the 1995 tragedy) by the press of Cercle Zététique, a French organization part of the international network of “professional skeptics” inspired by the American CSICOP, investigative journalist Renaud Marhic—using in part my own works as a source—has produced an interesting combination of all the three waves of interpretation. Marhic believes that the historical antecedents of the OTS are crucially important. The history of the neo-Templar subculture may, however, be studied at two levels: the purely esoterical, and the political, in the latter case insisting on the frequent connections of neo-Templarism with right-wing extremism and even terrorism.

Theoretically, Marhic argues, one could prefer either an esoteric or a political explanation of the tragedy. He is however persuaded that the political features are more important. True, argues Marhic, Di Mambro's personal problems (as well, he insists, as Jouret's) precipitated the tragedy, but more than a threatened loss of charisma was involved. Di Mambro's connections with right-wing terrorist and illegal organizations were about to be exposed and, like many others before him, Di Mambro "came to regard death as better than jail" (*préférait la mort à la prison*).<sup>13</sup> According to Marhic the OTS was both an occult order (not a "cult") and a front for a political conspiracy: the two things are often one and the same in the occult subculture since many occult leaders cultivate dangerous dreams about a world governed with an iron rod by the small elite of the initiates rather than by the inept politicians selected through the democratic process. Although Marhic has found some interesting pieces of the puzzle, his interpretation is at times dangerously close to pure conspiratorialism: for example, he implies that the Swiss judicial investigation may downplay the role of right-wing extremism because the judges' consultant, historian Jean-François Mayer, was himself a member of right-wing youth groups during his University years.<sup>14</sup> To anyone knowing Mayer's integrity, the simple idea is ridiculous. On the other hand, there is no strong evidence that Di Mambro was about to be arrested in October 1994. Although right-wing politics may have had a part in the OTS apocalyptic worldview, the OTS was not a purely political organization and regarding it as such leads back to reductionist interpretations. For a number of members right-wing politics were

not a crucial factor and do not explain their final decisions.

Compared with the strong roots in the French-speaking esoteric tradition, the New Age elements (such as Jouret's campaigns for natural food) seem in turn superficial, and Campiche's definition of the OTS as a "post-New Age occult order" (not a cult nor a new religious movement, in his opinion) may perhaps overemphasize their importance.<sup>15</sup> Campiche is not sure that identifying to what occult tradition the OTS exactly belonged is crucial. He calls attention to the fact that a number of former members—and relatives of members—have emphasized that the OTS, Huguénin's portrait notwithstanding, was apparently regarded by many as a friendly environment where significant religious emotions might be acquired. In this respect, Campiche criticizes the interpretation by the Protestant theologian Carl A. Keller, who sees the OTS as the epitome of both the dangers and the fascination involved in the occult.<sup>16</sup> Although Keller's interpretation is expressed in the common (and often generic) terms of the Christian counter-cult agenda, it is not untrue that the history of the OTS may well serve as an illustration of Mary Douglas' dichotomy of purity and danger<sup>17</sup> as applied to the occult subculture. John L. Brooke has applied this dichotomy to hermeticism, analyzing "hermetic purity" and "hermetic danger" in an American occult tradition that he regards as ultimately influential on the Mormon prophet Joseph Smith (1805-1844).<sup>18</sup> While I regard Brooke's argument about Joseph Smith as not entirely convincing, the categories of "hermetic purity" and "hermetic danger"—as Susan Palmer has suggested—may perhaps be applied with better success to the OTS. Campiche

seems to prefer an interpretation based, rather than on the dangers of hermeticism, on the dangers of syncretism. Adding up—or confusing—Theosophy, Rosicrucianism, the New Age and astrology created, in his opinion, “an explosive cocktail.”<sup>19</sup> The question, however, remains about what syncretistic cocktails could in fact “explode” while others, not unusual in the New Age and occult subcultures, will remain comparatively harmless. Surely not all syncretisms lead to homicides and suicides.

### 3. Some Conclusions

Although a number of questions remain unanswered, I believe that—one year after the first tragedy and some months after the second—the scholarly debate about the OTS has led to significant progress, perhaps thanks to the fact that there has not been a parallel heated political or media discussion, unlike in the cases of Waco and the Aum Shinri-kyo. While we may await with interest further findings by the Swiss and French judges, some conclusions may perhaps be in order.

1. Reductionistic interpretations regarding the OTS as a mere front for non-religious criminal activities have not been substantiated. When they pay attention to the OTS, even the media are now obviously looking for better interpretations. Regarding all apocalyptic or millenarian movements as dangerous is not, however, a better or acceptable conclusion. Occult millennialism should, first of all, be

carefully distinguished from the Christian millennialism of groups like The Family (and of many mainline American evangelicals) and from the millennialism of the Japanese *shin-shin-shukyo*, or second-generation new religious movements. Even among occult millennialists many varieties and differences exist and any general conclusion over-simplifies the issue and may generate hate campaigns against perfectly harmless groups.

2. It seems now certain that the threatened loss of Di Mambro’s charisma due to his poor health and increasingly contested authority was an important element in determining the tragedy. Socio-psychological interpretations centering on the effects of his self-perceived loss of charisma should however be complemented by a study of the OTS as a movement in order to explain why Di Mambro’s lethal decisions were accepted at least by a core group of key members and still executed in 1995 more than one year after his death (unless, of course, one believes that Di Mambro and Jouret were still giving orders from Sirius thanks to the mediums who claimed to channel them).

3. As Randall Collins wrote in 1990, sociological theories often “have a macro primacy” and need to be “micro-translated.” When “we attempt a micro-translation of sociology—not necessarily an absolute micro-reduction, but a grounding of macro-concepts in real interactions across the macro-grid of time—we are led to see the importance of emotional processes.”<sup>20</sup> Religious behavior is not purely cognitive but should also be studied through the lenses of a “sociology of emotions.” It seems increasingly clear that a

number of middle class men and women did in fact obtain from the OTS what they regarded as valuable emotions, a welcome supplement to their daily ordinary life. It is for the sake of these emotions that they kept following Di Mambro and Jouret (and their ideas, after their deaths) even after it became apparent to intelligent and cultivated people such as them (not necessarily “sweet idiots,” a reductionist label grossly unfair particularly when applied to *all* OTS members) that a certain amount of deception had been involved. This is, by the way, not uncommon in the occult traditions, where cognitive dissonance may work in explaining away deception as a needed tool to keep within the fold the weaker members, while the stronger do not need “manifestations” as physical evidence and know better. The feeling of being part of a secret community of initiates may have been in turn extremely valuable for men and women daily immersed in the routine of their business and professional life.

Finally—whether to adopt or not the dichotomy between hermetic purity and hermetic danger—the tragedy as an illustration of the ambiguity hidden in many kinds of occult, or hermetic, experience. This is not a general indictment of hermeticism or esotericism as such. Since rationalization, like secularization, is a self-limiting process, and there is such a thing as a general human need for ritual and symbol, a larger presence of esotericism and hermeticism as a postmodern reaction to rationalization is to be expected, and may in fact play a positive role. Hermeticism is, however, a borderline world where the differences between life and death, purity and danger are not always well marked. While the large majority of individuals and groups in the hermetic subcul-

ture are capable of approaching the alchemic “refiner’s fire” without burning themselves, occasionally—when all circumstances turn to the very worst—danger may prevail. As Antoine Faivre recently wrote, “A god, like a child, should not be left alone when he or she plays.”<sup>21</sup>

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> See my “Armageddon in Switzerland: The Solar Temple Remembered”, *Theosophical History*, V/8 (October 1995): 281-98.

<sup>2</sup> Thierry Huguénin, *Le 54e* (Paris: Fixot, 1995).

<sup>3</sup> In fact with Jacques de Molay only another Templar, Geoffroy de Charnay, was burnt at the stake on March 18, 1314. There were other executions at various times; the number 54 corresponds to those executed on May 11, 1310 (not including de Molay). See Régine Pernoud, *Les Templiers*, 5th ed. (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1992. (First ed.: 1974).

<sup>4</sup> See Anson D. Shupe, “Beware Alleged Experts’ Doomsday Warnings”, *A Special Report from “Freedom”: Cult Awareness Network*, a special issue of *Freedom*, 27/2 (January 1995): 32.

<sup>5</sup> See my book *Idee che uccidono: Jonestown, Waco, il Tempio Solare* (Pessano (Milan): MIMEP-Docete, 1995).

<sup>6</sup> Roland Campiche, *Quand les Sectes affolent: Ordre du Temple Solaire, médias et fin de millenaire. Entretiens avec Cyril Dépraz* (Geneva: Labor et Fides, 1995), 32-35.

<sup>7</sup> Geoff Baker, “Val-David Couple Hailed as Healers, Scorned as Cultists,” *The Gazette* (Montreal), September 30, 1995. Susan Palmer supplied me with a copy of this article.

<sup>8</sup> See Jean-François Mayer, “Des Templiers pour l’Ère du Verseau: Les Clubs Archéda (1984-1991) et l’Ordre International Chevaleresque Tradition Solaire”, *Mouvements Religieux* 14/153 (1993): 3-10 (summed up in Mayer, *Les Nouvelles voies spirituelles. Enquête sur la religiosité parallèle*

en Suisse, Lausanne: L'Age d'Homme, 1993, 148-49).

<sup>9</sup> Campiche, *Quand les Sectes affolent*, 133.

<sup>10</sup> Breyer's published works include: *Dante Alchimiste - I. L'Enfer. Interprétation alchimique de la Divine Comédie* (Paris: La Colombe, 1957); *Oubal el Phoumet* (Paris: Chez l'Auteur, 1970); *Terre-Omega (Clefs initiatiques pour survivre à l'Apocalypse)*, 2nd ed. (Paris: Ergonia, 1988) [1st ed.: 1974]; *Au Dessus des Tombeaux* (Paris: Ergonia, 1979); *Vaincre la seconde Mort* (Paris: Ergonia, 1984); *Le Philosophe* (Paris: Ergonia, 1989); *Les Forces Occultes du Bonsai. Horticulture sacrée* (Paris: Ergonia, 1990); *Il faut Souffrir pour être beau* (Paris: Ergonia, 1992); *Ésotérisme: clefs opératives vérifiées. Comment tirer notre épingle du jeu* (Paris: Ergonia, 1994). Perhaps the most influential of Breyer's books on the OTS is *Arcanes Solaires ou les Secrets du Temple Solaire*, Paris: La Colombe, 1959.

<sup>11</sup> See Jean-Pierre Laurant, *L'Ésotérisme chrétien en France au XIXe siècle* (Lausanne: L'Age d'Homme, 1992).

<sup>12</sup> See, for similar reincarnation games among the Illuminati of Copenhagen and prince Karl von Hesse-Kassel (1744-1836), Auguste Viatte, *Les Sources occultes du Romantisme. Illuminisme, Théosophie 1770-1820*, reprint, 2 volumes (Paris: Librairie Honoré Champion, 1979), I, 130-38.

<sup>13</sup> Renaud Marhic, *Enquête sur les extrémistes de l'occulte. De la Loge P2 à l'Ordre du Temple Solaire* (Bordeaux: L'Horizon Chimérique, 1995), 200.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, 210-214. According to Marhic, I may also downplay occasionally the political conspiracy side since I am a scholar "whom some regard as too close to the groups he studies" (que d'aucuns jugent trop proche de ceux qu'il étudie: *ibid.*, 156).

<sup>15</sup> Campiche, *Quand les Sectes affolent*, 57-58.

<sup>16</sup> See Raphael Aubert - Carl A. Keller, *Vie et Mort de l'Ordre du Temple Solaire* (Vevey: Éditions de l'Aire, 1994).

<sup>17</sup> See Mary Douglas, *Purity and Danger: An Analysis of Concepts of Pollution and Taboo* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1970) [first ed., 1966].

<sup>18</sup> John L. Brooke, *The Refiner's Fire: the Making of Mormon*

*Cosmology, 1644-1844* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994). Mormon scholars have had mixed reactions to Brooke's book. For a devastating critique by conservative Brigham Young University scholars see William J. Hamblin, Daniel C. Peterson and George L. Mitton, "Mormon in the Fiery Furnace Or, Loftes Tryk Goes to Cambridge", *Review of Books on the Book of Mormon*, 6:2 (1994), 3-58 (Loftes Tryk, mentioned in the title, is an ex-convict who is a particularly notorious author of paranoid conspirationist anti-Mormon literature). For a favorable review see Lance Owens, "The Divine Transmutation", *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought*, 27:4 (Winter 1994): 187-191.

<sup>19</sup> Campiche, *Quand les Sectes affolent*, 9.

<sup>20</sup> Randall Collins, "Stratification, Emotional Energy, and the Transient Emotions", in Theodore D. Kemper (ed.), *Research Agendas in the Sociology of Emotions* (Albany, New York: State University of New York Press, 1990), 27-57 (28). Margaret M. Poloma's paper on the Toronto Blessing read at the 1995 ASR Meeting in Washington D.C. directed my attention to the relevance of Collins' remarks for the study of new religious movements.

<sup>21</sup> Antoine Faivre, *The Eternal Hermes: From Greek God to Alchemical Magus* (Grand Rapids Michigan: Phanes Press, 1995), 70.

\* \* \* \* \*

# Notes on MADAME BLAVATSKY'S BABOON

W. T. S. Thackara<sup>1</sup>  
Theosophical University Press<sup>2</sup>

***MADAME BLAVATSKY'S BABOON: THEOSOPHY AND THE EMERGENCE OF THE WESTERN GURU.*** By Peter Washington. London: Secker & Warburg, 1993. Pp. 480 with notes, bibliography, and index. ISBN 0-436-56418-1. [The 1995 American edition is subtitled: *A History of the Mystics, Mediums, and Misfits Who Brought Spiritualism to America*]

PETER WASHINGTON is the General Editor of the Everyman Library and the author of several books including *Fraud: Literary Theory and the End of English*. He is a professor of English and European Literature at Middlesex University and a reviewer and critic for *The London Evening Standard* and *The Independent*.

## GENERAL APPRAISAL

Written in a witty and engaging style, the book contains sufficient facts and insights, some quite good, to make it appealing to a wide readership—beguilingly so, perhaps, for it has been cited as a source reference in magazines such as the

*Smithsonian* (May 1995), and Peter Washington has been interviewed on British television as an “authority” on Theosophic history.

On superficial examination the book appears to be well-researched and objective. But a more careful inspection—especially of the Theosophic section, to which these remarks are limited—discloses serious errors and omissions. Aside from fairly obvious use of innuendo and half-truths to bolster his negative conclusions about H. P. Blavatsky and Katherine Tingley, the author is frequently inaccurate, misrepresents Theosophic teaching, relies on uncorroborated assertion (often from unfriendly secondary and tertiary sources), omits rebuttal evidence, garbles dates, events, and attributions, downgrades, trivializes, and generally gives a one-sided account. Whatever merit the book may have is defeated by its unreliability and prejudice.

One would expect any author who writes on historical subjects to use primary sources as far as possible. We have no record of Peter Washington contacting the Theosophi-

cal Society (Pasadena) and its considerable historical resources, either to verify facts or to interview staff members and living witnesses who are perhaps better informed about Blavatsky, Tingley, Purucker, and Theosophical history. Washington's scholarly competence and objectivity may be deduced from the following list of errors and omissions. It is not exhaustive, but representative.

**ERRORS AND OMISSIONS** (sequentially listed)

1. Pages 34e-35b: "According to Blavatsky's later description of the Brotherhood, this hierarchy is headed by the Lord of the World, who lives at Shamballa in the Gobi Desert.<sup>11</sup> The Lord of the World came originally from Venus with several helpers and now inhabits the body of a sixteen-year-old boy. In descending order of authority, his helpers are the Buddha, the Mahachohan, Manu and Maitreya. . . .

"Manu's assistant is Blavatsky's original visitor, Master Morya, often referred to as Master M or simply M. His special duty in the distribution of cosmic responsibilities is to preside over the qualities of Power and Strength, with particular regard to the guidance of nations. . . .

"Maitreya's assistant is Master Koot Hoomi . . . whose past incarnations include Pythagoras. . . . He is a cultured fellow, a linguist and musician whose work takes in the supervision of Religion, Education and Art. . . . [etc., etc.]"

*COMMENT:* Misinformation; misattribution; evident reliance on secondary or tertiary

sources; undocumented (Chapter note 11 is a reference to Shambhala by René Guenon and Marco Pallis). This misleading description is not to be found in Blavatsky's writings, but may be traced to a divergent tradition which gained prominence among some Theosophists many years after Blavatsky's death in 1891. A careful scholar reasonably conversant with Theosophic history and doctrine would not confuse the two. Peter Washington (PW) in fact gives very little description of Theosophy as presented by HPB and her teachers, and what he does mention is often inaccurate or out of context (see Note 10 below).

2. Page 45a: "Madame Blavatsky's baboon signalled her own posture in this debate as an adamant anti-Darwinian. . . . But involved with this lofty dismissal of Darwinism . . . is the further message that anyone who thinks as Darwin does must be no better than a baboon, i.e. crude and crafty, foolish, vulgar, greedy, gross, and deceitful."

*COMMENT:* Inaccurate and misleading. The first statement could easily, but incorrectly be taken to mean that HPB was anti-evolutionist. On the contrary, HPB's *Secret Doctrine* is premised on an evolutionary paradigm, and she was sufficiently versed in the subject to articulate the difference between the *principle* of evolution and the Darwinian *model* which purports to explain its mechanism. Having translated at least a portion of *The Origin of Species* in early 1875, she was undoubtedly aware of Darwin's chapter 6, "Difficulties on the Theory"—fundamental problems which are unresolved

today (fossil gaps, hybrid limits, instinct, etc.). In her *Secret Doctrine*, HPB gave Darwin due credit for the partial correctness of his theory in regard to *variation*, as distinct from *speciation*. But she criticized it as insufficient to explain the underlying *causes* of evolution, and Darwinians as being ethically culpable for putting “in the place of *a conscious creative force . . . a series of natural forces working blindly (or we say) without aim, without design*” (2:652—here she quotes Ernst Haeckel so as not to misrepresent the Darwinist position).

As for “lofty dismissal,” HPB merely summarized the pertinent criticisms of contemporary scientists such as Darwin’s co-theorist A. R. Wallace (an early member of the Theosophical Society) and French anthropologist A. de Quatrefages—issues which are still debated in scientific circles. Her position vis-à-vis Darwinism is echoed nearly a century later in the 1973 comment of zoologist Pierre-Paul Grassé (late president of the French Academy of Sciences): “Through use and abuse of hidden postulates, of bold, often ill-founded extrapolations, a pseudoscience has been created. . . . the explanatory doctrines of [Darwinist] biological evolution do not stand up to an objective, in-depth criticism. They prove to be either in conflict with reality or else incapable of solving the major problems involved” (*Evolution of Living Organisms*, NY: Academic Press, 1977, pp. 6, 202). There is a considerable difference between lofty dismissal and informed criticism.

3. Page 49c: “After that [the closing of Gerry Brown’s *Spiritual Scientist*] Blavatsky estab-

lished a Miracle Club, devoted to investigating occult phenomena.”

*COMMENT*: Error of fact, evident reliance on faulty secondary source. Olcott organized the Miracle Club (with HPB’s concurrence) in New York in May 1875, while HPB lived in Philadelphia. The Club failed almost immediately, but Brown continued publishing the *Spiritual Scientist* for another few years. PW’s source is most likely V. Solovioff’s *Modern Priestess of Isis* (1895, pp. 249, 255) which makes the same error (see Note 7 below regarding Solovioff’s credibility).

4. Page 52b: “*Isis Unveiled* is an exposition of Egyptian occultism and the cult of the Great Mother.”

*COMMENT*: Misrepresents and trivializes. This characterization of *Isis Unveiled* is novel, but entirely misleading. PW amplifies his description in the paragraph which follows, but this, too, diminishes the scope of the 1,317-page two-volume work enormously. He cites only negative reviews, omitting several positive ones.

5. Page 52e: “. . . another critic identified over two thousand unacknowledged quotations [in *Isis Unveiled*].”

*COMMENT*: Questionable source; omits rebuttal evidence. The critic—whom PW fails to identify (perhaps intentionally so, given his lack of credibility)—is HPB’s long-time adversary, William Emmett Coleman, an ardent spiritualist who was a clerk in the US

Army Quartermaster's Office at Ft. Leavenworth in the 1870s and later in San Francisco. In spite of his claim, Coleman never produced satisfactory documentation. For credentials he listed himself as a member of several learned societies—including the American Oriental Society, the Royal Asiatic Society, and the Pali Text Society. According to historian Michael Gomes, investigation has revealed no contributions from him in these fields.

Gomes also examined Coleman's criticism and, allowing for errors in manuscript preparation and typesetting, concluded that nearly every instance of quotation in *Isis* is acknowledged in one way or another (there are some 2,400 footnotes). Moreover, Dr. Graham Hough, Emeritus Professor of English, University of Cambridge, grudgingly admitted in *The Mystery Religion of W. B. Yeats* (1984, p. 36) that "when she [HPB] cites an identifiable authority—a Neoplatonic philosopher for example—it generally turns out that she gives a fair representation of what he actually said." One must also account for the testimony of Professor Hiram Corson of Cornell University, who was amazed by HPB's ability to quote "long verbatim paragraphs from dozens of books of which I am perfectly certain there were no copies at that time in America, translating easily from several languages, . . ." (see Michael Gomes, *Dawning of the Theosophical Movement*, pp. 143-55, 113.)

6. Page 54c: "William Judge, the lawyer's clerk, proposed the colonel for President [of the TS]."

*COMMENT*: Downgrades; relies on secondary or tertiary source. Omits that Judge was a lawyer in his own right, specializing in commercial law. (John Symond's biography of HPB, frequently cited by PW, says "lawyer's clerk," as does Gertrude Marvin Williams, an earlier negative biographer, whom Symonds appears to rely heavily upon. Primary source is probably Olcott's "Old Diary Leaves" article in *The Theosophist*, Nov. 1892, where he states that Judge was "a lawyer's clerk" at the time—clerking was and is often the lot of young attorneys. But Olcott also mentioned in the same article that Judge had been admitted to the Bar in 1872).

7. Page 83: PW quotes the conclusion of the 1885 Hodgson Report of the Society for Psychical Research (SPR), which branded HPB "as one of most accomplished, ingenious, and interesting impostors in history."

*COMMENT*: Omits rebuttal evidence. Although PW points out that Hodgson withdrew his "conclusion" that HPB was a Russian spy, he fails to mention the SPR *Journal's* 1986 publication of "J'Accuse" by Dr. Vernon Harrison, an expert in detecting forgery and a senior SPR member. From his analysis, Harrison concluded that "whereas Hodgson was prepared to use any evidence, however trivial or questionable, to implicate HPB, he ignored all evidence that could be used in her favour. His report is riddled with slanted statements, conjecture advanced as fact or probable fact, uncorroborated testimony of unnamed witnesses, selection of evidence and downright falsity. . . . The Hodgson

Report is a highly partisan document forfeiting all claim to scientific impartiality . . . the case against Madame Blavatsky is NOT PROVEN—in the Scots sense.” Though not published at the time, Harrison’s later study, *H. P. Blavatsky and the SPR* (TUP, 1997), condemns the Hodgson Report as being “worse than I had thought. . . . It is the work of a man who has reached his conclusions early on in his investigation and thereafter, selecting and distorting evidence, did not hesitate to adopt flawed arguments to support his thesis” (p. viii).

Like Hodgson, PW does not challenge the unsubstantiated accusations of the Coulombs, whom he admits were seeking revenge, but allows their allegations of fraud to stand, evidently because they support his own conclusions. Similarly, he states (p. 90) that HPB confessed to Vsevolod Solovioff that her phenomena were fraudulent, a statement from Solovioff or possibly imported from John Symond’s frequently-cited biography, but omitting Symond’s question: “To what extent can one believe Vsevolod Solov’vov? There is only his word for it” (Symonds, *Madame Blavatsky*, 220).<sup>\*</sup> Absent here also is Vera Jelihovsky’s reply to Solovioff that her sister (HPB) sometimes “falsely accused” herself to escape annoyance, but had said to her that she (HPB) “was sure that she had never made any admission of the sort” (Solovioff, *A Modern Priestess of Isis*, 318). Throughout these chapters PW asserts trickery, sham, lying, and deceit on the part of HPB but, when not giving garbled information, never establishes anything more than hearsay, much if not all of it from hostile or prejudiced witnesses.

---

\*Even Solovioff’s translator, Walter Leaf, admitted that Solovioff used HPB’s letters selectively: “the letters are not entire; they are selected by a bitter personal enemy with the purpose of damaging their writer, . . . .” Leaf points to one letter in particular which implies “a real inconsistency with Mr. Solovioff’s narrative; it implies that he has not correctly represented the mental attitude in which he found himself after the Würzburg conversations. I confess that I am not satisfied with his own explanation . . . .” (Solovioff, xv).

8. Page 110b: “Purucker, a suave, scholarly and ascetic fellow almost thirty years younger than Tingley, soon became her surrogate son and right-hand man.”<sup>7</sup>

*COMMENT*: Misleading innuendo. Gottfried de Purucker (GdeP), a lifelong bachelor, was ascetic and scholarly, but not “suave” by most definitions. As a student of and the successor to Katherine Tingley, he may be considered her “son” only in the sense of spiritual and intellectual mentorship.

Note 7 (on p. 415) is more serious. Here PW states that “H. N. Stokes wittily dismissed Purucker’s extensive writings as ‘Theosophical Jabberwock’.” PW in fact garbles a statement in Emmett Greenwalt’s *California Utopia: Point Loma 1897-1914*, where Greenwalt writes: “One of [GdeP’s] critics, the independent theosophical editor H. N. Stokes, called Purucker’s vocabulary innovations ‘Sanskrit Jabberwock’” (p.118).

PW misrepresents both Stokes and GdeP. In the May-June 1935 issue of his *OE Library*

*Critic* (“The Sanskrit Jabberwock”), Stokes criticized what seemed to him to be a “fad” in Sanskrit education at Point Loma. He does not mention GdeP by name in the article and, to my knowledge, never accused GdeP of “Theosophical Jabberwock” elsewhere, disagreeing only with GdeP’s scholarly preference for Sanskrit precision (correct spelling can hardly be considered an “innovation”). On the contrary, Stokes was impressed with GdeP’s teaching and his clarity in writing and speaking. He eventually joined the TS under GdeP’s leadership, remaining an active member until his death on September 30, 1942, three days after GdeP died. Had PW gone to the primary source, he might also have found there Stokes’s description of his first meeting with GdeP in 1931 at a Theosophical meeting in Washington, DC:

“Naturally there were questions and answers, and to my mind the most impressive was his [GdeP’s] reply to a lady who had been sorely perplexed by reading Mahatma K.H.’s letter to A. O. Hume on God. . . . His reply, which I cannot attempt to abstract, was one of the most lucid expositions of this topic which I have ever listened to, and was something not to be forgotten.

“Clearly, too, did he speak on the subject of non-resistance in relation to the different stages of chelaship [discipleship]. Many, of course, have read *The Voice of the Silence* and have realized the truth of its precepts in a sort of fashion. Let G. de Purucker quote one of these precepts and make a few comments on it, as he did on this occasion, and it ceases to be a rule or a dictum and stands out before

one’s mental eye an indisputable and eternal truth. With no great skill in speaking, yet in some way he makes one feel in a new fashion the truth of what one has long known. . . . It has been years since I have felt the tremendous significance of these precepts so forcibly; and it was all done so modestly and simply. . . .

“His second, semi-public lecture, intended especially for theosophists, on “The Theosophical Movement,” was the most brilliant and convincing theosophical talk I have ever listened to. He is a true genius in exposition and, as stated above, carries conviction with a power which it is rarely the good fortune of a mere reader to experience. . . .

“All in all, then, I have felt myself more than rewarded. I have seen or heard nothing to which the most straight-laced theosophist of the old school could object and I have found an earnestness backed by power of expression which is only too rare and which, I think, places him in the very front rank of present day theosophists and teachers.” (*OE Library Critic*, July 1931)

9. Page 114c: “By the outbreak of World War One things were already on the slide. . . . The Purple Mother [Katherine Tingley] staggered on for another fifteen years, . . . but within a very few years of her death the community had been forced to close.”

*COMMENT*: Inaccurate and denigrating. The historical record reads otherwise, including the chartering of Theosophical University in 1919 and a resurgence of membership in the 1930s under the leadership of G. de

Purucker (1929-1942). The Depression forced cutbacks at Point Loma, exacerbated by new taxes and other financial burdens; but it was not until 1942, when San Diego became a staging area for the Pacific Theater in WW2, that GdeP moved the international headquarters—virtually debt-free—to Covina (from where it was moved in 1951 to its present location in Pasadena/Altadena).

“Staggering,” moreover, implies senility and incompetence. Colonel Arthur L. Conger (whom General George C. Marshall regarded as “one of the best minds in the army”\*) wrote to H. N. Stokes on August 8, 1932, as follows:

“I have received your letter of the 6th in which you quote a correspondent as having alleged: ‘It is on unimpeachable authority I have that Mrs. Tingley was by no means “the brilliant head” to the day of her passing. She suffered from brain affection for several years prior to her death.’

“In reply I wish to deny most emphatically that your correspondent has any such ‘authority’—‘unimpeachable’ or otherwise—for any such ridiculous assertion. I have known Mrs. Tingley intimately since 1896. In 1926 I was her guest at Nurnberg. In 1927 she was my guest at Berlin [where he was the US Military Attaché]. In 1928 I joined her at Visingsö and was with her until April 1929. . . . Based on the above contacts I assert that there was . . . no lessening of Katherine Tingley’s brilliant intellectual powers up to the very end of her life [on July 11, 1929]” (*OE Library Critic*, August 1932).

---

\*According to John Gilbert Winant in his *Letters from Grosvenor Square: An Account of*

*a Stewardship*, Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1947, p. 135. Winant was Governor of New Hampshire and, during WW2, US Ambassador to Great Britain.

10. Page 406, note 3: “. . . HPB’s great-nephew, Boris de Zirko.”

*COMMENT*: Inaccurate. “de Zirko” should be spelled de Zirkoff. This could be a typesetting error, but more likely the author’s inattention to detail. More importantly, I have found only this one mention of de Zirkoff—nothing in the index or bibliography. It is curious that there is no reference to the monumental 15-volume *H. P. Blavatsky: Collected Writings*, edited by de Zirkoff, in the bibliography—as any competent author relying on primary source material would surely include. One can only wonder how much of Blavatsky’s writings PW has actually read or comprehended.

Judging only by this relatively small sampling, Peter Washington’s treatment of Theosophical history is seen to be heavily biased as well as dependent on faulty sources, raising legitimate doubts about his accuracy and objectivity in the rest of the book. Vernon Harrison’s criticisms of the Hodgson Report (Note 7 above) could justifiably be applied to Washington’s *Baboon*.

\* \* \* \* \*

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Will Thackara served on the UCLA Committee on Religious Studies 1970-72 as an Assistant Dean of Students and, since 1972, has worked full time at the international headquarters of the Theosophical Society (Pasadena). He is currently Manager of Theosophical University Press and occasionally writes and lectures on Theosophic and related subjects.

<sup>2</sup> Condensed for publication in *Theosophical History*. A fuller version of these Notes is posted at [www.theosophy-nw.org/theosnw/theos/baboon.htm](http://www.theosophy-nw.org/theosnw/theos/baboon.htm), and is available also from Theosophical University Press, P. O. Box C, Pasadena, CA 91109-7107].

# Book Notes

**IN PERFECT TIMING: MEMOIRS OF A MAN FOR THE NEW MILLENNIUM.** By Peter Caddy with Jeremy Slocombe and Renata Caddy. Scotland: Findhorn Press, 1996. Pp. xvi + 462. ISBN 1 899171 26 6. £19.95, US\$28.

Before Peter Caddy was killed in a car accident on 18 February 1994, he had already worked extensively on these memoirs, making use of the considerable documentation he had preserved in a lifetime's involvement with the New Age (378). As well as being very readable, this book is already being used by scholars tracing the origin of that movement. Here I wish to call attention to the Theosophical aspect of Caddy's work.

Caddy was only ten when he first witnessed trance mediumship—that of Grace Cooke, whose White Eagle Lodge was to be an important bridge group between Spiritualism and Theosophy. At the age of nineteen he met Dr. Sullivan, a New Thought teacher who headed a Rosicrucian order, the Crotona Fellowship, whose student he became. But already “I read nearly everything available at that time, including Madam (*sic*) Blavatsky's *Secret Doctrine*, the Arcane School books by Alice Bailey, and Max Heindel's *Rosicrucian Cosmo-Conception*” (30).

In a long and varied esoteric pilgrimage, which had taken him to the Himalayas as early as 1945, Caddy was never prominent in the

main Theosophical bodies, yet even at the end of his life we find him lecturing in Germany about the Seven Rays (423). The main Theosophical influence on him was undoubtedly St. Germain (225). Caddy believed he worked with him as a friend throughout his life (389). Messages from St. Germain shaped the early Findhorn community (*e.g.*, 270, 280). St. Germain was even involved in the serial monogamy practiced by Caddy (367). At St. Anne's in N.W. England, Caddy met Liebie Pugh, who “took my hands, and the first words she said were, ‘St. Germain’—she recognized that I had a strong link with the Master of the Seventh Ray.” (234).

It has always been accepted in this journal that its scope includes all groups that derive their teachings—directly or indirectly, knowingly or unknowingly—from Modern Theosophy, and to related movements. So I would affirm without hesitation that we have in this book an autobiography of seminal relevance. It is not the whole story of the crystallizing of the New Age movement (Sir George Trevelyan, for example, looms large but not in his intellectual work through the Wrekin Trust), but it is a wonderful perspective on those events.

**Leslie Price**

\* \* \* \* \*

**IN THE NAME OF THE NEW WORLD ORDER: MANIFESTATIONS OF DECADENT POWERS IN WORLD POLITICS.** By Amnon Reuveni. London: Temple Lodge, 1996. Pp. 148. ISBN 0 904693 81 3. £9.95.

**THE CASE OF VALENTIN TOMBERG: ANTHROPOLOGY OR JESUITISM?** By Sergei O. Prokofieff. London: Temple Lodge, 1997. Pp. 226. ISBN 0 904693 85 6. £11.95.

Conspiracy theory is booming, and through the Internet can put a girdle round about the earth in forty seconds. A conspiracy is basic to Modern Theosophy. The Mahatmas, of whom we read in Madame Blavatsky's books and in their Letters, are said to have secretly influenced history. Opponents of Theosophy in turn placed that movement in their exposures of conspiracy.<sup>1</sup>

Later leaders in the Theosophical tradition put their own conspiratorial emphases on theosophical history, notably Dr. Rudolf Steiner.<sup>2</sup> Dr. Steiner, founder of the Anthroposophical Society, understood developments in the modern world to be influenced by secret societies. Disconcertingly for British and American readers, he was quite critical of their nations' economic and imperial activities.

In the U.K., Temple Lodge Publishing, associated with the Christian Community inspired by Rudolf Steiner, has emerged as the leading publisher of material relevant to theosophical history, although this naturally is given their own perspective.<sup>3</sup> Many of their most interesting titles are translations and some include updates for the English edition.

Mr. Reuveni's book provides evidence in support of Dr. Steiner's assertion that Anglo-

Saxon brotherhoods were active in world affairs. The policies and legacy of Cecil Rhodes provide a perfect case study, and take us down to Bill Clinton, a Rhodes scholar. Later chapters explore developments in Eastern Europe, with some reference to Papal diplomacy. The quality of analysis is superior to that commonly found in conspiracy books, and the book is a valuable attempt to demonstrate in historical particulars the accuracy of an occultist's view of politics. Dr. Steiner's threefold social order provides a pattern against which to judge events; another important influence is the folk spirits.

Dr. Steiner carefully distinguished his methods of training from those of the Jesuits and their "Spiritual Exercises."<sup>4</sup> Despite this, there are arisen an influential school of thought which combines Anthroposophical interests with Catholicism and a great respect for Jesuit methods.

The leading figure Valentin Tomberg (1900-1973), who converted to Roman Catholicism about 1945, is best known today for his anonymous *Meditations on the Tarot* (translated by Robert Powell<sup>5</sup>), though his earlier Anthroposophical writings have also been republished by students. Tomberg is now the subject of a detailed critique by Prokofieff intended to warn Anthroposophists to steer clear of him as a Catholic agent inimical to the true message of Rudolf Steiner.

Prokofieff is a Russian Anthroposophical leader and among many other works he is the author of *The East in the Light of the West*, the first volume of which assessed the Agni Yoga of Helen Roerich and its links with Leninism and the Mahatmas.<sup>6</sup> Prokofieff argues that while as a youth professing sympathy with Dr. Steiner,

Tomberg was actually identified with the French occultism of Papus, Guaita, and Eliphas Levi, and that he was in consequence fatally infected with a spurious occult stream (51). He presents evidence that, as a member of the Anthroposophical Society, Tomberg gave deluded information about their past lives to colleagues (108f.). But the most serious point (in the author's view) is Tomberg's enthusiasm for the Jesuits and their founder, I. Loyola. The controversy about Catholicism and Anthroposophy is likely to be with us for some time. As with the splits in the Theosophical movement (including the dispute about the Liberal Catholic Church), an advantage to the historian has sometimes been that it results in new material reaching the public domain.

### Leslie Price

\* \* \*

\* \* \* \* \*

## Notes

<sup>1</sup>For example, fascist Nesta H. Webster, *Secret Societies and Subversive Movements* (London, 1928); Protestant Alan Morrison, *The Serpent and the Cross: Religious Corruption in an Evil Age* (U.K.: K & M, 1994); New Ager David Icke, *And the Truth Shall Set You Free* (U.K.: Bridge of Love, 1995). Joscelyn Godwin touched on conspiratorial themes in his four-part series, "The Hidden Hand," in *Theosophical History*, III/2,3,4,5 (April, July, October 1990 and January 1991).

<sup>2</sup>Analyzed by Dr. H.J. Spierenburg, "Dr. Steiner on HPB," in *Theosophical History*, I/7 (July 1986); "Dr. Steiner on the Mahatmas," *TH* I/8 (October 1986) and II/1 (January 1987). See also C.G. Harrison, *The Transcendental Universe* (new edition, 1993) and reviewed by J.P. Deveney in *TH*, V/2

(April 1994).

<sup>3</sup>As noted by John Cooper in his review of T.H. Meyer, *D.N. Dunlop* (Temple Lodge 1992) in *TH* V/6 (April 1995). May I second the praise by Govert Schüller in his *Krishnamurti and the World Teacher Project*, (*TH Occasional Paper* V), 30. For another title from the same author and publisher, *The Bodhisattva Question* (1993), wherein Meyer already discussed the question of Tomberg on pages 75-84.

<sup>4</sup>For instance, his lecture series "from Jesus to Christ." Despite this, Mrs. Besant accused him of being a tool of the Jesuits. See L. Price, "The Loss of Rudolf Steiner," *TH*, IV/1 (January 1992). Madame Blavatsky also feared the Jesuits. See her incomplete memorandum about their attempt to destroy the British Empire in A.T. Barker, *The Letters of H.P. Blavatsky to A.P. Sinnett* (London, 1925), 230-33, and her essay, "Theosophy or Jesuitism?" *Lucifer* (June 1888) [in *Blavatsky Collected Writings*, X, 291-317].

<sup>5</sup>There is an illuminating interview with Powell in the magazine *Gnosis* 38 (Winter 1996).

<sup>6</sup>Published by Temple Lodge Publishing, 1993. A second volume not yet translated deals with Alice Bailey, and a projected third with the Mahatmas as the subject.