THE APPENDICES

Marginalia of Mystery

Introduction to the Appendices

harting the symbolic, literary, and historical layers of the novel The Seventh Chamber through a comprehensive annotated edition, the notes and source references presented here serve as the inaugural step of a long-term project. This work is conceived as an evolving process: chapter by chapter, the tapestry of allusions, traditions, and intellectual lineages is uncovered and examined in both documentary and interpretative modes. The ultimate aim is to produce a critical edition that is at once rigorously scholarly and welcoming to readers of the fantastic—effectively a revised and expanded edition. Thus, it seeks to guarantee scholarly verifiability while maintaining clarity and accessibility for a broader audience.

The present text is therefore not a finished whole but a growing archive. New chapters will be added at regular intervals; the annotations are designed to interlink with one another, and in some cases to anticipate motifs that appear only later in the novel. **Reading is thus best undertaken after completion of the novel itself.** Those who consult the commentary in advance will inevitably encounter anticipations – a phenomenon long described in philological tradition as *proleptic annotation*.

The aim, however, extends beyond mere documentation of sources. What is sought is to illuminate the dense layering of mythological, theological, esoteric, and literary traditions interwoven into The Seventh Chamber. The edition thus moves within an interstitial space: on the one hand in the mode of critical commentary familiar from historical and philological editions, on the other in the imaginative reach of fantastic world-expansion, which allows the novel to be inscribed within the broader cosmos of Western and Oriental mysteries.

The result is a text that is at once reference work and narrative continuation, critical apparatus and literary resonance – in the hope that the reading of the novel may be deepened by the contexts gathered here, and that the fantastic may appear in its intimate entanglement with history, theology, and symbolism.

Note on Editorial Practice

All page numbers refer, unless otherwise indicated, to the English paperback edition. Source references follow established academic conventions, appearing in abbreviated form in the running commentary and in full bibliographic form in the source list. Citations from foreign-language texts are drawn, wherever possible, from the authoritative critical editions; translations are identified where relevant or standard. Where multiple versions exist, preference has been given to the edition most influential or most decisive for the novel.

Chapter I.

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On the Historical and Symbolic Embedding of the Novel in Paris, 1831

The narrative sets in Paris in the year 1831—a moment charged both historically and symbolically. This year marks a threshold between two profound upheavals in French society: the July Revolution of 1830, which ended the Bourbon rule and elevated Louis-Philippe to the throne as the "Citizen King," and the June Uprising of 1832, a socially motivated revolt that achieved literary immortality above all through Victor Hugo's *Les Misérables*. This temporal setting may be read as a liminal threshold—an interstitial space between ossified order and imminent upheaval, in which political uncertainty, social tensions, and symbolic intensities converge.

For historical context, see: Louis Blanc, *Histoire de dix ans*, 1830–1840, 5 vols. (Paris: Pagnerre, 1841–1844); David H. Pinkney, *The French Revolution of 1830* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1972). For literary topography, see Victor Hugo, *Les Misérables* (1862), in which the events of the June Rebellion are interwoven with a mythically heightened image of Paris, placing the urban topography and the political passions of the era into an epic field of tension.

(pp. 9, 11)

Rain, Reflection, and the Principle "As Above, So Below"

The opening paragraph of the novel unfolds with a scene of almost liturgical density: rain falls upon the old pavement of Paris, cleansing it of the filth of the gutter and causing the stones to gleam like polished obsidian—an inaugural image of purification through water and revelation through light. Thereafter reflections are introduced: first the celestial light refracted in the shining stone, then the lofty façades mirrored in the darkened pools. In this way the space opens simultaneously upward and downward. This double reflection bears a hermetic signature: "As above, so below" *(quod est superius est sicut quod est inferius)*—the most renowned axiom of hermetic philosophy, first attested in the *Tabula Smaragdina*, which legend attributes to Hermes Trismegistus. The reflections within the text are not mere stylistic ornament but carriers of symbolic verticality: the macrocosm mirrors itself in the microcosm, the spiritual in the material, the invisible in the visible.

This vertical axis is deepened by a further detail: the door knocker of the Hôtel La Porte Noire depicts the Ouroboros (cf. note on page 40, "Ouroboros – Ring of Eternal Return"), the serpent that consumes itself—a symbol of cyclical renewal, of self-knowledge, and of the transformative unity of beginning and end: the hermetic loop. The place into which the protagonist steps is therefore not merely a building but a symbolic portal between worlds. In the language of alchemy and mysticism, the hotel is a locus where above and below, spirit and matter, microcosm and macrocosm converge: a threshold between everyday consciousness and higher vision.

The opening of the novel is thus more than a mood-setting introduction—it is a ritually encoded prelude, a literary pause that already intimates the essence of the entire text: a work that, through symbolic topography and esoteric semantics, opens spaces in which the reader, from the very first sentence, is placed within a deeper order of things.

For the Latin formula and the history of the tradition of the Tabula Smaragdina, see: Julius Ruska, *Tabula Smaragdina: Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte der hermetischen Literatur* (Heidelberg: Winter, 1926). For a general introduction to the hermetic tradition, see Brian P. Copenhaver (ed.), *Hermetica: The Greek Corpus Hermeticum and the Latin Asclepius in a New English Translation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992); Antoine Faivre, *L'ésotérisme* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1992), pp. 36–42 (on the hermetic symbolism of reflection and correspondence).

(p. 10)

Haussmann's Transformation of the City and the Erasure of Historical Layers

Long before the Parisii founded their settlement of *Lutetia,* the territory of what is now Paris was composed of a multitude of prehistoric and ancient habitation sites, whose traces survive in fragments of pottery, tool finds, foundations, and coins. In the Roman period several sanctuaries, public buildings, and villa complexes arose across the urban area, of which today only scant archaeological vestiges remain. Antiquarian literature and early sources mention, among others, a temple dedicated to the god of war *(the Templum Martis)*, in some accounts also associated with a sanctuary of Isis; its site is presumed to have lain southwest of the Île de la Cité, in the vicinity of the later abbey of Saint-Germain-des-Prés. Historical maps—such as the *Plan de Paris sous Philippe-Auguste* and Turgot's Plan of 1739—document a cityscape grown over centuries, in which medieval, early modern, and ancient strata were superimposed.

With the profound reshaping initiated under Georges-Eugène Haussmann (from 1853 onward), not merely single streets but entire quarters of the city were newly imposed. Narrow alleys, enclosed courtyard blocks, centuries-old rows of houses, and monastic complexes gave way to the severe geometry of boulevards and new axes of perspective. In the process not only architectural structures vanished, but also the material traces of earlier epochs—foundations, wells, workshops, vaulted cellars, and dwellings, whose histories stretched back into the Middle Ages and beyond. Contemporary reports describe how, during construction at the Pont Saint-Michel, the Rue de Rivoli, and around the Boulevard Saint-Germain, sarcophagi, Gallo-Roman altars, mosaic fragments, weapons, and ceramics came to light—often only briefly recorded before disappearing once more. The transformation altered the topographical configuration of Paris so profoundly that the location of certain once-prominent buildings can now be identified only through maps or archaeological reconstruction.

The tale of the Hôtel La Porte Noire ties into this historical experience and reworks it into a mythical motif: a place erased from the cityscape and yet—existing as if beyond official plans and

archives—persisting as a pale, elusive presence. The motif of "erasure" may thus be read simultaneously in historical, psychological, and metaphysical registers.

For historical and topographical context, see: *Plan de Paris sous Philippe-Auguste* (c. 1220), Bibliothèque nationale de France; *Plan de Turgot* (1739), Bibliothèque historique de la Ville de Paris; Jules Ferry, *Les Comptes fantastiques d'Haussmann* (Paris: Le Chevalier, 1868); David H. Pinkney, *Napoleon III and the Rebuilding of Paris* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1958), pp. 22–45; Jean Des Cars and Pierre Pinon, *Paris Haussmann: Le pari d'Haussmann* (Paris: Éditions du Pavillon de l'Arsenal, 1991), pp. 56–83.

(pp. 11 ff.)

Esoteric Architecture and the Hidden Language of the World

The *Lingua Adamica* (cf. note on page 111, "Lingua Adamica") resembles in its phonetic structure the blueprint of a sacred space: its syllables and combinations of sound possess ontological force—they shape, shift, or disclose reality. This force operates like an invisible architecture: comparable to the arrangement of sacred geometries that form atmospheres, mark thresholds, and open spaces of insight.

The Hôtel La Porte Noire itself is, in this sense, far more than a mere setting of action: it is an initiatory chamber, a ritual bearer of mystical instruction. Its numbered rooms follow the symbolism of the kabbalistic *Sefirot*, its paneling displays scenes of Creation, Fall, and Return—not as mere decoration, but as signposts along an inner path. In this idea converge ancient conceptions from mysticism, liturgy, and the philosophy of language: that words do not merely designate, but effect; they do not only refer, but create. As in the teachings of Proclus or in the kabbalistic speculations of the *Sefer ha-Bahir*, language here becomes a matrix of efficacy, a structure permeating both the visible and the invisible. Nicholas of Cusa likewise intimated that knowledge begins only where language reaches its limit—and points beyond itself.

The architectural description is not merely heightened in atmosphere, but carries initiatory coding. The massive timbered ceiling, the half-darkened hall, and the staircases reminiscent of Piranesi's fantastic *Carceri* produce a field of tension between real space and imaginal topos. The floating spiral staircase evokes the biblical and midrashic motif of Jacob's Ladder (Genesis 28:12), as well as the "heavenly chambers" of the Hekhalot literature, in which stages of approach to the divine must be traversed. The orientalist carpets and the exotic ornamentation of the paneling point to an eclectic syncretism of the kind cultivated in esoteric lodge rooms of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries—spaces in which symbols from diverse religious traditions were deliberately combined to create a universal sacral aesthetic (cf. James Stevens Curl, *The Art and Architecture of Freemasonry*).

The unnatural stillness of the place functions like an acoustic seal: in mysticism silence is not void but threshold—a *limen* at which profane perception ends and the true initiatory path begins. Through this layering of space, symbol, and sound the Hôtel becomes a hermetic microcosm in which every architectural gesture carries semantic function.

For symbolic and religious-historical context, see: Gershom Scholem, *Das Buch Bahir: Ein Schriftdenkmal aus der Frühzeit der Kabbala* (Leipzig: Drugulin, 1923); Proclus, *In Platonis Cratylum commentaria*, ed. Giorgio Pasquali (Leipzig: Teubner, 1908); Nicholas of Cusa, *De docta ignorantia* (1440), in *Opera omnia*, vol. I, eds. Ernst Hoffmann and Raymond Klibansky (Hamburg: Meiner, 2002); James Stevens Curl, *The Art and Architecture of Freemasonry* (London: B.T. Batsford, 1991); Peter Schäfer, *Hekhalot-Studien* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1988).

(pp. 11–12, 14 ff.)

Symbolic Imagery between Paradise and Cosmogony

The creatures depicted in the murals of the Hôtel La Porte Noire elude any known zoological cataloging: An ape-like hybrid creature, an armadillo-like colossus, and a Nubian lion with a nightmarish set of teeth point to an otherworldly bestiary that does not originate from the familiar creation narrative of our Earth. This strangeness functions as an anticipation of a central motif that is taken up later in the novel's cosmological reflections: that creation encompasses countless dimensions or worlds whose diversity of form does not follow the familiar patterns of terrestrial fauna.

At the same time, this iconographic program points to the potent presence of an arcane, only fragmentarily transmitted primordial chronicle in which the configurations of early creation do not correspond to contemporary species—a motif that resonates in ancient myths as well as in apocryphal writings. Foremost among these is the *Apocryphon of John* (Nag Hammadi Codex II, 1) with its cosmology of aeons and archontic realms emanating from

the Pleroma; Anaximander's concept of innumerable worlds emerging from the *Apeiron*; and Democritus's atomistic cosmology, which posits an infinity of coexisting worlds. In rabbinic traditions, too, this idea appears as an expression of divine multiplicity and expanse: thus, the Talmud (*Avodah Zarah* 3b) depicts God's nightly wanderings through eighteen thousand worlds. The *Zohar*, in turn, describes creation as a multifaceted, interwoven system of cosmic planes and palaces. Comparable conceptions of such a multifaceted, cyclical, or vertically structured cosmos can be found in Norse cosmology with the world tree *Yggdrasil* and its nine realms; in the Aztec notion of successive epochs of creation ("Five Suns"); in the Buddhist conception of a multitude of coexisting world systems; and in the Incan tripartite division of reality into *Hanan*, *Kay*, and *Ukhu Pacha*. Viewed from this perspective, the murals do not appear as mere ornamental embellishments, but as architectural palimpsests within which the memory of a vanished yet enduring primordial world is sedimented.

For mythological and religious-historical context, see: *Apocryphon of John* (Nag Hammadi Codex II, 1), ed. Bentley Layton in: *The Gnostic Scriptures* (New York: Doubleday, 1987); Anaximander, Fragments, in: Hermann Diels / Walther Kranz, *Die Fragmente der Vorsokratiker* (Berlin: Weidmann, 1951), 12A; Democritus, Fragments, ibid., 68A; Babylonian Talmud, *Avodah Zarah* 3b; *Zohar*, I, 24a (foliation of the original main text), cf. Daniel C. Matt, *The Zohar: Pritzker Edition* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2004–2017), Vol. 1; Snorri Sturluson, *Edda*, ed. Anthony Faulkes (London: Viking Society for Northern Research, 1982); Bernardino de Sahagún, *Historia general de las cosas de Nueva España* (Mexico City: Editorial Porrúa, 1981), Libro VII; Akira Sadakata, *Buddhist Cosmology: Philosophy and Origins* (Tokyo: Kosei Publishing, 1997); Franklin Pease, *Los Incas* (Lima: Fondo Editorial PUCP, 1991).

(pp. 13 ff.)

Speaking Names in Myth and Literature

Names in mythological as well as literary tradition are far more than mere designations: they carry meaning, open horizons of interpretation, and often function as prophecies or secret signatures of the figures they designate. Already the primeval biblical narrative recounts how Adam gave the animals their names (Genesis 2:19–20)—an act that is more than classification: it is an act of dominion and at the same time a participation in the creative order. In Egypt, by contrast, the true name of a deity was regarded as the bearer of its power; thus Isis wrests the hidden name from the sun-god Ra in order to gain a share in his might (cf. Erik Hornung, *Der Eine und die Vielen: Ägyptische Gottesvorstellungen*, Darmstadt 1971, pp. 83–89).

In Greco-Roman antiquity this significance was perpetuated: in Homer, heroes often bear speaking names that condense their nature into a single word—Odysseus as the "man of many wiles" *(polymētis)*. Roman thought coined the proverb *nomen omen*: the name as a portent of fate. Ancient etymologists such as Varro or later Isidore of Seville in his *Etymologiae* read the names of things and persons as encrypted revelations of their nature.

The Middle Ages and the early modern period transformed this into a distinctive allegorical mode: in the English *Morality Plays* figures bear names such as *Avaritia* or *Good Deeds*; in Prudentius's *Psychomachia* speaking names embody the forces of virtue and vice. Mystical traditions—such as the Kabbalah—deepened the dimension of the name as a bridge into the invisible: here the names of God are understood as keys to the order of creation (cf. Gershom Scholem, *Zur Kabbala und ihrer Symbolik*, Frankfurt am Main, 1973, pp. 45–63).

Modern literature continues this practice. John Bunyan peoples his *Pilgrim's Progress* with speaking figures such as Christian, Faithful, and Hopeful. In the symbolism of the nineteenth century speaking names become poetic condensations of destiny—as in Poe's Roderick Usher. In modernism authors such as James Joyce (Stephen Dedalus, a mythical transformation of Daedalus) or J. R. R. Tolkien (Saruman, Old English *saru* = cunning, treachery) consciously draw upon the power of the name to open genealogical, mythological, and semantic resonances.

Thus arises a continuous tradition in which "speaking names" function as *charactonyms* (to use the term of literary scholarship): they operate as semantic markers that reveal not only the figure itself but also its position within the narrative and symbolic framework (cf. Friedhelm Debus, *Namen in literarischen Werken*, Stuttgart 2012, pp. 23–35, regarding proper names and charactonyms).

In the present novel likewise the names of the figures are not mere conventions, but encrypted portents of their inner destiny. Their etymological origins and symbolic charge point to a deeper order inscribed within each character—and thus to the close

interweaving of linguistic form, mythical semantics, and literary dramaturgy.

For mythological, religious-historical, and literary context, see: Plautus, *Persa*, l. 625 (on the *nomen omen* motif); Homer, *Odyssey,* ed. Alfred Heubeck (Munich: Artemis, 1991); Varro, *De lingua Latina*, V, 84–85; Isidore of Seville, *Etymologiae*, I, ed. W. M. Lindsay (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1911); Prudentius, *Psychomachia*, ed. H. J. Thomson (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1949); Gershom Scholem, *Zur Kabbala und ihrer Symbolik* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1973); Miriam Lichtheim, *Ancient Egyptian Literature*, vol. II: *The New Kingdom* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1976), pp. 197–200 ("The Tale of Isis and the Secret Name of Ra"); John Bunyan, *The Pilgrim's Progress*, ed. Roger Sharrock (London: Penguin, 1987); James Joyce, *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, ed. Jeri Johnson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000); J. R. R. Tolkien, *The Lord of the Rings* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1954–1955); Friedhelm Debus, *Namen in literarischen Werken* (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 2012).

(p. 13)

Phineas Camill

Phineas is the English form of the Hebrew or Egyptian Pinchas—literally "the dark one"—a name associated in Jewish tradition primarily with two significant figures: Pinchas, son of Eleazar and grandson of Aaron, who appears in the Torah as the zealous executor of divine wrath, and Pinchas, who in later historiography is regarded as the last high priest of the Jerusalem Temple before its destruction in 70 CE.

Camill, by contrast, derives from the Latin *Camillus* (*Camilla* for the feminine form), in ancient Rome an epithet for especially noble and ritually pure boys who, by virtue of these qualities, were permitted to serve at the altars of the gods. In Roman religion the *Camillus* stood as mediator between the sphere of men and that of the deities—a function that in Phineas's path and encounters within the novel assumes a subtle, almost priestly dimension.

In the combination of Phineas and Camill, Hebrew, Egyptian, and Roman traditions intertwine: the dark, perhaps enigmatic heir of a priestly lineage, and at the same time a cultically pure servant—a name that may be read as a veiled prophecy of his role within the fabric of the narrative.

For etymological and religious-historical context, see: Numbers 25:7–13; Joshua 22:13–32; Babylonian Talmud, *Sanhedrin* 82b; Babylonian Talmud, *Zevachim* 101b; Flavius Josephus, *Antiquitates Judaicae* IV, 6, §§ 12–18; ibid., *Bellum Judaicum* IV, 3, § 8; Varro, *De lingua Latina* VII, 34; Festus, *De verborum significatu*, s.v. "Camilli," ed. W. M. Lindsay; Jacob Milgrom, *Numbers* (Anchor Bible 4; New York: Doubleday, 1990), pp. 210–231; Georges Dumézil, *La religion romaine archaïque* (Paris: Payot, 1974), pp. 343–350; Robert E. A. Palmer, *The Archaic Community of the Romans* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970), pp. 221–229; Ludwig Koehler, Walter Baumgartner, and Johann J. Stamm, *The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament* (Leiden: Brill, 1994–2000).

(pp. 13, 73, 114)

Room Numbers as Numerological Ciphers

The room numbers 42, 6, and 72 appear not merely as functional markers of orientation within the Hôtel La Porte Noire, but as part of a hidden numerological structure. Their seemingly arbitrary sequence suggests an inner architecture whose order eludes the profane gaze. In Jewish mysticism numbers are understood as bearers of divine qualities: 42 recalls, for instance, the *Anabekoach*, a kabbalistic prayer composed of forty-two letters and regarded as a key to spiritual ascent (cf. Scholem, *Kabbalah*, pp. 219 ff.); likewise, in the Egyptian temple library there were said to be forty-two "indispensable" books (Clement of Alexandria, *Stromata* VI, 4), and in Egyptian underworld mythology the dead were confronted with forty-two questions of judgment (*Papyrus of Ani*, Spell 125). Rabbinic tradition further identifies the forty-two-letter Name as the creative word by which God brought forth the universe (*Talmud Bavli*, Kiddushin 71a), while in the Book of Numbers the Israelites' wanderings are described as consisting of forty-two encampments (Numbers 33)—a sequence of trial stations that symbolically mirrors the ascent through the hotel's floors.

In the symbolism of the *Sefirot*, the number 6 stands for *Tiferet*, the sun, and the center of creation (Kaplan, *Sefer Yetzirah*, pp. 188 ff.); in antiquity, it was considered the most perfect of all numbers, as the world was created in six days (Genesis 1). Among the Pythagoreans, it was revered as the first perfect number *(numerus perfectus)* and as an emblem of cosmic equilibrium due to the productive union of the first female and male principles (2×3=6) (Pseudo-Iamblichus, *Theologoumena Arithmeticae)*. In Genesis, man is created in the sixth hour of the sixth day (Genesis 1:26–31)—the crowning of creation—and in the Jewish liturgy, the sixth day marks the eve of the Sabbath,

the threshold between profane time and sacred rest. The hexagonal Star of David (Magen David), the hexagram, appears in alchemy as a sign for the union of opposites (Jung, *Psychologie und Alchemie*, ch. 5).

Finally, 72 refers to the *Shemhamphorasch*, the secret name of God (*Zohar*, II, 51b), and is found in the kabbalistic interpretation of the ladder to heaven, whose 72 rungs correspond to the qualities of this name (*Zohar* I, 150a), or in the tradition that after the Tower of Babel, 72 languages were spoken (Genesis 11). In ancient Egyptian mythology, the number also appears in the 72 conspirators who, under the leadership of Typhon-Seth, betrayed the cosmic king Osiris (Plutarch, *De Iside et Osiride*, ch. 13), and in the Gospel of Luke, Christ sends out 72 (in some manuscripts, 70) disciples (Luke 10:1), a symbol for a mission into all spiritual and earthly realms. In the tree structure of the Sefirot, such numbers form not only individual stations but also energetic connections interpreted as paths between the spheres—a network that facilitates spiritual ascents and descents, thereby giving the initiatory path a concrete topological form.

Phineas's repeated confrontation with these numbers evokes a motif of initiatory trial: each floor, each new room, is less a physical change of location than a transition to another state of consciousness. Such spaces follow an ancient principle cultivated in mystery temples: that architecture itself becomes a didactic tableau, in which symbols, reliefs, and sequences of images visualize spiritual realms and stages of insight. In ancient initiation sites, frescoes of stellar courses, reliefs of divine processions, or allegorical depictions of the soul's ascent could be encountered—the adept passed through these scenes as if traversing a living diagram of the cosmos. Astronomical maps sometimes stretched across ceilings and walls, charting the paths of the planets; mosaic floors might depict world maps upon which the pilgrim literally trod from one continent of spirit to the next, while paired columns, inscribed, stood as mute guardians marking the threshold. Thus here, too, the passage from room to room becomes a ritual journey, in which the pilgrim ascends step by step into higher spheres of understanding. The absurd metamorphosis of the rooms further underscores the dream-logic of the hotel, whose inner geography perpetually reconfigures itself—a topos reminiscent of Borges's labyrinthine spaces or Piranesi's imaginary architectures.

Striking, moreover, is the recurring description of the plaques as finely wrought engravings in brass—a material that in alchemical texts symbolizes the transformation between moon and sun, between feminine and masculine principle (Agrippa, *De occulta philosophia*, II, 10). The diagonals, crossbars, and serifs of the numerals appear as glyphs whose significance becomes apparent only on a higher level of reading. The comportment of the porter Obed—now blustering, now silent—recalls the mythological gatekeepers who guard thresholds between worlds: whether the Janus-headed god at Roman temple doors, Cerberus at the entrance to the underworld, or the angel with the flaming sword before the gate of Paradise (Genesis 3:24). Thus the seemingly banal detail of the room number becomes a multilayered cipher within the hermetic symbolism of the novel.

For numerological, mythological, and religious-historical context, see: Numbers 33; Genesis 1:26–31; 3:24; 11; *Talmud Bavli, Kiddushin* 71a; *Zohar* I, 150a; II, 51b; Clement of Alexandria, *Stromata* VI, 4; *Papyrus of Ani*, Spell 125; Pseudo-Iamblichus, *Theologoumena Arithmeticae*; Plutarch, *De Iside et Osiride*, ch. 13; Heinrich Cornelius Agrippa, *De occulta philosophia* II, 10; C. G. Jung, *Psychologie und Alchemie* (Zürich: Rascher, 1944), ch. 5; Gershom Scholem, *Kabbalah* (Jerusalem: Keter, 1974); Aryeh Kaplan, *Sefer Yetzirah: The Book of Creation* (New York: Weiser, 1990).

(p. 15)

Eireen

Eireen is the Irish form of the name Irene, from the Greek εἰρήνη *(eirēnē)*—"the Peaceful One." In Christian iconography Irene appears with attributes such as the olive branch or the lamb and represents reconciliation, grace, and the divine peace that "surpasses all understanding." The choice of this form of the name lends the figure a gentle, almost otherworldly aura, which stands in contrast to the deep melancholy with which Phineas clings to her memory. The scene in which he touches the portrait intimates that Eireen is for him more than a deceased wife—she is an inner ideal, whose loss overshadows his existence and yet, in mysterious fashion, sustains it.

For etymological and iconographic context, see: Walter Bauer, *Griechisch-Deutsches Wörterbuch zu den Schriften des Neuen Testaments*, 6th ed. (Berlin/New York: de Gruyter, 1988), s.v. "εἰρήνη"; Hans Biedermann, *Knaurs Lexikon der Symbole* (Munich: Droemer Knaur, 1989), pp. 205–206; *Lexikon der christlichen Ikonographie* (LCI), ed. Engelbert Kirschbaum, vol. 7 (Rome/Freiburg: Herder, 1974), cols. 1–4 (s.v. "Irene"); Philippians 4:7.

(pp. 16–18)

The Occultist between Hermeticism, Merkabah, and the Peril of the Heavenly Vision

In the figure of the old man appearing here, an image is condensed that is characteristic of the esoteric culture of the 1830s: an almost liturgical symbiosis of theatrical self-presentation, antiquarian robes, and the proud claim of being the guardian of a pre-existent wisdom. During the era of Romanticism and the nascent occult revival, it was not uncommon for spiritual circles to imbue their rituals with borrowings from Egyptian, kabbalistic, and hermetic symbolisms. For instance, the Rite of Misraim, which flourished in Paris, cultivated a visual mystery—characterized by oriental turbans, richly decorated caftans, and alchemical emblems beneath the heavy veil of ritual incense; a universal sacral aesthetic whose loose lines of tradition would be taken up decades later by Éliphas Lévi, the great systematizer of French Hermeticism, and canonized into a dogmatic synthesis. Such attire functioned not merely as a costume, but as a ritual marker that placed the wearer into a symbolic role as a mediator between the visible and invisible worlds.

The headdress of the old man also alludes to the fashions of contemporary Masonic and Rosicrucian lodges, where members adorned themselves with fantastically reconstructed priestly insignia to claim a genealogy reaching back to ancient Egypt. In the symbolic canon of Hermeticism, Egypt was regarded as the primal land of all esoteric knowledge, mediated through Hermes Trismegistus/Thoth, whose supposedly antediluvian wisdom was said to have been engraved in hieroglyphs upon stone. The mystical-spiritual emblems upon the robe could stem as much from the diagrams of the *Corpus Hermeticum* as from the talismanic alphabet systems of the magical grimoires that circulated among occultists in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.

The literary core of this scene, however, lies in its parallel to Jewish Merkabah mysticism: the vision of the heavenly throne (*Merkabah*, Ezekiel 1) was regarded as a perilous ascent—or, as here, as a ritual *yeridah* (descent) to the *Merkabah*, understood in visionary terms as an ascent into heavenly spheres, leading the mystic through a succession of spiritual and cosmic stages until he stands before the throne of God. In the apocryphal *Books of Enoch* it is described how the *nous* of the seer can be "confounded" by the superabundance of heavenly images—a motif embodied by the occultist portrayed here. The unintelligible litany of *nomina barbara* corresponds to the practice attested in the ancient magical papyri: imitating the language of angels or demons to enable direct invocation of otherworldly powers. (Cf. the tradition of so-called "barbarous names" in the Greco-Egyptian magical papyri, for instance in the *Papyri Graecae Magicae*, where extended sequences of syllables were intended to intensify the ecstatic state of the invoker. At the same time this technique connects to the conception that divine language lies beyond what can be spoken by man and reveals its potency in pure sound—in the resonance of the unintelligible. In the Kabbalah such mysterious names appear as the *Shemhamphorasch*, while in Gnostic texts they are interpreted as the voices of the aeons; repetition, rhythmic accumulation, and deliberate unintelligibility are therefore not "nonsense" but a magical key that transcends reason and opens the gate to other spheres.)

That Phineas discerns within it the name "Misraim" links the occultist to the Egyptian tradition of the mysteries—Misraim being in Talmud and Midrash a cipher for the postdiluvian resettlement of Egypt by the eponymous son of Ham (Genesis 10:6), but in occult circles often understood as an initiatory lineage fusing Egyptian and kabbalistic elements.

The literary design enables the reader to experience how the ritual—or its aftereffect—overwhelms the practitioner. The frenzy culminates in an abrupt collapse into apathy, which, in the symbolic language of Merkabah literature, corresponds to the falling back of the mystic when he cannot endure the "vision of the throne." Contemporary reports from esoteric circles, whether in private lodge records or in London spiritist gatherings, testify to similar states of ecstasy, confusion of speech, and spiritual breakdown.

In this reading the old man is not merely an eccentric side figure but a tragic admonisher: one who, in striving after absolute knowledge, has crossed the boundary at which human comprehension fails.

For iconographic, hermetic, and Merkabah-mystical context, see: Éliphas Lévi, *Dogme et Rituel de la Haute Magie* (1854; ET: *Dogma and Ritual of High Magic*, trans. R. Asmus [Leipzig: Max Altmann, 1912]); Arthur E. Waite, *A New Encyclopaedia of Freemasonry* (London: Rider, 1921); Christopher McIntosh, *The Rosicrucians* (Freiburg: Herder, 1997); Garth Fowden, *The Egyptian Hermes: A Historical Approach to the Late Pagan Mind* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986); Peter Schäfer, *Der verborgene und*

der offenbarte Gott (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1991); *Hekhalot Rabbati*, ed. Peter Schäfer (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1981), §§ 102–114; 1 Enoch 14–16; Genesis 10:6; Albert G. Mackey, *Encyclopaedia of Freemasonry* (New York: Masonic History Co., 1914), s.v. "Misraim Rite"; *Papyri Graecae Magicae*, ed. Karl Preisendanz (Stuttgart: Teubner, 1928–1931; repr. 1973); Gershom Scholem, *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1957); Campbell Bonner, *Studies in Magical Amulets, Chiefly Graeco-Egyptian* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1950); Hans Jonas, *The Gnostic Religion: The Message of the Alien God* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1954).

(p. 18–19)

Dream Motif and Romantic Vision of Death

This passage stands within a long literary tradition in which the dream is staged as the inner chamber of the figure, revealing psychological or symbolic truths beyond the plane of external action. Early German Romanticism—for instance in Novalis's *Heinrich von Ofterdingen* (1802)—established the close connection of dream, death, and metaphysical intimation: the dream is not regarded as a mere illusion of the senses, but as a higher reality.

Striking here is the shift in tense: while the novel is narrated in the past, the dream enters the present tense. This device heightens immediacy and endows the experience with a "present" quality that sets it apart from the surrounding narrative flow—a technique common in nineteenth-century literature to mark inner visions or ecstatic states.

Within European Romanticism numerous parallels may be found: in French literature, Victor Hugo (*Notre-Dame de Paris*, 1831) and George Sand weave dream sequences and motifs of death into allegorical imagery. In the English-speaking world, authors such as Edgar Allan Poe (e.g. Ligeia, 1838) and Nathaniel Hawthorne (e.g. *The Minister's Black Veil*, 1836) employ similar devices to fuse vision, religious symbolism, and morbid beauty.

The iconographic language that emerges here (sacred image, catafalque, funereal color) has its roots both in Christian iconography and in the Romantic aesthetics of death, in which dying is conceived not as rupture but as a threshold to transcendence.

For symbolic and literary-historical context, see: Novalis, *Heinrich von Ofterdingen* (Berlin: In der Buchhandlung der Realschule, 1802); Victor Hugo, *Notre-Dame de Paris* (Paris: Charles Gosselin, 1831); Edgar Allan Poe, "Ligeia" (1838), in *The Works of Edgar Allan Poe*, ed. J. A. Harrison (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell, 1902), vol. II, pp. 248–268; Nathaniel Hawthorne, "The Minister's Black Veil" (1836), in *Twice-Told Tales* (Boston: American Stationers' Co., 1837), pp. 51–65; George Sand, *Indiana* (Paris: Henri Dupuy, 1832).

(pp. 20–21)

The Prayer of Manasseh

The prayer recited by Phineas with meticulous regularity follows in invocation, confession, and petition the *Prayer of Manasseh*, an apocryphal penitential prayer preserved in the Greek manuscripts of the Old Testament *(Septuagint)* and in Church Slavonic psalters. The text, composed probably between the second century B.C.E. and the first century C.E., is attributed to the Judean king Manasseh, whose repentance after years of apostasy and idolatry is narrated in 2 Chronicles 33.

In early nineteenth-century England it was included in many editions of the *King James Bible* within the Apocrypha and also circulated in breviary-like supplements, private collections of prayers, and catechetical manuals for penitential practice. While the *Book of Common Prayer* (1662) does not include it as a fixed canticle, it was employed both in Anglican High Church circles and in Nonconformist milieus as a paradigmatic example of contrite self-abasement, and—precisely because of its compelling, rhythmic diction—it was memorized and recited as a rhetorical exercise. This usage, parallel to the Eastern Orthodox tradition in which it is recited in Byzantine liturgy as part of the Great Compline (from Latin *completorium*, "completion"—the final prayer of the daily cycle of offices, recited at the close of day), explains why a clergyman would recommend it to a child as a daily formula of repentance: its linguistic force sharpened both conscience and expression, binding the sober discipline of duty to an unmistakable aesthetic appeal.

The characteristic elements—the invocation "O Lord, God of our fathers, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob …," the praise of God as Creator of heaven, the confession of sin with maritime metaphors ("my sins are more in number than the sands of the sea"), and the plea for mercy—appear here almost in full, interrupted only by Phineas's personal digressions. Within the novel the liturgy acquires a double inflection: on the one hand, it evokes the gravity and sacrality of ancient Near Eastern penitential formulas; on the other hand, it stands in stark contrast to Phineas's inner exhaustion and his extinguished heart of faith. His interpolated memories—of the "delirious old man,"

of Eireen's final struggle—disrupt the flow of the prayer as unwelcome images that refuse to fit into the prescribed order of piety. The comparison of the hotel gable, which "like a church nave" rises from "cataclysmic primeval floods," recalls mythic images of the primal deluge and the Flood, fusing the sacred register of liturgy with an apocalyptic, almost visionary perception of architecture.

For historical and liturgical context, see: *The Prayer of Manasseh*, in *Septuaginta*, ed. Alfred Rahlfs, vol. II (Stuttgart: Privilegierte Württembergische Bibelanstalt, 1935), Odae (Ode 12), pp. 180–181; James H. Charlesworth (ed.), *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, vol. 2 (New York: Doubleday, 1985), pp. 625–637; R. H. Charles (ed.), *The Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha of the Old Testament in English*, vol. 1: *Apocrypha* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1913), pp. 612–624; Brian Cummings (ed.), *The Book of Common Prayer: The Texts of 1549, 1559, and 1662* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011); Christopher Wordsworth, *The Apocrypha: The Prayer of Manasses* (London: Rivingtons, 1880), pp. 112–118.

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Monsieur Lameth

The name Lameth evokes Lamech, a biblical figure who appears in Genesis in two genealogies—once as a descendant of Cain (Genesis 4:18–24) and once as an ancestor of Noah (Genesis 5:25–31). In tradition Lamech is regarded as an ambivalent figure of human hubris and violence ("…if Cain shall be avenged sevenfold, truly Lamech seventy and sevenfold"). His double appearance suggests a mythical dual existence, which medieval exegetes—including Petrus Comestor (*Historia scholastica*, ca. 1170) and Petrus Riga (*Aurora*, ca. 1190)—interpreted as a sign of a primordial archetype. In addition, Lamech—in forms such as Lameth or Lamekes—was received in English literature, for instance in Geoffrey Chaucer *(The Wife of Bath's Prologue, The Book of the Duchess, Anelida and Arcite)*, where he draws upon precisely these medieval sources and serves as a symbol of a mixture of creative gesture (nomadic life, music, metallurgy) and moral instability. The Hebrew root of the name further connotes "strength" or "mighty man," an association that underscores in the novel his powerful, enigmatic presence.

In medieval and early modern iconography, Lamech figures appear in genealogical tables extending from Adam to the antediluvian patriarchs; in some instances they are staged in mythically expanded portrait series as links in a lineage that continues into historical rulers. Such depictions combine biblical genealogical illustrations—as found, for example, in the *Grandes Chroniques de France* or in illuminated world chronicles—with iconographic motifs of continuity between divine order of creation and worldly sovereignty. Lameth is also a historically attested French family name, borne for instance by the brothers Alexandre and Charles de Lameth, officers and politicians of the French Revolution.

In the context of France and England of the 1830s, the solitary use of the name "Lameth" appears unusual, since the convention of using both given name and surname had long been the social norm. That he nevertheless appears under a single name—like figures of the ancient world, in which family names were not in use—heightens the impression of a being whose existence stretches from mythical prehistory into the present. At the same time, this form of the name carries with it the shadowy ambivalences of strength and violence, creative force and moral transgression.

For historical and literary context, see: *Biblia Sacra Vulgata*, ed. Robert Weber (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 1969), Genesis 4:18–24, 5:25–31; Petrus Comestor, *Historia scholastica*, in *Patrologia Latina*, vol. 198, ed. Jacques-Paul Migne (Paris, 1855); Petrus Riga, *Aurora*, ed. Paul E. Beichner (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1965); Geoffrey Chaucer, *The Riverside Chaucer*, ed. Larry D. Benson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987), pp. 105–112, 329–332; François Avril, Marie-Thérèse Gousset, and Bernard Guenée, *Les Grandes Chroniques de France: Manuscrit français 6465 de la Bibliothèque Nationale de Paris* (Paris: P. Lebaud, 1987); Albert Soboul, *The French Revolution, 1787–1799* (London: Allen Lane, 1974), pp. 192–194.

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Lameth's Occult Library – From Pythagorean Number Mysticism to the Bruce Codex

The package of books sent by Lameth opens an encyclopedic cross-section of esoteric systems of knowledge from antiquity to the early modern period. Pythagorean, Jewish, and Christian number mysticism—as a numerological cosmology rooted both in Greek philosophy (Iamblichus, *De vita Pythagorica*) and in the Kabbalah *(Sefer Yetzirah, Bahir)*—forms the starting point for a sequence of learned currents whose common denominator is the conviction that number, sound, and form are the fundamental principles of creation.

Merkabah mysticism (cf. Ezekiel 1; *Hekhalot Rabbati)* appears in Lameth's selection in the form of hitherto unpublished translations from the Hebrew. This group of texts belongs to a tradition that renders visionary throne visions, heavenly palaces, and the stages of ascent into precise, at times diagrammatic language forms—a current that, in the Renaissance, entered Christian scholarship through kabbalistic mediators such as Pico della Mirandola.

The manuscript mentioned from Thebes refers to a Greek-Coptic codex known in scholarship as the *Bruce Codex*. This late antique compilation from the 4th–5th century was purchased in 1769 by the Scottish traveler James Bruce in Upper Egypt, near the mortuary temple of Ramses III at Medinet Habu. It contains the two so-called *Books of Jeu*, central writings of late antique Gnosticism. The diagrams of concentric circles, rectangles, and letter-grids contained therein function as "heavenly maps" for the ascent of the soul through cosmic spheres and the stations of the archangels. Carl Schmidt published in 1892 the first critical edition and German translation of these texts (*Gnostische Schriften in koptischer Sprache aus dem Codex Brucianus*, Leipzig 1892), which since then has been regarded as a key source for the understanding of Gnostic cosmology.

Alongside these stand Hermetic writings such as the *Corpus Hermeticum*, kabbalistic-alchemical works such as Georg von Welling's *Opus Mago-Cabbalisticum et Theosophicum* (1735), Agrippa's *De occulta philosophia* (1533), Paracelsus's *Aurora Philosophorum*, and the *Egyptian Great Revelation* of Abraham of Worms. Together they form a library in which Greek, Jewish, Coptic, and Christian traditions interweave with the hermetic-alchemical streams of the early modern period.

Taken as a whole, they create an intellectual space of preparation that conveys not merely antiquarian erudition but structures an initiatory training: the order of the books implicitly follows an inner hierarchy in which numbers, diagrams, and verbal formulas form the foundation for the transition into higher levels of knowledge.

For esoteric and textual-historical context, see: Iamblichus, *De vita Pythagorica*, ed. Ludwig Deubner (Leipzig: Teubner, 1937); *Sefer Yesira: Edition, Translation and Text-Critical Commentary*, ed. and trans. Peter Hayman (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2004); Gershom Scholem, *Das Buch Bahir* (Leipzig: Drugulin, 1923); *Hekhalot Rabbati*, in Peter Schäfer (ed.), *Synopse zur Hekhalot-Literatur* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1981); Pico della Mirandola, *Oratio de hominis dignitate*, ed. Eugenio Garin (Florence: Vallecchi, 1942); Carl Schmidt, *Gnostische Schriften in koptischer Sprache aus dem Codex Brucianus* (Leipzig: J. C. Hinrichs, 1892); *Corpus Hermeticum*, ed. and trans. Arthur Darby Nock and André-Jean Festugière, 4 vols. (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1946–1954); Georg von Welling, *Opus Mago-Cabbalisticum et Theosophicum* (Frankfurt, 1735); Heinrich Cornelius Agrippa, *De occulta philosophia libri tres* (Cologne: Soter, 1533); Paracelsus, *Aurora Philosophorum*, in Karl Sudhoff (ed.), *Sämtliche Werke*, pt. 1, vol. 14 (Munich: Oldenbourg, 1933); Abraham von Worms, *Die egyptischen großen Offenbarungen* (Cologne: Peter Hammer, 1725).

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The Three Wise Men as Magi

Lameth's remark that the so-called "Three Wise Men"—commonly known as the Three Kings—were versed in magic stands within a long exegetical and iconographic tradition. The biblical foundation lies in Matthew 2:1–12, where the visitors from the East are designated as *magoi* (Greek: μάγοι). This term originally refers to the Persian-Median priestly caste of the Magi, known in the Zoroastrian context for their expertise in astrology, dream interpretation, ritual practice, and occult symbolism.

Already the Church Fathers such as Origen and Tertullian sought to mitigate this pagan resonance by portraying the Magi as wise astronomers whose astrological observations led them to the birthplace of Christ. Jerome, by contrast, retained the term *magus*, yet emphasized that their gifts (gold, frankincense, myrrh) were to be read allegorically—gold for the king, incense for the God, myrrh for the suffering man.

In medieval legend the Magi were elevated to kings, their number (three) being fixed only gradually and derived from the triad of gifts. Yet the association with magic persisted in esoteric circles: Renaissance Hermeticists such as Marsilio Ficino and Giovanni Pico della Mirandola regarded them as masters of a "pure magia," a godly science, since it sought knowledge of divine order and the harmony of the cosmos.

Arabic-Islamic tradition likewise preserves tales of sages from the East, described as *ḥukamāʾ* (wise men) or astrologers. In certain Coptic and Syriac texts of the 5th–7th centuries their homeland is located in Persia or Babylon, reinforcing the historical link to the *magoi* of antiquity.

Lameth's interpretation in the novel mirrors this hermetic reading: for him, the Magi are neither tricksters nor sorcerers in a pejorative sense, but representatives of an ancient, God-attuned tradition of wisdom and mystery. Through their knowledge they were able not only to surmise but consciously to "see" the advent of the Messiah—a vision that in its symbolism of the *visio beatifica* connects with mystical ascension traditions such as Merkabah mysticism.

For exegetical and tradition-historical context, see: *Biblia Sacra Vulgata*, ed. Robert Weber (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 1969), Matthew 2:1–12; Origen, *Contra Celsum*, ed. Marcel Borret, 5 vols. (*Sources Chrétiennes* 132, 136, 147, 150, 227; Paris: Cerf, 1967–1976); Tertullian, *Adversus Marcionem*, ed. Ernest Evans (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1972); Jerome, *Commentariorum in Matthaeum libri IV*, in *Patrologia Latina* 26, ed. Jacques-Paul Migne (Paris, 1845), cols. 15–218; Marsilio Ficino, *De vita libri tres*, ed. and trans. Carol V. Kaske and John R. Clark (Binghamton, NY: Medieval & Renaissance Texts & Studies, 1989); Giovanni Pico della Mirandola, *Conclusiones nongentae: Le Novecento Tesi dell'anno 1486*, ed. Albano Biondi (Florence: Leo S. Olschki, 1995); Sebastian Brock, "Some Syriac accounts of the Magi," in *Mélanges en hommage à Jean de Menasce*, eds. Pierre Gignoux and Ahmad Tafazzoli (Louvain: Imprimerie Orientaliste, 1974), pp. 387–404.

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Lenglet du Fresnoy, *Histoire de la Philosophie Hermétique*

In the figure of the French scholar Nicolas Lenglet du Fresnoy (1674–1755), we encounter one of the most influential compilers and interpreters of alchemical and hermetic literature of the early Enlightenment. His work *Histoire de la Philosophie Hermétique* (Paris 1742) is considered one of the first systematic historical accounts of Hermeticism in Europe. The passage cited in the novel (cf. Nicolas Lenglet du Fresnoy, *Histoire de la Philosophie Hermétique* [Paris: chez Coustelier, 1742], vol. I, pp. 4–5; here, in terms of reception history, following the German translation in Julius Evola, *Die hermetische Tradition*, p. 246) describes the ideal image of the hermetic adept—immortals in spirit, unbound by physical infirmities, endowed with immediate revelatory knowledge and the ability to "vanquish the most powerful spirits and demons."

This image stands in the tradition of both late antique hermetic writings *(Corpus Hermeticum, Asclepius)* and the Christian kabbalists of the Renaissance, who understood the "true *magus*" not as a sorcerer, but as a mediator between divine wisdom and the earthly world. In the esoteric literature of the 17th and 18th centuries, the adept is often depicted as part of an invisible brotherhood—a motif that recurs in novels and occult representations of the 19th century (such as in the works of Bulwer-Lytton or Éliphas Lévi) and here reflects Lameth's self-conception as the guardian of ancient, imperishable wisdom.

For hermetic and reception-historical context, see: Nicolas Lenglet du Fresnoy, *Histoire de la philosophie hermétique* (Paris: chez Coustelier, 1742), vol. I, pp. 4–5; Julius Evola, *The Hermetic Tradition: Symbols and Teachings of the Royal Art*, trans. E. E. Rehmus (Rochester: Inner Traditions, 1995), p. 246; *Corpus Hermeticum*, eds. and trans. Arthur Darby Nock and André-Jean Festugière, 4 vols. (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1946–1954); *Asclepius*, in Brian P. Copenhaver (ed. and trans.), *Hermetica: The Greek Corpus Hermeticum and the Latin Asclepius in a New English Translation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992); Giovanni Pico della Mirandola, *Conclusiones nongentae: Le Novecento Tesi dell'anno 1486*, ed. Albano Biondi (Florence: Leo S. Olschki, 1995); Edward Bulwer-Lytton, *Zanoni* (London: Saunders and Otley, 1842); Éliphas Lévi, *Dogme et rituel de la haute magie* (Paris: Germer-Baillière, 1854–1856).

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Visualization as a Creative Act in Eastern and Esoteric Traditions

The exercise taught by the monk at Bodhgaya—to hold a clump of earth before the inner eye until it becomes "present" with all the senses—is not merely a technique of calming the mind, as in the samatha meditation of early Buddhism. In certain schools of Vajrayāna, in Indian Tantra, as well as in Taoist alchemical traditions, sustained and lucid visualization is regarded as a magically creative act: the image in the mind is not only a representation but an *archetypon*, a primordial form from which reality itself is shaped.

This view connects to the Hermetic maxim *mens agitat molem* ("the mind moves matter") as well as to the tantric doctrine that all existence ultimately consists of consciousness and is therefore malleable through consciousness. In the Tibetan practice of *sādhanā*, deities are visualized with such high degree of detail that they are experienced as genuinely present; in some traditions, it is reported that such manifestations become not only visionary but externally

perceptible—analogous to the powers of *prākāmya* described in the Indian yoga siddhis (the ability to shape reality at will).

Western esoteric currents, from Renaissance magic to Theosophy, likewise adopted this notion: imagination is not "fancy" in the profane sense, but *imaginatio vera*, a true imagination in which spirit and matter interpenetrate. In this perspective, the visualization of the clod of earth is not simply a relaxation exercise but a trial within the *magnum opus* of the mind—an experiment in the alchemical laboratory of the soul, capable of erasing the boundary between inner and outer worlds.

For symbolic and reception-historical context, see: Bhadantācariya Buddhaghosa, *The Path of Purification (Visuddhimagga)*, trans. Bhikkhu Ñāṇamoli (Kandy: Buddhist Publication Society, 2011 [1956]); Mircea Eliade, *Yoga: Immortality and Freedom* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1969); Herbert V. Guenther, *Meditation Differently: Phenomenological-Psychological Aspects of Tibetan Buddhist (Mahāmudrā and sNying-thig) Practices from Original Tibetan Sources* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1992); Giuseppe Tucci, *The Theory and Practice of the Mandala* (London: Rider, 1961); Isabelle Robinet, *Taoist Meditation: The Mao-shan Tradition of Great Purity* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1993); André Padoux, *Tantric Mantras: Studies on Mantrasastra* (New York: Routledge, 2011); *Bhāgavata-Purāṇa*, XI.15.4–5, in J. L. Shastri (ed.), G. V. Tagare (trans.), *The Bhāgavata Purāṇa*, part V (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1989); Helena P. Blavatsky, *The Secret Doctrine* (London: Theosophical Publishing Society, 1888).

Chapter II.

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Serpentarius Stroude

Serpentarius is the Latin designation for the "Serpent-Bearer" *(Ophiuchus)*, the mythical thirteenth constellation beyond the zodiac. In ancient tradition it is identified with Asclepius, son of Apollo and Coronis, a figure endowed with divine healing power. Asclepius's presumption—not only to heal the sick but also to restore the dead to life—moved Zeus to strike him down with a thunderbolt. The choice of this name thus suggests a double association: that of secret, potent mastery of knowledge, and the peril of transgressing divine order.

The family name Stroude (Old English *strōd*) means "marshy ground" or "morass" and evokes the image of treacherous, unstable soil. Taken together, the combination yields a speaking name that alludes both to occult ambition and to a character who draws his power from obscure, perilous depths.

For mythological and linguistic context, see: Aratus of Soli, *Phainomena*, ed. and trans. Douglas Kidd (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997); Eratosthenes, *Sternsagen (Catasterismi)*, eds. and trans. Jordi Pàmias and Klaus Geus (Oberhaid: Utopica, 2007); Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, Book II, ed. and trans. Michael von Albrecht (Stuttgart: Reclam, 2010); *Oxford English Dictionary*, 2nd ed., vol. 16 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989), s.v. "Stroud/Stroude"; Emma J. Edelstein and Ludwig Edelstein, Asclepius: *A Collection and Interpretation of the Testimonies*, 2 vols. (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1945).

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Paris 1831 – Cityscape between Revolution and Romanticism

The route through Paris described here leads across an urban landscape still visibly marked—barely a year after the July Revolution of 1830—by political upheavals and scars. Phineas's path begins at the Place Vendôme, where the Colonne Vendôme had in 1814, after the Restoration, been stripped of its Napoleonic statue. From there it proceeds along the Rue Saint-Honoré to the parish church of Saint-Roch, whose façade still bore the bullet holes of the fighting of 13 Vendémiaire 1795. A few streets farther rises the Palais des Tuileries; from this vantage one gazes upon the Louvre—already open to the public as the Musée du Louvre since 1793, yet still part of the royal palace complex—before the way continues on to the Palais-Royal.

The true heart of this scene, however, is the area around Les Halles, the great central market halls of Paris. At the beginning of the 19th century, they were still located at their historical site around the church of Saint-Eustache and the Marché des Innocents. The Rue de la Tonnellerie on the western side of the halls was one of the busiest axes of the quarter. There, hundreds of merchants offered food, animals, and goods—a seething hub of activity whose visceral opulence, congestion, noise, and odor already prefigure the dark metaphor of the "belly of Paris" in literary tradition. The nickname Marché des Innocents refers to the former cemetery of the Innocents (Cimetière des Innocents), the closure of which in 1780 cleared the way for the market and the Fontaine des Innocents, which still exists today. This Renaissance fountain, erected between 1547 and 1550 by Pierre

Lescot, is not merely a jewel of public architecture, but through its reliefs and its location in the heart of the market, a central reference point in the everyday life of the Parisians.

Farther southeast the Place du Châtelet opens. Today a traffic hub, at that time it was a free square on the site of the Grand Châtelet, a fortress and administrative building demolished in the early nineteenth century, whose medieval towers had once guarded the northern end of the Pont au Change. The square was accented by the column-crowned fountain (commonly called Fontaine du Palmier), with its figure of Victory atop a palm-ribbed shaft—an allusion to Napoleon's Egyptian expedition. Along five bands of the shaft the names of victorious battles were inscribed; at the summit the goddess Victoria rose, holding in each hand a laurel crown of triumph.

Phineas's way then leads him across the Pont au Change onto the Île de la Cité, past the Conciergerie—infamous as a prison during the Revolution—and Notre-Dame Cathedral, whose façade and sculpture had been gravely damaged during the revolutionary upheavals. Finally, the Pont Saint-Michel carries him to the southern bank of the Seine.

This type of literary urban traversal—rich in sensory impressions—connects to the tradition of the French *tableaux de Paris* and to the Romantic city narrative, in which the metropolis itself becomes an active protagonist. Literarily, the scene can be situated within the 19th-century depiction of the city, as encountered, for instance, in Victor Hugo's *Notre-Dame de Paris* (1831) or in the realist tableaux of the period. The detailed enumeration of impressions—architectural, acoustic, olfactory—follows a technique that draws the reader into a quasi-synesthetic stream of perceptions, thereby replicating the gaze of the flâneur in the Paris of the July Monarchy.

For historical context, see: *Paris, ou Le livre des cent-et-un*, 15 vols. (Paris: Ladvocat, 1831–1834); David H. Pinkney, *The French Revolution of 1830* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1972), pp. 257–262. For literary tradition, see: Victor Hugo, *Notre-Dame de Paris* (Paris: Charles Gosselin, 1831); Louis-Sébastien Mercier, *Tableau de Paris*, 8 vols. (Amsterdam: 1781–1788).

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L'Auberge du Géant

L'Auberge du Géant is a fictional setting whose architectural design draws inspiration from Parisian inns of the early 19th century—featuring forged iron sign brackets, figurative coats of arms, colorful stained-glass windows, and limestone facades slightly inclined toward the street.

The fire-breathing giant on the crest alludes to Cacus, the son of the fire-god Vulcan as depicted in Virgil's *Aeneid*: a demon of the Aventine who dwelt in a cavern whose threshold was strewn with skulls and bones. Cacus stole Hercules' cattle and hid them amid darkness and smoke, until the hero slew him.

As Cacus guarded his stolen spoils in the gloom of his cave, so too does Lameth, behind cultivated façade and courtly speech, maintain the veil over his true intentions, whose depth and scope only much later become apparent to Phineas. In the language of the Kabbalah one might say that he dwells in the *Sitra Achra*—the "other side," that realm of separation where divine light glimmers only as a spark within matter. The fire-breathing giant thus becomes a cipher for a figure who bears within himself both *Qliphoth* and ember: a mixture of corruption and the final remnant of an extinguished divine spark which, should it flare up, may bring revelation as well as destruction.

For mythological interpretation, see: Virgil, *Aeneid*, eds. and trans. Edith Binder and Gerhard Binder (Stuttgart: Reclam, 2005), Book VIII, ll. 184–305; Gershom Scholem, *Kabbalah* (Jerusalem: Keter, 1974), pp. 122–128; Moshe Idel, *Kabbalah: New Perspectives* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988), pp. 137–142.

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Ouroboros – Ring of Eternal Return

The symbol of the self-devouring dragon or serpent, known as the Ouroboros, belongs among the oldest and most profound emblems of Hermetic tradition, alchemy, and Western esotericism. It depicts a being that bites its own tail, forming a closed circle—a figure of enigmatic power that has attracted interpretation for millennia.

Its origins reach deep into the ancient Egyptian worldview. Already on the gilded shrines in the tomb of Tutankhamun (14th century BCE), one finds a representation of the coiling serpent, which there symbolizes the cosmos—a self-contained, self-limiting, yet all-encompassing whole. In late antique Greek alchemy, particularly in the works of Zosimos of Panopolis (3rd/4th century CE), the Ouroboros appears as a symbol of transformation. It also appears in the *Chrysopoeia of Cleopatra*, one of the oldest alchemical treatises, accompanied by the inscription: "ἓν τὸ πᾶν" *(Hen to pan)*—"The One is

the All." This image, which depicts the Ouroboros enclosing the entire cycle of creation, formulates the first and last mystery of Hermeticism in a single breath.

The meaning of this symbol unfolds upon several intertwined levels. First, the Ouroboros points to the unity of all things, to the One that sustains itself and rests within itself. Within it there is no beginning and no end, no external vantage point—the circle closes upon itself. In a Hermetic cosmology in which the universe is understood as a spiritual unity, this becomes central: As above, so below—the All is a mirror of itself. At the same time the image speaks of self-devouring as transformation. The Ouroboros signifies not merely cyclical return, but transmutation: the base passes away so that the noble may arise. In the language of alchemy, self-consumption is not suicide but purification, an alchemical fire that burns in order to cleanse.

As a circle without beginning or end, the Ouroboros becomes a symbol of timelessness, indeed of eternity—and simultaneously of the eternal cycle of becoming and passing away. It is an early form of the thought that Nietzsche would later articulate as the "eternal recurrence of the same": nothing is lost, all returns.

Beyond this, the Ouroboros bears within itself the paradox of being creator and destroyer at once. It both engenders itself and consumes itself in the same act. Herein shines the Hermetic principle of polarity: everything contains its opposite; nothing exists without its complementary force. In a Gnostic-Hermetic reading, the Ouroboros thus also appears as an image of divine self-relatedness: God as the one who thinks himself, creates himself, and simultaneously conceals himself—or as a symbol of the cosmic process itself, in which the Absolute encounters itself within the world.

In modernity the symbol acquired new interpretations. For C. G. Jung the Ouroboros was an archetypal image of individuation: psychic wholeness achieved through the integration of the unconscious. Here the circle signifies the Self as the goal of an inner path of development. Philosophically, the Ouroboros may be read as a figure of dialectical thought—movement through contradiction, overcoming through self-opposition, synthesis from conflict. One may well imagine that Hegel, too, would have delighted in this symbol. Mythically, finally, the Ouroboros remains alive as the world-serpent—whether as Jörmungandr in Norse mythology or as Ananta in the Hindu worldview: beings that encompass, preserve, and threaten the cosmos.

Thus the Ouroboros remains across all ages the multilayered emblem of the All-One: a symbol of unity, transformation, eternity, and the creative dialectic of becoming and passing away. In Hermetic thought it is the sign of that esoteric secret that reveals itself only through inner transformation—a sign that is not to be read but to be experienced.

For historical and hermetic interpretation, see: Marcellin Berthelot, *Collection des anciens alchimistes grecs*, vol. II: *Texte grec* (Paris: G. Steinheil, 1888), p. 132; Zosimos of Panopolis, fragments in F. Sherwood Taylor, *The Alchemists: Founders of Modern Chemistry* (London: Cresset Press, 1949), pp. 68–77; H. J. Sheppard, "The Ouroboros in the Alchemical Tradition," in *Ambix* 10 (1962), pp. 83–96; C. G. Jung, *Psychologie und Alchemie* (Zürich: Rascher, 1944), pp. 224–231; Mircea Eliade, *The Myth of the Eternal Return: Cosmos and History* (Düsseldorf: Diederichs, 1953).

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"The sickness of the soul is godlessness"

This dictum is derived from a sentence in the *Corpus Hermeticum*, a collection of late antique didactic writings composed in Greek and attributed to Hermes Trismegistus. In the twelfth treatise (Libellus XII, "On the Common Mind"), it is stated: "The greatest sickness of the soul is godlessness; everything else is born from this sickness" (cf. *Corpus Hermeticum*, Libellus XII, section 3; Greek: "νόσημα δὲ ψυχῆς ἀθεότης," which was influentially framed as *morbus animae gravissimus* in Marsilio Ficino's influential Latin Renaissance translation).

In the hermetic tradition, godlessness is not merely considered a moral failing, but a metaphysical alienation from the divine origin, from which all other vices emerge. This doctrine was widely known in Renaissance and Enlightenment literature—not least through Marsilio Ficino's Latin translation *(De communi),* which had circulated among European scholarly circles since the 15th century—and lends Lameth's statement a philosophical and ancient depth that simultaneously fits his role as a bearer of ancient knowledge.

For symbolic interpretation, see: *Corpus Hermeticum*, eds. Arthur Darby Nock and André-Jean Festugière, 4 vols. (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1946–1954), vol. I, Libellus XII, 3 ("νόσημα δὲ ψυχῆς ἀθεότης"); Brian P. Copenhaver (ed. and trans.), *Hermetica: The Greek Corpus Hermeticum and the Latin Asclepius in*

a New English Translation (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), pp. 32–33. See also Wilhelm Schmidt-Biggemann, *Philosophia perennis: Historische Umrisse abendländischer Spiritualität in Antike, Mittelalter und Früher Neuzeit* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1998), pp. 75–80.

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Of Bel-Marduk, Nergal, and Sacred Prostitution

Lameth's remark concerning the priests of Bel-Marduk and Nergal—speaking of catamites and temple courtesans as integral to Babylonian cult—moves along that narrow ridge where historical recollection meets mythopoetic interpretation. Marduk, the tutelary god of Babylon, in the course of centuries ascended to the highest rank of the Mesopotamian pantheon: a lawgiving creator of the cosmos, an ordering force, and at once the master of magical arts (cf. Bottéro, *Religion in Ancient Mesopotamia*, 2001). Nergal, his somber counterpart, reigned over the underworld, pestilence, fire, and war. In late antique and early Christian sources both increasingly appear as figures of a demonized otherworld—not ancestral intimations of divine truth, but antagonists to the monotheistic faith (cf. Eusebius, *Praeparatio evangelica*, Book IX; Diodorus, *Bibliotheca historica*, Book II).

The image of bloody sacrifices, magical incantations, and cruel rites surrounding their temples belongs to a long tradition of ancient polemic and apocalyptic imagination. Although archaeology yields no firm evidence for systematic human sacrifice—at most scattered and fragmentary hints—the notion of ritual cruelty pervades the writings of authors from Diodorus to Eusebius and the Fathers of the Church.

The motif of sacred prostitution, to which Lameth alludes, forms another link in this chain of cultural ascriptions. Herodotus reports in his Histories (I.199) of a custom whereby every woman must, at least once, yield herself to a stranger in the temple of Mylitta (Ishtar). Modern Assyriologists such as Stephanie Budin (*The Myth of Sacred Prostitution in Antiquity*, 2008) and Julia Assante ("From Whores to *Hierodules*," 2003) have questioned or even dismissed this account as projection—yet the motif endures: as a cultural memory, as an allegory of the intermingling of sanctity and sensuality, as the sign of a cult in which the flesh itself became liturgy.

Thus when Lameth—half in scorn, half in bitter gravity—invokes these practices, he does not speak as the sober antiquarian, but as an initiate lamenting the corruption of a once-sacred order. His words bear the patina of apocryphal tradition, imbued with late antique polemic, yet also with a deeper intimation: that in Babylon a sacred mirror was shattered, and from its shards there arose a religion in which power, magic, and seduction were themselves transfigured into liturgy.

For historical and religious-historical context, see: Jean Bottéro, *Religion in Ancient Mesopotamia* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001), pp. 115–143; Herodotus, *Histories*, I, 199; Eusebius, *Praeparatio evangelica*, Book IX; Diodorus, *Bibliotheca historica*, Book II; Stephanie Lynn Budin, *The Myth of Sacred Prostitution in Antiquity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008); Julia Assante, "From Whores to Hierodules: The Historiography of Ancient Near Eastern Prostitution," in *Hypatia* 18/4 (2003), pp. 1–21.

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On the Position of Egypt and Babylon in the Mythic-Historical Context

In several passages of the novel a spiritual tension is suggested between Egypt and Babylon—a polarity deeply embedded in the scholarship of antiquity and the Middle Ages, and traceable through biblical, Hermetic, and occult traditions well into the modern era.

Historically, the kingdom upon the Nile is the elder: already by 3000 BCE the early pharaohs reigned over a united Egypt, whereas Babylon as city and power emerged centuries later, in the time of Hammurabi (ca. 1800 BCE), out of the Amorite dominion of Mesopotamia. Egypt was the land of pyramids, of the cult of the dead, of enigmatic hieroglyphs—a continuum of stone and stars that seemed to outlast the flux of time. Babylon, by contrast, rose like a storm: later, mightier, steeped in magical ambition, restless and animated by titanic hubris.

In Hebrew tradition both realms are counted among the descendants of Ham, the son of Noah—Mizraim as father of Egypt, Cush as father of Nimrod, the founder of Babylon. In this reading Egypt is guardian of an antediluvian wisdom, while Babylon becomes the stage of metaphysical revolt. The Tower of Babel—described in the Book of Genesis as the symbolic attempt to storm heaven—was interpreted in Gnostic writings, by Church Fathers such as Augustine, and in Christian apocalyptic thought as the image of a lost world-order, a magical inversion.

Within the Hermetic tradition of the Middle Ages and Renaissance, Egypt was venerated as the cradle

of all occult arts. The so-called *Aegyptiaca*—texts such as the *Corpus Hermeticum* or the *Asclepius*—ascribe to the legendary Hermes Trismegistus the divine science: a wisdom not directed against heaven, but striving to penetrate it. Babylon, on the other hand, was often cast as the embodiment of a demonized counterforce—a city of confusion, the Whore of the Apocalypse, a center of false light.

Thus, in the mythic imagination of the ages, two empires confront one another: Egypt, the mystery of order, founded upon *Maat*, the divine measure of all things; and Babylon, the abode of magical transgression, of the will to dominion over heaven and earth. This polarity, which endures within the history of Western imagination, is less a matter of chronology than of inner principle: Egypt preserves—Babylon covets. Egypt guards the seal—Babylon seeks to break it.

The novel takes up these archetypes and brings them to an imaginary point of convergence, where historical fact, religious symbolism, and occult depths intermingle. The map upon which Phineas moves is at once a map of ancient ideas—and Mizraim and Babel are its poles.

For historical and religious-historical context, see: Jean Bottéro, *Religion in Ancient Mesopotamia* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001), pp. 115–143; Genesis 10–11; Augustine, *De civitate Dei*, Book XVI; *Corpus Hermeticum*, eds. Arthur Darby Nock and André-Jean Festugière, 4 vols. (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1946–1954); *Asclepius*, in Brian P. Copenhaver (ed. and trans.), *Hermetica: The Greek Corpus Hermeticum and the Latin Asclepius in a New English Translation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), pp. 67–92; Eusebius, *Praeparatio evangelica*, Book IX; Revelation 17–18; Mircea Eliade, *A History of Religious Ideas*, vol. 1 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978), ch. IV and V, pp. 53–105.

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On the Curse of Ham and the Guilt of His Son

"Cursed be Canaan; a servant of servants shall he be unto his brethren." (Genesis 9:25)

It may appear alien to the modern reader that it is not the one who transgressed against the divine order, but his descendant—the child of his loins—who was placed under a ban. And yet, that passage where the elder Noah, intoxicated by wine, lies uncovered in his tent—beheld by Ham, yet reverently covered by Shem and Japheth—possesses a greater depth than might appear from the superficial wording.

The Church Fathers—those vigilant interpreters standing between the ancient world and Christian revelation—have long wrestled with this passage. Augustine, whose judgments were rarely lenient, pointed out that Ham, having been blessed by God after the Flood, could not himself be cursed. The malediction, therefore, fell not upon him, but upon the one in whom his deed was thought to manifest itself: his son Canaan—a name that later became a cipher for the unholiness of a people set in opposition to the Chosen.

Others, like Origen, spoke allegorically: Ham stood for the flesh, Canaan for the sinful legacy born from it. And in deeper circles of rabbinic speculation there circulated darker conjectures of a distorted act, a transgression not to be read with the bare eye—a mockery that shamed not only the father but the divine order itself.

Thus it appears consistent when Lameth insists that it was not the father, but the son, who was cursed. He discerns in this distinction a principle recurring through all the ancient texts: guilt is not passed on as a mere biological stain, but as a spiritual potency, a rift within the order of being, emerging where man forsakes his rightful place. Ham saw—yet Canaan was born blind.

Some would misread this, erecting upon it a dogma of the rejection of whole nations; but the deeper meaning lies not in political inheritance, but in the state of the soul. Canaan is a disposition. A posture of estrangement. A line that finds its culmination in the building of Babel's tower.

And Ham? Ham, the father of Mizraim, from whom Egypt descends? In him, Lameth surmised, another legacy endured—not the scorn, but the wisdom. For Egypt's knowledge was old, older than Babel, and bore the seal of the world before the Flood. It preserved what might otherwise have been lost. And thus the curse itself is but a shadow, one that falls only where there was light.

For exegetical interpretation, see: Augustine, *De civitate Dei*, Book XVI, 2; Origen, *Homiliae in Genesim*, II, 5; Babylonian Talmud, *Sanhedrin* 70a; David M. Goldenberg, *The Curse of Ham: Race and Slavery in Early Judaism, Christianity, and Islam* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003), pp. 168–175; Nahum M. Sarna, *Genesis: The Traditional Hebrew Text with the New JPS Translation* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1989), pp. 67–69.

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Misraim

The name Misraim (Hebrew מִצְרַיִם) appears in the Bible both as a personal name and as the designation of the land of Egypt. In the Table of Nations (Genesis 10:6–14), Misraim is listed as the second son of Ham and grandson of Noah, from whose descendants various ancient Egyptian and neighboring peoples arise (cf. also 1 Chronicles 1:8–12). As a geographical cipher the name stands for the Nile Valley, and in Biblical Hebrew it is almost consistently employed in the dual form—a usage often linked by scholars to the historical division of Upper and Lower Egypt.

Jewish-Hellenistic historiography, for instance in the works of Flavius Josephus (*Antiquitates Judaicae* I, 6, 2–3), already identified Mizraim as the progenitor of the Egyptians. Manetho, the Egyptian priest-historian of the 3rd century BCE, whose *Aegyptiaca* has only survived in fragments (cited by Josephus, Africanus, Eusebius, and Syncellus), described these origins as a purely dynastic continuity. The synthesis performed in the novel, which links Manetho's accounts with later oriental myths of the pyramids as pre-diluvian repositories of knowledge, precisely replicates that esoteric syncretism which merged late antique stele traditions and Islamic chronicling into a mystical unity within the stream of tradition. In his Chronicle (based on Manethonian tradition), Eusebius of Caesarea reports that the great age of Egyptian civilization is to be placed before the Flood, and that Mizraim resettled the land after the Deluge.

In Arabic-Islamic historiography—for instance in Ibn ʿAbd al-Ḥakam's *Futūḥ Miṣr wa-akhbāruhā* (9th c.)—we encounter legends claiming that the pyramids were built by "kings before the Flood" to safeguard hidden knowledge from the coming catastrophe; parallel traditions are found in further chronicles (al-Ṭabarī, Sibt ibn al-Jawzī) and were transmitted into the medieval Latin West (e.g. Vincent of Beauvais, *Speculum Historiale*) and into early modernity (notably Athanasius Kircher).

The chain of motifs echoed in the novel—from Adam's prophetic foreknowledge of the Flood (cf. *Aurora Philosophorum* [Pseudo-Paracelsus], ch. I), to the "pillars of wisdom" erected by the sons of Seth as described by Josephus (one of brick against fire, one of stone against water; Antiquities I,2,3 [= I,70–71]), to later accounts in which Nimrod and Misraim appear as appropriators of this antediluvian heritage—interweaves biblical genealogy with apocryphal myths of hidden knowledge. In Hermetic tradition this lineage is bound to Thoth/Hermes Trismegistus, who (according to Manethonian lore transmitted via George Syncellus in the *Book of Sothis*) is said to have inscribed arcane wisdom in hieroglyphs upon stelae before the Flood. The *Book of Jubilees* (ch. 8) further relates how Cainan discovered a pre-diluvian inscription in the rock containing the "teachings of the Watchers," sought to copy it, and sinned thereby.

Thus Misraim, in the context of the novel, becomes a cipher for the "secret knowledge of antediluvian time." His historical existence as such cannot be verified; yet his Wirkungsgeschichte as a mythological pattern of interpretation has been extraordinarily influential since antiquity—spanning ancient historiography, medieval and early modern encyclopaedism, and continuing into modern esoteric systems.

For historical and religious-historical context, see: *Biblia Sacra Vulgata*, ed. Robert Weber (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 1969), Genesis 10:6–14, 1 Chronicles 1:8–12; Flavius Josephus, *Antiquitates Judaicae, in Flavii Iosephi Opera*, ed. Benedikt Niese, vol. I (Berlin: Weidmann, 1887), Book I, §§ 131–133; Manetho, ed. and trans. W. G. Waddell (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1940 [Loeb Classical Library]), frags. 1–6; Eusebius of Caesarea, *Chronicon*, ed. Alfred Schoene, 2 vols. (Berlin: Weidmann, 1875); Ibn ʿAbd al-Ḥakam, *Futūḥ Miṣr wa-akhbāruhā*, ed. Charles C. Torrey (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1922), pp. 8–15; al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh al-rusul wa-l-mulūk*, ed. M. J. de Goeje (Leiden: Brill, 1879–1901); Sibt ibn al-Ǧauzī, *Mirʾāt al-zamān fī taʾrīkh al-aʿyān* (Hyderabad: Dāʾirat al-Maʿārif al-ʿUṯmāniyya, 1951); Vincent of Beauvais, *Speculum Historiale* (Strasbourg: Johann Mentelin, c. 1173 [repr. Douai, 1624]), Book II; Athanasius Kircher, *Oedipus Aegyptiacus* (Rome: Vitalis Mascardus, 1652–1654); Pseudo-Paracelsus, *Aurora Philosophorum*, in Karl Sudhoff (ed.), *Sämtliche Werke*, pt. 1, vol. 14 (Munich: Oldenbourg, 1933), ch. 1, pp. 3–12; *Book of Jubilees*, ed. Klaus Berger (Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus, 1981), ch. 8:1–5.

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The Inscription of Kainam

In the *Book of Jubilees* (chapter 8, vv. 1–4) it is told how Kainam, the grandson of Arpachshad and great-grandson of Shem, "learned writing" from his father and, in seeking a place for the founding of a city, came upon an inscription carved into the rock by the "forefathers." The text of this inscription contained "the knowledge which the Watchers had taught"—a direct allusion to the tradition recounted in Genesis

6:1–4 and in *1 Enoch*, according to which the fallen angels ("Watchers," Aramaic *ʿîrîn*, Greek *egrḗgoroi)* imparted to humankind secret knowledge such as astrology, metallurgy, magic, and divination. In the version of Jubilees, Kainam's appropriation of these teachings leads directly to sin, thereby underscoring the ambivalent legacy of antediluvian knowledge.

This motif is closely linked to the legends surrounding Mizraim, the son of Ham and mythical progenitor of the Egyptians, as traditionally handed down in Jewish-Hellenistic and early Islamic historiography. In continuation of the synthesis discussed in the previous section—between classical chronicles (Josephus, Manetho) and Arab authors such as Ibn ʿAbd al-Ḥakam—he was credited with the resettlement of Egypt and the preservation of pre-diluvian knowledge. In both cases, inscriptions or monuments—whether the rock containing the teachings of the Watchers or the pyramids containing secret knowledge—function as repositories of an ancient, partly forbidden science that survived the Great Flood. The genealogy addressed in the novel, extending from Adam through Seth, Noah, and his sons down to Nimrod and Mizraim, directly connects to these lines of tradition and integrates the figure of Lameth into the mytho-historical context of an "ancient transmission of knowledge."

For historical and textual context, see: *The Book of Jubilees*, ed. and trans. James C. VanderKam, 2 vols. (*Corpus Scriptorum Christianorum Orientalium* 510–511, *Scriptores Aethiopici* 87–88; Louvain: Peeters, 1989), ch. 8:1–4; 1 *(Ethiopic Apocalypse of) Enoch*, trans. E. Isaac, in James H. Charlesworth (ed.), *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, vol. 1 (New York: Doubleday, 1983), pp. 5–89 (here ch. 6–8); *Biblia Sacra Vulgata*, ed. Robert Weber (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 1969), Gen 6:1–4; Flavius Josephus, *Antiquitates Judaicae, in Flavii Iosephi Opera*, ed. Benedikt Niese, vol. I (Berlin: Weidmann, 1887), Book I, §§ 70–71 and §§ 130–139; Manetho, ed. and trans. W. G. Waddell (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1940 [Loeb Classical Library]); Ibn ʿAbd al-Ḥakam, *Futūḥ Miṣr waakhbāruhā*, ed. Charles C. Torrey (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1922).

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Jesus the Magician

The assertion that Jesus performed his deeds through secret arts and by means of the names of powerful angels is already attested in late antique religious criticism. Arnobius the Elder (*Adversus nationes* I, 43) reports of an opponent—frequently understood in the apologetic tradition as an Egyptian priest—who argues: "Jesus was a magician; he performed all these things by secret arts. From the shrines of the Egyptians, he stole the names of the angels of power as well as the religion of a distant land."

This polemical argumentation stands in a long tradition of ancient and late antique polemic, in which Christian wonder-working was brought into proximity with magical practices. Comparable accusations can be found, for instance, in the works of Celsus (known from Origen, *Contra Celsum* I, 28;VIII, 41), who explicitly attributes sorcery and arts learned in Egypt to Jesus.

In modern scholarship Morton Smith's *Jesus the Magician* (New York, 1978) has contextualized these ancient charges systematically: he collects pagan and Christian adversarial voices (including Celsus/Origen and Arnobius) and compares them with motifs from the Greco-Egyptian magical papyri (names of angels and gods, adjurations, exorcisms). The book has been influential but remains controversial; many exegetes regard these accusations as a polemical tradition concerning Jesus's miracles, not as evidence that Jesus himself practiced magic. For an overview of Late Antiquity see also Jennifer Taylor Westerfeld, *Egyptian Hieroglyphs in the Late Antique Imagination* (Philadelphia, 2019), which examines the Christian interpretation of Egyptian "secret writing" and temple lore within the ideological framework of the time.

For historical and religious-historical context, see: Arnobius of Sicca, *Adversus nationes*, Book I, 43, ed. August Reifferscheid (*Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum* 4;Vienna: Gerold, 1875), p. 28; parallel in: Jacques-Paul Migne (ed.), *Patrologia Latina* 5 (Paris, 1844), cols. 792–793; Eng. trans. in: Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson (eds.), *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, vol. 6 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1951 [repr. Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark]), p. 427; Origen, *Contra Celsum*, ed. Marcel Borret, 5 vols. (*Sources Chrétiennes* 132, 136, 147, 150, 227; Paris: Cerf, 1967–1976), here vol. I (SC 132) on I, 28 and vol. IV (SC 150) on VIII, 41; Morton Smith, *Jesus the Magician* (New York: Harper & Row, 1978); Jennifer Taylor Westerfeld, *Egyptian Hieroglyphs in the Late Antique Imagination* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2019).

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Darcie Morrígu

Darcie is an Irish given name, derived from the Old French aristocratic house of d'Arcy, and in

modern Irish interpretation often associated with the sense of "descended from the dark." The surname Morrígu unmistakably points to the figure of the *Mórrígan* (Old Irish *Mórrígan*—"Great Queen" or "Phantom Queen"), a complex goddess of Irish Celtic mythology bound up with war, death, prophecy, and shapeshifting. In the sagas she often appears as a triple goddess, striding across battlefields, foretelling death, and accompanying warriors into the Otherworld.

The combination of the names creates an image that connects an occult nimbus, dangerous femininity, and an aura of inevitability—traits that are also reflected in Madame Morrígu's appearance as the high priestess of a modern, spiritistically charged phantasmagoria.

For onomastic and mythological context, see: Patrick Hanks, Kate Hardcastle, and Flavia Hodges, *A Dictionary of First Names* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), s.v. "Darcy"; Donnchadh Ó Corráin and Fidelma Maguire, *Irish Names* (Dublin: Lilliput Press, 1990), pp. 68–69; Proinsias Mac Cana, *Celtic Mythology* (London: Hamlyn, 1970), pp. 95–103; Miranda J. Green, *The Gods of the Celts* (Stroud: Alan Sutton, 1986), pp. 58–64; Rosalind Clark, *The Great Queens: Irish Goddesses of War and Sovereignty* (Gerrards Cross: Colin Smythe, 1991), pp. 23–45.

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Spiritist Circles in Paris under the July Monarchy

The séance depicted in the novel reflects the early manifestations of European Spiritism as it blossomed in Paris from the 1820s onward, in salons, variety theatres, and the backrooms of taverns. Under the July Monarchy (1830–1848), popular fortune-telling mingled with Mesmer's magnetism, occult circles in which mediums claimed to converse with the dead, Christian traditions of prophecy, and pseudo-scientific experiments. Although modern Spiritism reached its true zenith only in the 1850s with figures such as Allan Kardec (born Hippolyte Léon Denizard Rivail), séances were already being staged as theatrical spectacles—complete with dimmed lighting, music, drumming, exotic props, and a carefully orchestrated "trance" moment designed to evoke in the audience a curious blend of reverence, dread, and awe. Such events were not merely entertainment for a curious bourgeoisie, but part of a current that sought to bridge rationalism and mystical interpretation of the world.

The *Egyptienne* typeface used on the leaflet belongs to the family of slab serif typefaces and, in the first half of the nineteenth century, became a hallmark of modern poster design. Its block-like serifs conveyed stability and long-distance legibility, making it especially suitable for public announcements. The designation "Egyptienne" was itself a product of contemporary Egyptomania: after Napoleon's Egyptian campaign (1798–1801) and the monumental publication of the *Description de l'Égypte*, Europe seized with avid fascination upon all that could be associated with ancient Egypt—from mummy exhibitions in Parisian salons to furniture and fashion accessories in the "Pharaonic style." A séance announcement set in such a type thus conjoined two realms: the technical progress of modern print culture and the fascination with the mysterious, the timeless, and the otherworldly.

In the narrative, the appearance of Madame Morrígu—accompanied by a shaman in Mongolian attire and underscored by disturbing overtone singing—is staged as precisely such a phantasmagoria. The atmosphere evokes a borderland between variety theatre and cultic ceremony, where religious and theatrical elements blur. The biblical allusion, "And the soul that turneth after such as have familiar spirits, and after wizards, to go a whoring after them, I will even set my face against that soul, and will cut him off from among his people" (Leviticus 20:6), points to the Old Testament's severity toward any communication with the dead. Within the narrative context, it underscores Phineas's inner resistance to the allure of Spiritism—a resistance which, under the spell of the scene, begins to crumble.

For cultural-historical and typographic context, see: Marina Warner, *Phantasmagoria: Spirit Visions, Metaphors, and Media* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006); Lynn L. Sharp, *Secular Spirituality: Reincarnation and Spiritism in Nineteenth-Century France* (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2006); Robert Darnton, *Mesmerism and the End of the Enlightenment in France* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1968); Allan Kardec, *Le Livre des Esprits* (Paris: Édouard Dentu, 1857); Robin Kinross, *Modern Typography: An Essay in Critical History* (London: Hyphen Press, 1992); Jean-Marcel Humbert et al. (eds.), *Egyptomania: Egypt in Western Art, 1730–1930* (Ottawa: National Gallery of Canada, 1994); Leviticus 20:6.

Chapter III.

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Landscapes and Sanctuaries of Vilarien

The place names delineate a panorama that oscillates between linguistic etymology and mythical projection: Herndún (from Old English *hyrne* "remote district," *dūn* "hill") suggests a natural idyll; Thuriasàn evokes cultivated avenues, a space poised between wilderness and civilization. Neèbh (from Old English *nebb* = "beak," Aramaic "fang") conjures images of volcanic craters like teeth piercing the heavens, while Amoneáth, as the shadowed valley of the crater mountains, signifies a site of mines and hidden treasures—a topos reminiscent of the underworldly regions of many mythologies. Kartham, with its grottos and caves, may be linked biblically to Kartan (Joshua 21:32; city of the tribe of Naphtali), thereby granting the place an Old Testament substratum.

At the center, however, lies the city and temple complex of Erydin, capital and sacred site, enthroned upon the Holy Mountain, crowned by the Dome of Lights or the Light-Dome of a thousand lights. On the flanks of the mountain, however, looms the Samut Naúr, the "black door," the vault beneath, or the secret path leading there. The name Erydin evokes a passage in the *Red Book of Hergest* (14th century), where "Erydon" appears in the prophetic dialogue poem *Cyvoesi Myrddin a Gwenddydd*—a medieval reminiscence that here merges with the darker connotation of the dimensional gate (Samut Naúr). Thus, the temple complex gains a dual character—on the one hand, a radiant sanctuary and the "much-sung longing of the Athalanian peoples," on the other hand, a gate to an abyssal, hidden dimension.

The places named are situated, within the novel, in the realms of Vilarien—that mythical part of Athalania which gathers around Erydin. Vilarien appears there as a core landscape of sanctuaries and sites of remembrance, as the stage of childhood experiences and initiations, which lives on in the figures—such as in the recollection of the gates of Alharion—as a psychic topography.

The Sacred Mountain aligns itself with the tradition of the world-mountains—Sinai, Zion, Meru, Olympus—while at the same time serving as threshold between worlds, where earthly cultic sanctuary and cosmic mystery converge. Thus Erydin/Samut Naúr becomes the mythical center of the Athalanian cosmos. Athalania, as a continent, encompasses all these landscapes into a mythical vastness: the name distinctly evokes *Atlantis* (Plato, *Timaeus* 24e–25d; *Critias*), the lost realm beyond the Pillars of Heracles, whose memory resounds in countless legends. In that world, Athalania becomes the resonance chamber of the great myths: a space that gathers biblical, Celtic, classical, and medieval strands to sustain a newly wrought cosmology.

For linguistic and mythological context, see: *Biblia Sacra Vulgata*, ed. Robert Weber (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 1969), Josh 21:32; *The Text of the Bruts from the Red Book of Hergest*, eds. John Rhŷs and J. Gwenogvryn Evans (Oxford: J. G. Evans, 1890), p. 577 (on "Erydon" in the poem *Cyvoesi Myrddin a Gwenddydd*); Jacob Grimm, *Deutsche Mythologie* (Göttingen: Dieterich, 1835), vol. I, pp. 197–202; Mircea Eliade, *Patterns in Comparative Religion* (London: Sheed & Ward, 1958), pp. 367–389; J. Gwyn Griffiths, *Atlantis and Egypt: With Other Selected Essays* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1991); Joseph Bosworth and T. Northcote Toller, *An Anglo-Saxon Dictionary* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1898), p. 711.

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Jahdis

In the novel, Jahdis is introduced as a mysterious inhabitant of the temple of Erydin, whose origins lie shrouded in obscurity. She appears as an orphan, taken in and raised by Chirion, the guardian of the Dome of Light. Even her name suggests a special dedication: it may be derived from the Hebrew *Yah* ("YHWH") and the Aramaic-West Semitic *dî* ("belongs to")—thus, "she who belongs to God." Such theophoric names are frequent in the Ancient Near East and mark a close bond to the divine.

The biographical stages—the scene on the southern slope of the mountain amidst a grove of towering savins (a poisonous species of juniper, sometimes used in folk medicine as an abortifacient, which here assumes fantastically exaggerated proportions), the ascent into the community of the consecrated, and the crowning with the diadem—condense the image of a figure caught between loss and election. As the later second wife of Phineas, she unites sacred consecration with narrative fate.

For onomastic and religious-historical context, see: Ludwig Koehler, Walter Baumgartner, and Johann J. Stamm, *Hebräisches und aramäisches Lexikon zum Alten Testament*, 3rd ed., 5 vols. (Leiden: Brill, 1967–1995), vol. V, s.v. "dî"; Martin Noth, *Die israelitischen Personennamen im Rahmen der gemeinsemitischen Namengebung* (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1928),

pp. 35–48; Tal Ilan, *Lexicon of Jewish Names in Late Antiquity, Part I: Palestine 330 BCE–200 CE* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2002), pp. 17–22; Heinrich Marzell, *Wörterbuch der deutschen Pflanzennamen*, vol. 2: *Ilex–Lythrum* (Leipzig: S. Hirzel, 1951), cols. 1061–1074 (s.v. "Juniperus Sabina L."); Miranda J. Green, *Symbol and Image in Celtic Religious Art* (London: Routledge, 1989), pp. 141–145.

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The Twin-Faced Moon

The two-faced moon appears in the novel as a twin star, pouring its rays over the landscapes of Herndún, Thuriasàn, Neèbh, Amoneáth, and Kartham, and finally culminating in the Dome of Lights of Erydin. Thus, the moon becomes not only a cosmic illuminator but also a cartographic principle that transforms the world into a mythical relief of light and shadow. In a later scene, Jahdis looks barefoot from a grove of towering trees up at the moons, which appear above the branches and "to which men, above all other celestial bodies, ascribe the gift of wisdom."

The twin form alludes to ancient myths of the moon's twofold visage: the bright, revealing face and the dark, concealed one. Already in antiquity, the moon was regarded as a threshold star: Selene, Artemis, and Hecate embodied differing aspects of the same principle—beauty, the hunt, and magic. In Egypt, Thoth, the moon-god, bore wisdom and served as the scribe of the gods; in India, Chandra was linked with knowledge and clarity of mind. The attribution of foresight mentioned in the novel thus stands within a venerable tradition.

Linguistically, the epithet "twin-faced" recalls the Roman term *bifrons*—symbol of the god Janus, who gazes both forward and backward, guardian of gates and thresholds. In Athalania, the moon thereby becomes a symbol of cosmic dualism: light and darkness, this world and the beyond, illusion and truth. By casting its "glamour" over the world, it renders it both visible and transfigured—a vision of the threshold where dream and revelation merge.

Iconographically, the twin-faced moon may be conceived in two ways: as two disks appearing side by side in the sky, overlapping—corresponding to the depiction in the novel—or as a single heavenly body bearing two visages, like Janus, encompassing opposite directions at once. Both interpretations open a visual language of ambivalence: the moon as mirror of contraries, guardian of foresight and threshold alike.

Moreover, the twin form recalls Celtic dual deities such as the Morrígan, who in multiple guises embodied war, death, and fertility, and may be compared with the mythical twin stars of many cultures (the Dioscuri, the Aśvin twins). Even the Atlantis tradition faintly resounds: Plato, in the *Critias* fragments, describes the island as encircled by concentric rings—an image that finds symbolic correspondence in the "twin-faced" motif of the circling and mirroring moon. Thus, in Athalania, ancient, Celtic, and Atlantean mythologies coalesce into a new image of the threshold where cosmic order and hidden dimension meet.

For mythological interpretation, see: Robert von Ranke-Graves, *The White Goddess: A Historical Grammar of Poetic Myth* (London: Faber & Faber, 1948), ch. 5–6; Mircea Eliade, *The Myth of the Eternal Return: Cosmos and History* (Düsseldorf: Diederichs, 1953), pp. 92–105; Jan Assmann, *Ägypten: Theologie und Frömmigkeit einer frühen Hochkultur* (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1984), pp. 137–142; Klaus Mylius, "Die Religionen Indiens," in *Geschichte der Religionen* (Cologne: Naumann & Göbel, 2005), pp. 112–117; J. Gwyn Griffiths, *Atlantis and Egypt: With Other Selected Essays* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1991), pp. 55–68.

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Chirion

In the novel, Chirion appears as the supreme figure of the temple complex of Erydin, guardian of the glassy Dome of Light and keeper of the Citadel of Knowledge, within whose halls the secret books of the ancient tongue are preserved. He is at once the foster father of Jahdis, raising her with kindness and initiating her into the mysteries of the Sacred Mountain.

His figure is a deliberate variation on the Greek centaur Cheiron (lat. Chiron), the "kindest and wisest of the centaurs," who in mythology stands forth as tutor of Heracles, Achilles, and Asclepius, and who after his death was elevated to the heavens as the constellation of the Centaur. These echoes bind Chirion to the topos of the educator and sage, the liminal figure who moves between gods and men.

„His title, Master of Secrets, also points to ancient Egyptian underworld texts: In the *Amduat,* the *"Book of That Which Is in the Underworld,"* this expression is encountered as a faithful translation of the sacred title for those who guard the hidden names, gates, and transformations in the afterlife. Chirion thus becomes a mystagogical guardian

who manages the boundary between revelation and mystery.

The Citadel of Knowledge he preserves is, in the novel, the library of Erydin—a repository of ancient writings concealed from ordinary men. The motif evokes the idea of a sacred library, from Alexandria through the medieval cathedral libraries to the imaginary archives of fantastic literature (cf. Borges's *Library of Babel)*.

Thus Chirion unites within his figure three traditions: the Greek archetype of the pedagogical centaur, the Egyptian guardian of secrets, and the universal myth of the librarian of sacred scriptures. Within the context of Athalania, he emerges as archetypal teacher, paternal protector, and priestly-initiatory custodian of the arcane.

For mythological and religious-historical interpretation, see: Fritz Graf, *Griechische Mythologie: Eine Einführung* (Munich: C.H. Beck, 1993), pp. 145–150; Erik Hornung, *Das Amduat: Die Schrift des Verborgenen Raumes*, 3 vols. (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1963), vol. II: *Übersetzung und Kommentar*, pp. 22–27; Jan Assmann, *Ägypten: Theologie und Frömmigkeit einer frühen Hochkultur* (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1984), pp. 201–207.

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Xerxes (the Gryphon)

The fantastic creature Xerxes, a gryphon of immense size and graceful ferocity, is bound to the figure of Jahdis in a complex of motifs that combines homely intimacy with ancient magic. His presence oscillates between humorous-grotesque scenes and an exalted imagery in which yearning for wind, vastness, and freedom finds expression.

Decisive for the course of the novel, however, is that Xerxes is not merely a companion but a being bound through the perfect name: Jahdis summons him in the *Lingua Adamica* (cf. note to p. 111, "Lingua Adamica"), that "first language" which bestows power over creatures. The name Xerxes she adopts from the *Chronicles of Nemiáh* as an innocuous shell, while the true, sacred name remains unspoken and concealed. At this intersection of childhood fantasy and theologically mystical power of language lies the gryphon's key function: he is mirror of Jahdis's solitude, guarantor of her freedom, and at the same time medium of an ancient, creative magic.

In mythological tradition, the gryphon appears as guardian and threshold-keeper: in the Egyptian religious world he is guardian of the passage between this life and the next; among the Greeks he watches over the gold of the Hyperboreans and battles the Arimaspi (Aeschylus, *Prometheus Bound* 803–807; Herodotus 4.13); in medieval Christian allegory he becomes emblem of Christ, uniting divine and earthly natures. Isidore of Seville describes him as a hybrid of lion and eagle, highlighting his vigilance (*Etymologiae* XII.3.10). In medieval bestiaries he appears in allegorical interpretation as embodiment of the union of above and below; in hermetic-alchemical imagery the fusion of eagle (volatile) and lion (fixed) signifies the *coniunctio oppositorum*—the gryphon here functions as cipher of the union of opposites, symbol of threshold and mediation alike (cf. Abraham, *Dictionary of Alchemical Imagery*, s.v. "gryphon"). In heraldry and architecture, finally, the gryphon marks the role of the guardian—symbol of protection, strength, and watchful attention.

From a literary-historical perspective, Xerxes ties into a tradition of mythical animal companions—from the fabulous talking animals of antiquity (Aesop, Phaedrus) and the lion in Chrétien de Troyes's *Yvain* (ca. 1180) to modern fantastic companion creatures such as the beasts of Sibel in Patricia A. McKillip's *The Forgotten Beasts of Eld* (1974).

For symbolism and tradition, see: Aeschylus, *Prometheus Bound*, ll. 803–807; Herodotus, *Histories*, IV, 13; Isidore of Seville, *Etymologiae*, XII, 3, 10; Ludovico Ariosto, *Orlando Furioso* (1532); A. C. Fox-Davies, *A Complete Guide to Heraldry* (London: T. C. & E. C. Jack, 1909); *The Book of Beasts: Being a Translation from a Latin Bestiary of the Twelfth Century*, ed. and trans. T. H. White (London: Jonathan Cape, 1954), pp. 22–24; Joscelyn Godwin, "The Hermetic Tradition," in *The Golden Thread: The Studied and the Esoteric*, trans. Joscelyn Godwin (Wheaton: Quest Books, 2007), pp. 5–10; Lyndy Abraham, *A Dictionary of Alchemical Imagery* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), s.v. "gryphon"; Christa Tuczay, *Poetik der Mythenrezeption: Das Fabelwesen in der mittelhochdeutschen Epik* (Stuttgart: Steiner, 2002), pp. 144–156; Stanislas Klossowski de Rola, *The Secret Art of Alchemy* (London: Thames & Hudson, 1973), pp. 44–49; Patricia A. McKillip, *The Forgotten Beasts of Eld* (New York: Atheneum, 1974).

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Niahl

In the novel, Niahl appears as the corpulent librarian of the Citadel of Knowledge in Erydin, where he also bears the title Guardian of the Citadel and of the Secret Chamber. His name derives from Old Irish

Niall, which can mean both "master" and "the passionate one"—a speaking name that designates both his role as lord of the library and his fervent devotion to the written word.

In literary tradition, Niahl embodies the archetype of the librarian as threshold-keeper of knowledge: a figure ranging from the librarians of Alexandria to Borges's imaginary archivists. Yet his bodily abundance disrupts the pure sublimity of this figure, lending him a human grounding and at the same time reflecting the ambivalence of the guardian of knowledge, who unites protection and restriction within himself. In the context of Athalania, Niahl is thus a double figure: a grave warden before the forbidden mysteries of the ancient tongue and at the same time an almost caricatural character who ironically marks the distance between esoteric knowledge and everyday life.

For onomastic and literary context, see: Donnchadh Ó Corráin and Fidelma Maguire, *Irish Names* (Dublin: Lilliput Press, 1990), pp. 145–147; Patrick Woulfe, *Irish Names and Surnames* (Dublin: M. H. Gill, 1923), s.v. "Niall"; Lionel Casson, *Libraries in the Ancient World* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001), pp. 120–135; Alberto Manguel, *Die Bibliothek bei Nacht* (Frankfurt am Main: S. Fischer, 2007), pp. 245–260; Jorge Luis Borges, "The Library of Babel," in *Ficciones*; Jan Assmann, *Ägypten: Theologie und Frömmigkeit einer frühen Hochkultur* (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1984), pp. 201–207; Umberto Eco, *Der Name der Rose* (Munich: Hanser, 1980), esp. the chapter on Jorge of Burgos.

The commentary ends here for the time being; it will be continued in the following chapters.

Initial taken from: Carol Belanger Grafton (ed.), *Bizarre & Ornamental Alphabets* (New York: Dover Publications, 1981).