

The Prophets and the Goddess

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*W. B. Yeats, Aleister Crowley,
Ezra Pound, Robert Graves and
the Chthonic Esoteric Tradition*

By

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Cambridge
Scholars
Publishing



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This book first published 2017

Cambridge Scholars Publishing

Lady Stephenson Library, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE6 2PA, UK

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

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ISBN (10): 1-4438-9375-7

ISBN (13): 978-1-4438-9375-6

To the Great Goddess, the Mother of us all.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The title of this book was revealed to me in a dream. Shortly afterwards, two friends separately messaged me that they had dreamt I had published a book and was lecturing about it. Then I realized I had no choice but to follow the will of the Goddess.

I would like to thank above all my PhD supervisor at the University of Edinburgh, Dr Cairnes Craig, who originally encouraged me to pursue this topic. My gratitude extends to my former Dean of the Arts and Sciences at the American College of Greece, Dr Patrick Quinn, a good friend and mentor, whose inspiration and insightful comments accompanied me along the path to the Goddess. Thanks also to Michel Pharand, editor extraordinaire, for reading the manuscript in its later stages and for providing valuable suggestions. My thanks also to the staff of the library at the American College of Greece for their patience with me and for helping me locate sources. Finally, a heartfelt thank you to my precious family, my *raison d'être*.

I also wish to thank the following for their kind permission to reproduce copyrighted material: Michael Staley, editor of Starfire Publishing and successor to Kenneth Grant as Outer Head of the Typhonian Order, for his generous permission to quote from his ingenious articles published in *Starfire: A Journal of the New Aeon*, and from the works of the legendary master Kenneth Grant, whose wife Steffi Grant owns the copyright; Michael Schmidt, managing director of Carcanet Press, for his gracious permission to quote from the works of Robert Graves; and Christopher Wait, Permissions Editor at New Directions Publishing, for permission to quote from the works of Ezra Pound.

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INTRODUCTION

Where do we come from? Where are we going? What is the meaning of this life? That is what every heart is shouting, what every head is asking as it beats on chaos.

And a fire within me leaps up to answer: "Fire will surely come one day to purify the earth. Fire will surely come one day to obliterate the earth. This is the Second Coming."

—Nikos Kazantzakis, *The Saviors of God*. Translated by Kimon Friar

In his essay "Tradition and the Individual Talent" (1919), T. S. Eliot attacks the "metaphysical theory of the substantial unity of the soul" (*The Sacred Wood* 56) and asserts that "the poet has not a 'personality' to express, but a particular medium, which is only a medium and not a personality, in which impressions and experiences combine in peculiar and unexpected ways" (56). In other words, according to Eliot, in order to create a work of art, the artist must deny the existence of his inner world and reduce his art to a scientific experiment, since for Eliot "the poet's mind is in fact a receptacle for seizing and storing up numberless feelings, phrases, images, which remain there until all the particles which can unite to form a new compound are present together" (56).

But this scientific conception of artistic creation does not constitute the only current that has directed the tide of twentieth-century poetry. In contrast to Eliot, the poets under consideration in this book—W. B. Yeats, Aleister Crowley, Ezra Pound, and Robert Graves—maintain that the "metaphysical theory of the substantial unity of the soul" is a prerequisite for the creation of great poetry, and that unity can only be achieved by bringing to light the suppressed world of the subconscious, which constitutes the fundamental source of poetic inspiration or intuition. Furthermore, "the substantial unity of the soul"—or Yeats's "Unity of Being" (*AVB* 82)—presupposes a thorough investigation into the depths of the human psyche, one that has preoccupied primarily the initiates of the esoteric tradition. That tradition, however, has been misunderstood and marginalized by many literary critics who, unable to fathom its indispensability to the study of late-nineteenth and twentieth-century poetry, consider it a miasma, if not an exogenous factor, in literary criticism. In "Enchanting Modernism" (2014), Amy Clukey accurately comments that

“the modernist establishment crafted a retrospective self-image that censored its own occult interests” (80). Similarly, in *W. B. Yeats and the Learning of the Imagination* (1999), Kathleen Raine expresses her bitterness at the academic establishment’s failure to pay proper attention to the spiritual wisdom that actually forms the cornerstone of Modernist literature. Instead, Academia is still obsessed with a barren materialism, that, as Raine observes, has already become obsolete “in the most advanced thought of science itself” (115), meaning the advances in quantum physics. Referring to Yeats’s metaphysical thought and Academia’s inability to accept and understand it, Raine asserts that

the Universities, having replaced new criticism, Marxism, behaviourism, existentialism, and the rest with minimalism, post-modernism, feminism, deconstructionism, political-correctness and whatever other ‘original’ theories ingenious ignorance is able to generate, seem to understand Yeats not a whit better, for the premises remain unchanged—materialism remains an unquestioned orthodoxy. (3)

Raine’s wise judgment is that we must discard “naïve materialism” (19) and turn to the venerable and widespread principle “of the *sophia perennis*” (19), the perennial wisdom of the Great Goddess.

The nineteenth century witnessed an overflowing of an occult current that stimulated the disheartened minds of artistic society. Victorian capitalism and morality, as well as the scientific rationalism of the period, plagued the pursued artistic spirit that found shelter in the covens of secret societies. The conspiratorial existence of secret societies marks the thought and style of many early twentieth-century poets. Nikos Kazantzakis, for example, in his visionary *The Saviors of God* (1927), assumes the role of a “conspirator” and strives to communicate to his comrades “in time a simple word . . . a password” (54). And Yeats wonders in his autobiography (1926) whether “modern civilization [was] a conspiracy of the sub-conscious” (159). Yeats’s statement conveys a metaphorical meaning denoting the change of emphasis from the primary conscious state (masculine principle) to the antithetical sub-conscious (feminine principle).

The aim of this symbolic conspiracy is the product of the ‘sacred marriage’ between opposites, that is Jung’s child-god archetype, Crowley’s crowned and conquering child, Yeats’s new divinity (or turbulent child of the Altar), Pound’s child of the goddess Aphrodite, brought forth at the last stage of the Eleusinian Mysteries, and Graves’s child of the waning moon, Lucifer, or child of the Mother alone. The product of the ‘sacred marriage,’ or of the equal balance of opposites, is, in

other words, a new state of consciousness that would liberate humanity from the tyranny of the 'I' and from the illusionary world we live in. It would also lead us back to the original state of Unity, or lost paradise, represented by the Great Goddess.

In *Conjectures and Refutations* (1963), Karl Popper comments that "the conspiracy theory of society . . . comes from abandoning God and then asking: 'who is in his place?'" (123). Indeed, the loss of God in the nineteenth century created a spiritual abyss that had to be bridged by a faith substantial enough to satisfy peoples' spiritual hunger. As many critics have recognized, poets were inspired to develop a new religion that would stress its adherence not to an A-gnostic, abstract deity, but to a Gnostic one that would reside in the human soul and form its eternal element. In "The New Spirit and the Poets" (1918), French poet Guillaume Apollinaire remarks significantly that the mission of the poets of the new age is to assist readers in turning their attention within, to the inner or hidden god. The poets who, according to Apollinaire, have assumed the status of the seer or prophet "will be charged finally with giving by means of lyric teleologies and arch-lyric alchemies a constantly purer meaning to the idea of divinity, which is so alive within us, which is perpetual renewal of ourselves, that eternal creation, that endless rebirth by which we live" (235). Similarly, French poet Arthur Rimbaud, a precursor of Surrealism and modernism, in a 15 May 1871 "Letter of the Seer" (addressed to his friend Paul Demenny), claims that the poet who has assumed the status of the prophet or seer "by a long, gigantic and rational derangement of all the senses" (307), must turn inwards and explore the terra incognita of the self. The mission of the modern poet is to rediscover the lost cosmic harmony, the 'ideal' of the ancient Greek philosophers and religion or the unity symbolized by the Great Goddess. Rimbaud sees in the modern poet Plato's philosopher, who has escaped the phenomenal world and perceived the true light, and whose subsequent mission is to direct profane humanity to the "Universal Intelligence" (307) or "Soul" (307), the divine essence that exists within us.

Humanity's divine essence could be evoked by poetry and, therefore, the poet became legitimately the minister or apostle of the new creed. As poet-priests of a new religion, Yeats, Crowley, Pound, and Graves, like Apollinaire, Rimbaud, Filippo Marinetti, and the Surrealists, exhibited an experimental form of poetry that satisfied the requirements of the new age and religion. In applying their esoteric knowledge to poetics, they experimented with forms and techniques that would reflect and convey the spirit of a new age. The German philosopher Eduard von Hartmann, in *The Religion of the Future* (1886), commenting on the function and the form of

future art, observed that “a work of Art . . . begins to really deserve the name only when its external form is merely the symbol of a mystery opening an infinite world to the person who meditates on it and to the presentiments of the heart; a world in which each man finds the meaning which suits him without being able to accuse others of error” (76). In “The Founding and Manifesto of Futurism” (1909), the Italian Futurist Marinetti, a major influence on Pound’s poetics and specifically on Vorticism, declares that “poetry must be conceived as a violent attack on unknown forces, to reduce and prostrate them before man. We stand on the last promontory of the centuries! . . . Why should we look back, when what we want is to break down the mysterious doors of the Impossible? Time and Space died yesterday. We already live in the absolute” (42). Indeed, This is precisely what Yeats, Crowley, Pound, and Graves did: they lived “in the absolute,” they had accepted in their hearts the grace of the Goddess, endeavoured to expose the forces which defy the poetic spirit and imagination in the humans’ psyche and produced ‘Muse poetry’, so to speak, that touched the hearts of readers, opening up in them an infinite world of associations and unique meanings.

Considering themselves priest-magicians of the new age, these four poets conceived of poetry as a ritual in a new religion that would lead the reader to a revelation, an enlightenment. They explored the soul—the inner world or subconscious, if you will—to discover the route inwards towards the roots of humanity and establish a common language among people. Language, however, communicates the experience of the conscious state, as evidenced by the five senses, and does not express and communicate messages to and from the subconscious. Yeats, Crowley, Pound, and Graves believed that history was a conspiracy of the subconscious, that life itself is the manifestation of the divine will. The only question was, which poetic form would enable them to get in touch with that divine will or subconscious? All four understood the need to develop new forms and techniques that would enable them to reach the subconscious. They believed that contact with the collective unconscious occurs with a sudden revelation that brings enlightenment or palingenesis¹—rebirth or re-creation—to the poet’s or reader’s consciousness. Thus the collective unconscious is the state that the individual experiences through ecstasy, trance, or reverie, a state identified with the divine source.

The poem, then, is nothing less than the gateway to the collective unconscious. The poet uses free verse, myth, symbol, image, or rhythm in order to “transform” the reader’s consciousness, that is, to create a trance, ecstasy, reverie, or vortex that might “form” the consciousness of readers

and carry them away to the vortex of the subconscious. Myth, symbol, and image, charged by the priest-magician-poet's desire, function as catalysts that initiate the poet and the reader to the collective unconscious, an initiation that allows them to tap the wells of memory and establish a continuity among past, present, and future. It is the remembrance of things past that provides the whole and establishes communion with the inner hidden Goddess.

The four poets, for the most part independently of each other, arrived at the idea that in the new age it would be possible for poetry, through imagination and intuitive poetic insight, to restore the balance between the opposites in the human soul, to redeem humanity from the faithlessness of the present era and lead humanity to divine knowledge and the discovery of the Goddess within. Through this new poetic form, poetic language is transformed into a web of interlinked, charged talismanic images or symbols that ultimately produce ecstasy or reverie in the reader. The associations that are released by this trance-like state direct the reader to the depths of memory (or collective unconscious), an encounter that in turn evokes a feeling of accomplished unity with the divine. In short, the poem forms a gateway to the subconscious; it is a catalyst that enables poet and reader to experience an exalted state of consciousness that leads to the activation of a magical memory and to the recognition of the hidden god within.

Yeats, in *A Vision B*, declares that his work will proclaim "a new divinity" (27); in "The Symbolism of Poetry" (1900), he considers the priest of the primary Christian religion the poet's "shadow" (195). The true poet for Yeats is the priest of the Great Goddess, the Muse poet who has surrendered fully to the Goddess. Similarly, Rimbaud significantly defines the poet as the "thief of fire," a Promethean figure designating the relationship between the poet and humanity. A significant number of poets in the late nineteenth century, aware that they were living in a "time of troubles"—an appropriate term coined by Arnold Toynbee in his monumental *A Study of History* (1934)—denoting the state of unrest and decline that precedes the fall of a civilization, turned away from social chaos and embraced their inner psychic world. In other words, they underwent a process of "withdrawal and return." As Toynbee asserts:

The . . . withdrawal make[s] it possible for the personality to realize individual potentialities which might have remained in abeyance if the individual in whom they were immanent had not been released for a moment from his social toils and trammels. The withdrawal is an opportunity . . . for the anchorite's transfiguration; but, . . . this transfiguration can have no purpose, and perhaps even no meaning, except

as a prelude to the return of the transfigured personality into the social milieu out of which he has originally come. *A Study of History*, vol. 3, 248

Toynbee's statement expresses perfectly the philosophy of the avant-garde poets of the nineteenth century and specifically that of Rimbaud, who believed that the poets of the new age become mere instruments of "the Universal Intelligence" or "Soul." The poets being the agents of the Goddess "define the amount of the unknown awakening in [their] time in the universal soul" (309).

Indeed, our four poets, as Apostles of the Goddess, crossed the abyss of the phenomenal world, immersed themselves in the deep waters of their own psyches, and became instruments of the Goddess. Like Plato's confined philosophers, they escaped the cave of the illusionary world, experienced the light of forbidden gnosis, and returned to transmit this knowledge to profane humanity. The poets of the new antithetical age, identifying themselves with Prometheus or the rebel Satan, turned against patriarchy—specifically against the Gnostic demiurge, the cosmocrator Jehovah—and became conspirators or ministers of new creeds, seeking to resurrect and rekindle half-forgotten and forbidden knowledge and transmit it to humanity. The archives of this forbidden and aristocratic knowledge were kept within the strongholds of secret societies. Many poets of this period (particularly those under examination here) were inspired by the ideology that runs through the channels of secret societies and sought to communicate that ideology to humanity. According to this belief, the patriarchal religion of Christianity had degenerated to such an extent that it could no longer satisfy humanity's religious instincts, and that the time had come for the old gods, nurtured in the covens of the esoteric tradition, to dominate once more humanity's religious consciousness.

The purpose of this book is to demonstrate how late-nineteenth and twentieth-century writers, such as Yeats, Crowley, Pound, and Graves, were driven by a subconscious urge to bring forth a poetic manifesto that would teach humanity an esoteric creed. This creed would be based on a belief in humanity's eternal divine principle and in the neglected feminine aspect of the human soul. It would turn the attention of humanity within, rekindle the divine flame, and build a spiritual fire that would purge the illusionary material world and reveal humanity's divine essence. Yeats's *A Vision* (1925 and 1937), Crowley's *The Book of the Law* (1904), Pound's *The Cantos* (1948), and Graves's *The White Goddess* (1944) are apocalyptic works, manifestos proclaiming the coming of a new faith that will overthrow the old religious and social orders and initiate a new world order and a new divinity based on the ancient religion of the Great Goddess. The new creed will exalt the long-suppressed feminine principle,

will liberate the Gnostic Christ (or Set) that exists within the human soul, and bring forth, eventually, the apotheosis of humanity. In other words, the purpose of this book is not to provide a thorough critical analysis of the poetry of Yeats, Crowley, Pound, and Graves, but rather to investigate the ways in which the conspiracy of the subconscious (or esoteric tradition) has influenced their thinking, and, in general, to reveal the significant role played by the occult in shaping late-nineteenth and twentieth-century poetry. The fact that Yeats, Crowley, and Graves believed that they had received their manifestos supernaturally justifies Yeats's conjecture that modern history is clearly a conspiracy of the subconscious. Yeats would never have guessed that the Goddess Herself had chosen them as Her delegates and apostles to spread Her word to the bewildered masses.

The four writers examined in this book, therefore, represent a focus of influence of the esoteric tradition, which is likely much wider in modern poetry. Many other initiate poets had composed their poetry under the aegis of Athene and had unveiled Isis. The argument of this book provides the foundation for a broader analysis of the influence of the esoteric tradition in English, American, and Greek modern poetry.

* * *

The origins of the esoteric tradition are obscure and debatable. Leon Surette—mainly responsible, together with Demetres Tryphonopoulos, for the “reevaluation of modernism’s dark side” (Clukey 80)—asserts in *The Birth of Modernism* (1993) that Occultism’s allegation “to belong to a tradition much older than Christianity cannot be taken seriously” (49). Tryphonopoulos, in *The Celestial Tradition* (1992), agrees with this assessment, adding accurately that “the intellectual content of the occult is almost all derived from the Hellenistic period” (25). However, if we accept that during the early Christian period the esoteric tradition found expression in early Christianity, Gnosticism, Hermeticism, and Neoplatonism, and if we accept Gnosticism not as a Christian heresy, but as an offshoot of the esoteric tradition (as scholars have shown), then we must acknowledge the existence of an uninterrupted esoteric tradition through the ages and give credence to the occultists’ claim of an uninterrupted pre-Christian lineage.

Surette’s main argument is that the roots of modernism lie deep in the occult, that is, in the esoteric tradition. In my efforts to outline the history of the esoteric tradition in order to establish the impact it had on Yeats, Crowley, Pound, and Graves, I discovered that its doctrines constituted a homogenous body in appearance only, while in reality, they were

disseminated mainly by two inimical factions. I use the expression ‘chthonic esoteric tradition’ to refer to the esoteric body of initiates who remained faithful to the fundamental doctrine of the esoteric tradition as it was before the split in human consciousness; that is, to the philosophy and state of consciousness symbolized by the Mother-Goddess and the feminine principle. Because of this split in human consciousness, marked by the advent of patriarchal religions, the main body of the esoteric tradition acquired a solar character, since it accepted the new principles and philosophy directed by patriarchal religions. Unlike the fiery, flexible, and artistic disposition of the chthonic tradition, the spirit of the solar tradition is typified by rigidity, technocracy, and conformity to the rational analytical powers of the human brain.

Moreover, aside from the existence of the chthonic and solar traditions, I realized that in the meta-Christian Western world there existed “Church Mythologists”—a phrase coined by Thomas Paine in *The Age of Reason* (1793)—who, having no access to the teachings of the esoteric tradition (either chthonic or solar), interpreted literally the metaphysical and mythological doctrines which constituted solar Christianity. They are actually those who formulated the Christian dogma, disregarding the esoteric tradition that preceded and shaped it. Thus, in the meta-Christian Western world, the esoteric tradition no longer forms a unified body and, most importantly, its teachings (both solar and chthonic) do not coincide with those of institutionalized patriarchal Christianity, a religion developed only to control the uninitiated masses.

My view is that the esoteric tradition began with the development of religious feeling in human beings, which is related primarily to the concept of time. The occult was probably an attempt to express the ineffable unity observed in physical phenomena as well as the awe and ecstasy early humans felt when surrounded and intoxicated by the marvels of nature. In their early evolutionary phase, humans developed a sense of inner unity that matured with their observation of the basic scheme of birth, death, and rebirth (expressed later in the mystery cults) discerned in the astronomical phenomena related to the sun and moon and in the cyclical process of nature. The esoteric tradition probably originated from humanity’s yearning to articulate this strange, ineffable feeling of unity experienced within, and which was inevitably identified with the causeless archetypal logos, that is, the principle that cannot be communicated through words but can only be felt.

In *Myth, Religion and Mother Right* (1861), Johann Jakob Bachofen examines the universality of the sociological phenomenon of matriarchy and asserts that it “is not confined to any particular people but marks a

cultural stage” (71) in human evolution. In early human societies, the phenomenon of unity observed in heaven and on earth was externalized and deified in the image of the Mother-Goddess. According to Gerald Massey, the Mother-Goddess was the “earliest of all Divinities in all lands,—being pourtrayed [*sic*] in the image of the reproducer that unites both Father and Mother in one person” (“Man in Search of his Soul” 5). In those early days, the esoteric tradition complemented the exoteric religion; its rituals (Dromena or actions) had as their purpose to make the initiate feel the ineffable unity taught by the exoteric religion of the Mother-Goddess: the divine circle of birth, death, and rebirth. However, in its early phase, the esoteric tradition was not necessarily occult in a derogatory sense. As long as the exoteric religion adhered to the principle of unity personified by the Goddess, the esoteric tradition retained its esotericism only to complement the exoteric religion, without any conflict whatsoever. Tryphonopoulos asserts that during the classical age in Greece, the mysteries of the Goddess at Eleusis became part of the religious establishment of Athens” (*CT* 31). However, with the rise of patriarchal religions, the faction of the esoteric tradition that adhered to the cult of the Mother-Goddess became by necessity occult and acquired a subversive, conspiratorial character. Therefore, the occultists’ claim that the esoteric tradition was and is hostile to Christian doctrine is accurate, since institutionalized Christianity is the patriarchal religion *par excellence*.

In the pre-Christian age, when matriarchy belonged to the distant past, the Chthonic or Typhonian tradition found shelter in the Egyptian mysteries of Isis and Osiris, in the Hellenic Eleusinian and Dionysian Mysteries, and in the various sects of Gnosticism. The term ‘Typhonian’ is extensively used by Gerald Massey and Kenneth Grant to indicate the primeval cult of the Mother-Goddess, who is represented, as Grant notes, by “the Seven Stars of Ursa Major” (*Outer Gateways* 242). Through Gnosticism, the chthonic tradition made its appearance in the Christian world. In the twelfth century, it coloured the philosophical and religious thought of the Cathars or Albigenses, and in the sixteenth it reappeared in the guise of Rosicrucianism. In 1717, with the establishment of Freemasonry as the official representative of the solar esoteric tradition, the chthonic esoteric tradition, having infiltrated Freemasonry, initiated several chthonic factions, such as the order of the Illuminati, the Order of the Golden and Rosy Cross, and Ordo Templi Orientis in Germany, as well as the Societas Rosicruciana in Anglia, the Golden Dawn, and Crowley’s Argenteum Astrum in England. The best representative of the chthonic esoteric tradition today is the English charter of the O.T.O., which was under the leadership of Crowley’s student and secretary,

Kenneth Grant, until his death in 2011. The legacy of the ‘Order Typhonis’ continues under the adept guidance of Michael Staley.

In contrast, the solar esoteric tradition of the pre-Christian period appears in various mystery schools, such as the Orphic and Kabiric (or Samothracian) Mysteries in Greece, the Mysteries of Mithras in Persia, and the sect of the Essenes in Judaea. There is ample evidence that Christianity emerged as the natural consequence of the solar mystery cults that preceded it. In the meta-Christian years, it seems that the Order of the Templars inherited the solar tradition, which later found expression in Freemasonry, the main voice of the solar esoteric tradition, even though its roots, however, are nourished by the fertile ground of the chthonic tradition.

The history of the esoteric tradition, if interpreted in psychological and physiological terms, traces, in some manner, the development of human consciousness itself. In the evolution of human consciousness, the Mother-Goddess, who formed the primordial divinity in early agricultural societies some 40,000 years ago, represented, more or less, a balanced state of consciousness, a state of innocence, unity, femininity, bliss, and, at the same time, ignorance of the functions of the phenomenal world. At the onset of the Iron Age and patriarchal religions, about 14,000 years ago, this archetypal unity, typified by the Goddess, vanished, causing a split in human consciousness that released the analytical or rational powers of the brain and resulted in duality. This split came as a natural consequence in the evolution of human consciousness to enable human beings to cope with the complexities and hazards of the phenomenal world, the challenges of everyday reality related to their survival on earth. This transition in the human consciousness from a homogeneous or holistic state to a fragmentary one constitutes, from a psychological point of view, humanity’s ‘fall,’ which was later misunderstood and mythologized in ensuing religions. The esoteric tradition, as it developed from the shamanistic trance flights and the mystery schools of antiquity to the heretic thought of the Gnostics, Templars, and Cathars, is essentially feminine or chthonic in nature. Furthermore, the chthonic tradition reveals a recurrent pattern which, after the Fall, consists in the rediscovery of the divine essence or unity in the human soul, a process that could be precipitated in an initiatory way by the experience of transcendental gnosis, that is, an ecstatic experience that could symbolically transmute or elevate the base qualities of the human psyche onto a purely divine level. The culminating altered state of consciousness would result in palingenesis, or the accomplishment of the Great Work; that is, “the raising of the whole man in perfect balance to the power of Infinity”

(Crowley, *Magick* 4) or in the ritualistic death of the old personality and the emergence of a new self, conscious of its divine essence and free from the burden of duality.

A common denominator among Yeats, Crowley, Pound, and Graves is that they claimed to have had epiphanies. In one way or another, the sacred was revealed to them; that is, they achieved direct access to the noumenal world, enabling them to compose manifestos that disclosed ancient esoteric teachings, which in turn had as their purpose the raising of humanity's spiritual consciousness. More specifically, the manifestos of these poets attack the conventional beliefs of the 'Church mythologists' and attempt to formulate or revive a creed, perpetuated in the esoteric tradition, that emphasizes the significance of the feminine principle over the masculine. They also comment on the notion of the 'Thios Anthropos,' or 'Divine Human Being,' the son of the Gnostic God, that is, the Gnostic Christ, who is androgynous and resides in the human soul or subconscious. Thus the four writers under consideration in this study can be considered rhapsodists of the matriarchy and of the New Age. However, the New Age they herald should not be confused with the "new age" or the expression New World Order used by the cabal who currently rule the Earth as a code for the One World Government associated with Pound's conspiracy of usura, Graves's conspiracy of Mammon, and Crowley's conspiracy of the Black Lodge.

This study will clearly demonstrate the relationship between each writer and some of the occult movements and ideas of their times, and will also analyze each writer's esoteric manifestos—Yeats's *A Vision*, Crowley's *The Book of the Law*, Pound's *The Cantos*, and Graves's *The White Goddess*—as declarations of the beginning of the New Aeon, of the divinity of human beings, and of the necessity to reinstate the feminine principle. The feminine principle is glorified in the New Aeon, and subsequently the role of woman assumes an honoured and important position. According to Kenneth Grant, the woman is "beginning to glimpse freedom and to make certain her release from the ancient and restrictive formulae of the . . . forces of the piscean [patriarchal] current" (*Hidden God* 161). Additionally, Grant insists that "woman will lead the initiatory system of the New Aeon [and] . . . will achieve a 'soul', a centre of her own, independent of the male intervention at present necessary for her full initiation" (161).

Although some may criticize Yeats and Crowley as misogynists, the truth is that they worshipped Woman and sought, through mysterious candle-lit chambers, to reinstate the esoteric tradition related to the Great Goddess. In *Per Amica Silentia Lunae* (1918), Yeats, echoing Rimbaud

and Apollinaire, claims that the true poet has to know the real and must be a seer of reality (504). And to become a seer of reality, Yeats openly acknowledged the significance of the esoteric tradition (*Autobiographies* 71). Crowley, for his part, maintained that his whole body of esoteric beliefs derived from the teachings of the mysterious Great White Brotherhood, which during his time was a mouthpiece for the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn and the Theosophical Society. Crowley claimed that part of his mission was, in his words, to “preserve the Sacred Tradition, so that a new Renaissance might in due season rekindle the hidden light” (*MWT* 457). Yeats and Crowley, inspired by the ideology of the chthonic esoteric tradition to which they had access thanks to membership in the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn, sought to propagate through their poetry and prose the advent of a new divinity, the child of the Mother alone—or, in Yeats’s expression, the “turbulent child of the Altar” (*AVB* 204)—that would stress the neglected feminine characteristics of the human psyche and bring ‘unity of being.’ Both poets saw themselves as conspirators and apostles whose mission was to spread the doctrines of the chthonic esoteric tradition, and who believed that modern civilization was, indeed, a conspiracy of the subconscious.

Yeats’s ‘turbulent child of the Altar,’ or ‘antithetical dispensation,’ leads us to Crowley’s “crowned and conquering child,” which is actually Hoor-paar-kraat, associated with Set or Lucifer or Shaitan the Watcher, but not Ra-Hoor-Khuit or Horus, as Crowley erroneously believed. Both writers, though very different in personality, have essentially the same message: dissatisfied with the spiritual scarcity and materialism of their age, they sought a religion. In his esoteric feminist manifesto, *The Book of the Law* (or *Liber AL*), Crowley proclaims the advent of a new Aeon, the emergence of the child-god archetype (or Horus, as he believed) to replace the patriarchal primary religions and restore the chthonic esoteric tradition as well as the feminine principle to its proper place. In fact, Crowley’s Set (twin brother of Horus), Yeats’s ‘turbulent child,’ and Graves’s child of the waning moon (or Lucifer) form essentially the same archetype: they symbolize the outcome of the assimilation of the opposites, the child of the two opposing forces that struggle in the great wheel of the human psyche. It is the child of the Mother alone that has been neglected by the Christian religion, the same child that Pound and Graves extol in their poetry, the neglected child of the waning moon, the bearer of light (or Lucifer) who represents the ‘height’ of the Mother and manifests Her unity.

For most critics, Crowley’s strange world is terra incognita, a forbidden place populated by monsters born of Crowley’s association with the left-handed tantric element utilized in his magic. As an initiate,

Crowley, like Yeats, used the sexual element in order to dissolve duality and reach a higher state of consciousness. Kathleen Raine refers to Crowley as Yeats's "caricature . . . [and] shadow" (*Yeats, the Tarot and the Golden Dawn* 33), but Virginia Moore assumes that for Yeats and the other adepts in the Golden Dawn, Crowley was "persona non grata, a show off, charlatan, and perhaps a black magician" (161). Except for the above-mentioned epithets and some very brief correlations that Raine draws in *Yeats*, no critic has made a serious attempt to compare these two poets. Actually, Raine acknowledges that both Yeats and Crowley share the same occult tradition, and that both wrote of "the ending of one Great Year [of 26,000 years] and of the advent of an antithetical phase [of 2,155 years]" (35). But for Raine, Crowley is anathema, one who, because of his "defilements" (34) (as she calls them) and notorious reputation, cannot be taken seriously. She recognizes Crowley as a prophet "complementary (or antithetical) to Yeats himself" (34) and quotes a passage from Yeats's play *The Resurrection*² and Crowley's *The Book of the Law*³ as evidence. Puzzling over the resemblance of the two passages, she insinuates that Crowley imitated Yeats's style—but fails to mention that *The Resurrection* was written in 1931 and *The Book of the Law* in 1904. Furthermore, Raine poses the interesting question of whether Crowley was a facet of Yeats's "'rough beast'" (34). She also assumes that "Yeats cannot have been unaware of Crowley's new cult of the Antichrist 'Thelema', with its deliberate desecrations and defilements" (34). Raine concludes that "whereas Crowley placed himself in the services of Antichrist, 'the savage God' of the new cycle, Yeats's fidelity was to 'the old king', to 'that unfashionable gyre', the values about to be obscured, to the 'workman, noble and saint' of Christian civilization" (35). In the present study, the philosophical and esoteric beliefs of both Yeats and Crowley will be examined and compared in order to clarify some obscure aspects in the metaphysical thought of the former and reinstate the marred literary reputation of the latter.

This study concentrates also on Pound's quest for unity of being and examines his experimental work *The Cantos* (1948) as well as his other esoteric poetry and prose in order to illustrate how he—like Yeats, Crowley, and Graves—believed in the advent of a new era that would bring back the glory of poetic inspiration and the religion of the Great Goddess. Pioneering works by Surette—*The Light from Eleusis* (1979) and *The Birth of Modernism* (1993)—and Tryphonopoulos—*The Celestial Tradition* (1992)—show Pound's connection to the chthonic esoteric tradition, as well as his relation to the apocalyptic spirit of the late nineteenth century. Both scholars point to the initiatory and revelatory

character of *The Cantos* (1948), and also acknowledge the significance of the Eleusinian Mysteries in shaping Pound's religious metaphysics.

Surette and Tryphonopoulos, however, underestimate the cosmic character of the Eleusinian Mysteries, which they consider only of a local character and importance, and thus underestimate their impact on Pound. As this study suggests, Pound was so convinced that the ancient European religion of the Great Goddess was the only solution to the spiritual impasse of the modern world that he dedicated his life to propagating its teachings. He believed that alongside mainstream history ran "for 2000 or more years . . . the celestial tradition" (*GK* 222), that is, the chthonic esoteric tradition. Pound also calls the celestial tradition the "conspiracy of intelligence" (*GK* 263) and the cult of Amor, or "light of Eleusis" ("Terra Italica" 55). But, alongside the conspiracy of intelligence or Eleusis runs the conspiracy of "usura." For Pound, the conspiracy of "usura"—for Graves the conspiracy of Mammon and for Crowley the conspiracy of the Black Lodge—is the conspiracy of the 'powers of financial capitalism' or the 'Establishment,' whose aim is to stifle imagination and poetic inspiration in order to enslave politically and economically the entire planet. On another more esoteric level, however, it is the conspiracy of Jehovah, the Gnostic demiurge, the serpent arch-enemy who has imprisoned humanity in the matrix of the phenomenal world. Like Yeats's apocalyptic *Vision*, Crowley's *Book of the Law*, and Graves's *White Goddess*, the mission of Pound's *Cantos* is to accomplish the Great Work, to narrate aspects of the history of this conspiracy of intelligence, to proclaim the birth of a new divinity, identified with the divine human principle, or Gnostic Christ, embodied in the figure of the Great Goddess, and to reinstate the feminine principle in human consciousness.

In his introduction to the *Greek Myths* (1955), Robert Graves declares that "Ancient Europe had no gods. The Great Goddess was regarded as immortal, changeless, and omnipotent" (13). Graves expresses the same idea in "The Bible in Europe," where he claims that "the Supreme Being . . . had for thousands of years been regarded in Mediterranean countries as a goddess, not as a god" (47). Recent studies substantiate Graves's intuitive conjecture and reveal that the feminine principle reigned over a considerably long period in the history of human consciousness, and thus patriarchal religions constitute a relatively recent phenomenon. Marija Gimbutas, in *The Goddesses and Gods of Old Europe* (1974) and *The Language of the Goddess* (1989), and Anne Baring and Jules Cashford, in *The Myth of the Goddess* (1993), argue convincingly that, during the Paleolithic and Neolithic periods until the Iron Age (c. 1250 BCE), the cult of the Mother-Goddess reigned supreme. Moreover, as that cult was

identified with Earth, Moon, and Life, it came to represent unity itself. Baring and Cashford maintain that despite the apparent observation of dualism in the phenomenal world, the Mother-Goddess succeeded in representing a holistic view of life that inspired an awareness of the cosmos “as an organic, alive and sacred whole” (47). Graves is convinced that the fragmentation of the modern character—indeed the modern world—came about as a result of humanity’s departure from the old religion of the Great Goddess. His solution is the return of the “Lady of the House,” or White Goddess, who represents poetic inspiration and the feminine aspect of the human soul. The return of the White Goddess inaugurates a new state of consciousness symbolized by the Black Goddess. The Black Goddess is the counterpart to Yeats’s unity of being, a product of the assimilation of opposites emerging from an understanding of the importance of the feminine principle.

Why did the Goddess choose these four poets as emissaries of Her message? Despite their unquestionable ingenuity, they were ordinary men with ordinary passions. There was nothing saintly about them. In fact some of them, when interacting with one another, behaved with mistrust and pettiness. For instance, in a letter to Lady Gregory of 25 April 1900, Yeats confesses that Crowley was an “unspeakable person” (CL 2 515). Two days later, in a second letter, Yeats adds that Crowley was living “an unspeakable life” (518). For his part, Crowley considered Yeats “a genuine poet at heart” (CAC 166), yet believed that his poetry, which he admired, was inferior to his own, that it lacked “virility” (165), and that Yeats was envious of Crowley’s own poetry. Crowley claims that in 1899, when Yeats had examined the page proofs of *Jephthah*, he was seized with a “black bilious rage,” for he realized “his own incomparable inferiority” (166). From that encounter onwards, Yeats becomes for Crowley a “lank dishevelled Demonologist” (177), a “long lank melancholy unwashed poet” (*At the Fork of the Roads* 101). Yeats and Crowley had absolutely nothing in common but their love of the occult, and though initiates in the same Order, there was no love lost between them.

Graves did not hold either Yeats or Pound in high esteem; in fact he despised them both. In a letter to Yeats, dated 21 October 1935, Graves confesses bluntly that they have nothing in common. As Graves’s biographer Martin Seymour-Smith observes, Yeats was the “object of [Graves’s] unrelenting and lifelong dislike” (3). Neither did Pound live up to Graves’s high standards. The two poets were introduced by T. S. Eliot in 1909 in T. E. Lawrence’s rooms in All Souls, Oxford, and Graves was appalled by Pound’s “wet handshake” and “yankee manner and jocose slang” (86).

As Crowley comments in his autobiography, Pound was indeed a “buzzing round” (737) man, an imposing individual, a fascist, and, in the eyes of some, a phallocrat, though Pound considered Yeats, at the beginning of their relationship at least, “the greatest poet of our time” (Carpenter 119). Indeed, Yeats, older by some twenty years, was like a mentor to Pound and had certainly fueled Pound’s interest in the esoteric tradition during their productive three winters (1913 to 1916) at Stone Cottage, Sussex. But it was a love-hate relationship and, as Yeats admitted to Lady Gregory, “We [he and Pound] disagree about everything, but if we have not met for 24 hours he calls full of gloomy and almost dumb oppression” (463).

Yeats, Crowley, Pound, and Graves, no matter how disparate in character, nonetheless shared the vision of transmitting esoteric knowledge to uninitiated humanity. They were chosen by the Goddess as Her apostles and they ushered Her way into the religious consciousness of the people.

Before examining how She did so, however, the next chapter, “The Golden Dawn and the Chthonic Esoteric Tradition,” will survey succinctly the history of the Order of the Golden Dawn of which Yeats and Crowley were prominent members. The Golden Dawn indisputably nurtured the esoteric thought of Yeats and Crowley and provided the esoteric context for their work. This chapter will also focus on the Order’s chthonic nature and genesis, and demonstrate that its founders and members were adherents to the Great Goddess.

Other chapters will concentrate individually on Yeats, Crowley, Pound, and Graves to illustrate how they were consciously or unconsciously instruments of the Goddess, fellow conspirators, fighters of the Light, and disseminators of the forbidden Gnosis of the eternal feminine. They will explore how the Goddess directed their steps towards an exploration of their inner land. What they discovered there—and it is found in the heart of every human being—is an almost-extinguished divine flame, the hidden god or Gnostic Christ in chains. The released deity becomes the new divinity or child: Yeats’s ‘turbulent child of the Altar’, Crowley’s ‘crowned and conquering child’ or ‘Set’, Pound’s ‘Zagreus’, the offspring of the Sacred Marriage at the Eleusinian Mysteries, and Graves’s ‘Waning child of the Moon’ or ‘Lucifer’. This new divinity stands for a new state of consciousness that will help humanity transcend the inertia of the previous Aeon and ‘blast’ her into a brave new world: the Aeon of Maat, the Goddess of truth and justice, where humans will no longer be slaves to a relentless manipulating evil authority but masters of their own destinies.

ABBREVIATIONS

Works by W. B. Yeats

<i>AU</i>	<i>Autobiography</i>
<i>AVA</i>	<i>A Critical Edition of Yeats's A Vision (1925)</i>
<i>AVB</i>	<i>W. B. Yeats, A Vision, A Reissue with the Author's Final Revisions</i>
<i>CL 1,2</i>	<i>The Collected Letters of William Butler Yeats, Vol. 1 and Vol. 2</i>
<i>Letters</i>	<i>The Letters of W. B. Yeats</i>

Works by Aleister Crowley

<i>AL</i>	<i>The Book of the Law or Liber AL</i>
<i>CAC</i>	<i>The Confessions of Aleister Crowley: An Autohagiography</i>
<i>Gems</i>	<i>Gems from the Equinox: Instructions</i>
<i>HBT</i>	<i>The Holy Books of Thelema</i>
<i>LETT</i>	<i>Little Essays Toward Truth</i>
<i>Magick</i>	<i>Magick in Theory and Practice</i>
<i>MWT</i>	<i>Magick Without Tears</i>

Works by Ezra Pound

<i>Cantos</i>	<i>The Cantos of Ezra Pound</i>
<i>EP/DS</i>	<i>Ezra Pound and Dorothy Shakespear, Their Letters: 1909-1914</i>
<i>GK</i>	<i>Guide to Kulchur</i>
<i>Radio</i>	<i>'Ezra Pound Speaking': Radio Speeches of World War II</i>
<i>SL</i>	<i>The Selected Letters of Ezra Pound, 1907-1941</i>

Works by Robert Graves

“BE”	“Bible in Europe”
<i>Goddess</i>	<i>The White Goddess</i>
<i>Images</i>	<i>In Broken Images: Selected Letters of Robert Graves, 1914-1946</i>
<i>KJ</i>	<i>King Jesus</i>
“GWG”	“What Has Gone Wrong?”

Secondary Works

<i>BM</i>	Surette, <i>The Birth of Modernism: Ezra Pound, T. S. Eliot, W. B. Yeats, and the Occult</i>
<i>CT</i>	Tryphonopoulos, <i>The Celestial Tradition</i>
<i>Cults</i>	Grant, <i>Cults of the Shadow</i>
<i>Epic</i>	Moody, <i>Ezra Pound, Poet – A Portrait of the Man and His Work: the Epic Years, 1921-1939</i>
<i>GD</i>	Regardie, <i>What You Should Know About the Golden Dawn</i>
<i>GDTM</i>	Gilbert, <i>The Golden Dawn: Twilight of the Magicians</i>
<i>Hammadi</i>	<i>The Nag Hammadi Library in English</i>
<i>Hidden God</i>	Grant, <i>Aleister Crowley and the Hidden God</i>
<i>Life</i>	Stock, <i>The Life of Ezra Pound</i>
<i>Perdurabo</i>	Kaczynski, <i>Perdurabo: The Life of Aleister Crowley</i>
<i>Tragic</i>	<i>Ezra Pound: Poet: A Portrait of the Man and His Work: The Tragic Years 1939-1972</i>
<i>TGD</i>	Regardie, <i>The Golden Dawn</i>
<i>Young</i>	<i>Ezra Pound: Poet: A Portrait of the Man and His Work: The Young Genius 1885-1920</i>

Notes

¹ From the Greek Παλιγγενεσία, “pali-genesis” (re-birth).

² “Another Troy must rise and set, // Another lineage feed the crow” (“Two Songs from a Play” 9-10).

³ “Another prophet shall arise, and bring fresh fever from the skies;” (III: 34).

CHAPTER ONE

THE GOLDEN DAWN AND THE CHTHONIC ESOTERIC TRADITION

«AN ΠΕΘΑΝΕΙC ΠΙΠΙΝ ΠΕΘΑΝΕΙC, ΔΕΝ ΘΑ ΠΕΘΑΝΕΙC ΟΤΑΝ
ΠΕΘΑΝΕΙC»

(If you die before you die, you will not die when you die.)

—Inscription in the cell of an ascetic on Greece's Holy Mountain.

With the official establishment of Freemasonry in 1717, the conflict between the advocates of the Mother and those of the solar patriarchal religion of Christianity developed into a full-fledged struggle. Suddenly, the world became a network of conspiratorial secret societies. In 1797, the Abbé Augustin Barruel, in his four-volume *Memoirs Illustrating the History of Jacobinism* (discussed extensively in Surette's *The Birth of Modernism*), maintained that the French Revolution was the end result of a conspiracy, the aim of which was to destroy the Church and the monarchy. On 14 July 1856, British prime minister Benjamin Disraeli warned the House of Commons that there was a whole network of secret societies in Europe whose objective was the subversion of the "constitutional governments" and the "ecclesiastical establishments" (qtd. in Roberts 378).

Nesta Webster, in *Secret Societies and Subversive Movements* (1924), hypothesizes the existence of a cosmic conspiracy instigated by the "veritable powers of darkness [which are] in eternal conflict with the powers of light" (405). Webster is absolutely right; this conspiracy, however, was not a malicious conspiracy instigated by the powers of evil, seeking dominion over the earth, as the uninitiated believed. It was a benign conspiracy, the mission of which was probably the accomplishment of the Great Work, that is, the elevation of human consciousness to divinity. It is a conspiracy instigated by the chthonic esoteric tradition, a conspiracy of the divine will itself, or of the divine human principle which seeks liberation from the powers of inertia and repression: a conspiracy that has as its ultimate purpose the glorification of the feminine, intuitive, and poetic principle embodied in the figure of the Great Goddess.

The spirit of sedition against the patriarchal oligarchy of the Christian God also permeates the work of William Butler Yeats, Ezra Pound, Robert Graves, and Aleister Crowley. It should be noted in passing that Pound, for instance—who was, as Surette indicates, passionately lured “to the secret society and secret history hypothesis” (*BM* 33)—believed in a “conspiracy of intelligence” (*GK* 263) that had prevailed through the centuries in direct opposition to the “Mithraic ‘evil’” (“*Terra Italica*” 55) or the “cult of Atys and asceticism” (58), the solar patriarchal religion of Christianity. Pound associates this conspiracy of intelligence with the cult of Amor or Eleusis, or, in other words, with the chthonic esoteric tradition. Significantly, in “*Credo*,” Pound expresses his conviction that “a light from Eleusis persisted throughout the middle ages and set beauty in the song of Provence [Troubadours] and of Italy” (53). Indeed, the “*Light from Eleusis*” stands for the sacred gnosis of the Goddess transmitted to the initiates in the Eleusinian Mysteries and which inspired the Troubadours to sing of the Goddess. This sacred knowledge deals with the myth of the descent of Persephone into Hades, an allegory of the descent of the human soul into the world of transformation, the phenomenal reality dominated by matter. The soul, in order to achieve the ultimate reality, the Beatific Vision, passes through physical existence and descends into the world of generation to experience the whole cycle and achieve synthesis, the ultimate knowledge of the self. The myth of Persephone’s rape by Pluto portrays the tragedy of the human soul which must descend into the fallen world, into the prison of the illusionary world, to endure the hardships and torments of this dense material plane and achieve through suffering the transubstantiation of matter into spirit (or light). It is a complete initiatory experience, the Great Work, the assimilation of opposites, what William Blake called the ‘*Marriage of Heaven and Hell*’: the union of microcosm and macrocosm, of human and divine.

Persephone is actually the product of the marriage between the masculine principle Zeus and the feminine principle Demeter. At the conclusion of that ‘*Hieros Gamos*’ (Sacred Marriage), an extraordinary light, the midnight Sun, a light that was also perceived by the bystanders outside the telesterion—the great Initiation Hall at Eleusis—floods the latter, and the Hierophant announces in a stentorian voice the birth of the divine child. This sacred being, the child of the Mother alone, symbolizes the new state of consciousness that the initiate would achieve after the completion of the Mysteries. It is a state created out of the synthesis of the conscious and unconscious, male and female, heaven and earth. In the absence of the divine child, that is, when humanity suppresses the divine spark that exists within us, the whole world becomes a wasteland. The

child symbolizes the human urge towards self-realization and apotheosis. This self-realization is nothing less than the product of ‘Γνωθι Σεαυτον’ (Know Thyself): a knowledge that culminates with the birth of the divine child, the new self that emerges out of the synthesis or the assimilation of all the contradictory elements that exist in the human psyche. The message of the knowledge of the self, knowledge that only comes after the purification of the passions and is clearly expressed in the Mysteries by the ritual of the Sacred Marriage and the emergence of the divine child, is apparently the most important message that the Hierophant communicated to the initiates. This is the message (or Logos) that Christianity, the religion of love and tolerance, persecuted and suppressed. The persecuted Logos sought shelter in the candle-lit lodges of the secret societies and eventually found its way back into the hearts of the people.

The conspiracy hypothesis was not only an eccentricity of Pound’s, but also of Yeats, Crowley, and Graves. Yeats wonders in his autobiography whether modern civilisation is a conspiracy of the powers of the subconscious, that is, of the esoteric tradition. His metahistorical work, *A Vision*, reflects the conspiratorial spirit of a secret society. Yeats declared in his introduction to *Essays and Introductions* (1961) that the work could only be understood by fellow initiates (xi), and that it proclaimed the commencement of a new era that would liberate the poetic and divine genius that lies dormant in the human soul. Crowley openly declared his belief in the existence of an elitist society of conspirators (the Great White Brotherhood) whose purpose was the accomplishment of the Great Work, the “raising of the whole man in perfect balance to the power of Infinity” (*Magick* 4), as well as the destruction of any power—namely Christianity and scientific materialism—that opposed the fulfilment of the Great Work. Crowley maintains in *Magick Without Tears* that “even the spiritually and morally as well as the physically destructive phenomena of our age must be parts of some vast all-comprehensive plan” (457-458). In addition to Pound’s *Cantos*, which is actually Pound’s attempt to highlight and capture the essence or spirit permeating the history of the conspiracy of intelligence, or chthonic esoteric tradition, Graves’s *White Goddess* is also permeated with the same supernatural spirit that pervades *The Cantos*. Thus *The Cantos*, Yeats’s *A Vision*, and Crowley’s *The Book of the Law* are works that actually glorify and proclaim the coming of the religion of the Great Goddess.

It would not be farfetched to say that Freemasonry, and particularly the Fringe Rites of Freemasonry, became the repository of the esoteric tradition as well as the foundation upon which other secret societies developed in the modern era. The Fringe Rites were not accepted by the

official solar Freemasonry as proper, since they did not comply with its basic tenets and philosophy. Moreover, the Fringe Rites explored the most practical esoteric aspects of the chthonic esoteric tradition, such as alchemy, Eastern mysticism, and other occult elements that were anathema for solar Freemasonry to take seriously, especially after the coup of Dr. James Anderson (ca. 1680-1739), on 24 June 1717, to unite the four Freemasonic Lodges of London into the Grand Lodge of England. Reverend's Anderson's resolution denigrated Freemasonry, downgrading it from a secret society to a society of secrets, secrets that became open to the public after the appearance in print of the Freemasonic rituals in 1838 and the keeping of official meeting minutes beginning in 1723. Anderson's resolution obviously played a key role in the rise of the Fringe Rites. Darcy Kuntz asserts that with the death of Augustus Frederick, Duke of Sussex—Grand Master of the Grand Lodge of England from 13 April 1813 to 21 April 1843—the English Fringe Masonry experienced a tremendous growth, one that escalated between 1860 and 1890, and which gave rise to the Societas Rosicruciana in Anglia (15-16).

The Chthonic Essence of the English Rosicrucian Society

The Rosicrucian Society of England (S.R.I.A.) was founded in 1865 by the eminent Freemason Robert Wentworth Little (1840-1878) and purports to be the first Rosicrucian Order in England. According to its mythology, the Order was established when Little came across some timeworn documents in Freemasons' Hall. Dr. William Wynn Westcott (1848-1925), one of the leading members of the Rosicrucian Society, who had joined the Order in 1880 and became its supreme Magus in 1891, following the death of its previous leader, Dr. William Robert Woodman, comments that Little "availed himself of certain knowledge and authority which belonged to Brother Kenneth R. H. Mackenzie" (qtd. in Howe 27). Westcott was a Freemason who was not content with the strict solar Freemasonic spirit. Even though his allegiance was to the Square (Freemasonry), Westcott flirted with the Circle (the chthonic esoteric tradition) and became a member of the Fringe Masonic body S.R.I.A. In the S.R.I.A, Westcott experimented with the more practical aspects of occultism and therefore paved the way for the creation of the Golden Dawn. But if Westcott served as the mastermind behind the Golden Dawn, Mackenzie definitely set its cornerstone, since he had provided the Order, unknowingly and posthumously, with the necessary rituals. An eminent scholar, famous cryptologist, masterful ritualist, and a very experienced occultist, Mackenzie had officially joined the Rosicrucian Society in 1872, became