

— Andreas Önnerfors, »Esoteric Encounters. The Queen of Sheba in Solomon's Temple«

— A B S T R A C T —

How do literary motifs migrate and translate into esoteric imagination? What is their mutual interdependence? The case discussed in this article, an episode in the half-fictitious, half-documentary *Voyage en Orient* (1851) by French proto-surrealist author Gérard de Nerval (1808–1855) provides us with an example where such an adaptation has taken place over the course of one and a half century. Furthermore, Nerval incorporates the Queen of Sheba (henceforward Balkis) into one of the foundational myths of freemasonry, which prompts another, albeit larger question of role of female characters in literary esoteric imagination. The ritual centerpiece of the third or master's degree in freemasonry is crafted around the biblical account of the construction of Solomon's temple with an apocryphal extension, the 'Hiramic legend', treating the murder of the temple architect Hiram. Whereas from the late 1720s and onwards the ritual narrative does not feature any female protagonists at all, Nerval introduces Balkis as a central and fundamentally plot-changing character. In this article, I will introduce Nerval's version of the Hiram legend, present a likely explanation how it migrated to the writings of anthroposophist Rudolf Steiner (1861–1925) and discuss Balkis' role as a 'female principle' introduced in the hyper-masculine ritual narrative of freemasonry. My reading of the literary sources is informed by both genealogical and comparative approaches by which I trace the elements of the Hiram legend from its eighteenth-century origins to their transformation at the end of the nineteenth and early twentieth century. A necessary limitation of this project at this stage is to omit context in favor of content. Whereas the interplay between these two levels of understanding certainly would merit deeper analysis, I will in this piece only discuss the suggestion of French historian Hivert-Messeca: that Nerval's adapted masonic mythology aimed at to create an inclusive and secularized spirituality for the age of modernity.

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■—ESOTERIC ENCOUNTERS. The Queen of
Sheba in Solomon's Temple—■

— MURDER AND MASCULINITY AT THE SACRED
BUILDING SITE —

When modern freemasonry emerged in urban London in the late 1710s, there was an apparent need to gather, print, and edit documents from earlier periods in order to make an ideological statement.¹ This happened in 1723 with the publication of *The Constitutions of the Freemasons. Containing the History, Charges, Regulations &c. of that most Ancient and Right Worshipful Fraternity. For the Use of the Lodges*, a work of roughly 100 pages that still is considered to be the major foundational document and expression of masonic ideas. Within two decades, *The Constitutions* had been translated into all major European languages. They were published again in 1738 as an amended second edition and have since been republished in innumerable versions over the last three centuries. The first part, representing almost half of the book, outlines the sacred mythology of freemasonry from the biblical age to its (then) contemporary situation. The second part is devoted to »The Charges of a Free-mason«: rules and regulations for individual freemasons, lodges, and their mutual interrelationship. It is here the exclusion of women turned into a membership criterion. Mediaeval craft regulations allowed unmarried women to exercise trade on their own under the legal status of »femme sole«.² As a rule, this right was extended to widows of master craftsmen. Thus, it is possible to find women in building trades such as (free)masonry throughout history. In *The Book of the City of Ladies* (1405), a literary work by mediaeval author Christine de Pizane (ca. 1364–1430), women are depicted as actively engaged in masonry and in a host of other crafts. Pizane also introduced the figure of the Queen of Sheba or Balkis as a very positive intellectual female role model in her writings.³

However, the *Constitutions* make no reference to any significant women in world history in general or to Balkis in particular. And while the rituals of freemasonry evolved during the 1720s, there are no signs that any references to women were incorporated. Rather the contrary was the case since the central legend of freemasonry of the third or the Master's degree has a distinct focus on masculinity in which the murder of the architect of Solomon's temple occupies a central place. In 1730, the first full exposure of the first three

degrees in freemasonry was published: *Masonry Dissected*.⁴ The thirty-odd paged brochure eventually appeared in more than thirty editions and was disseminated in translations and in periodicals across Europe. Despite the negative view of modern freemasonry given in the preface by its author Samuel Prichard, research suggests that *Masonry Dissected* was used as an aide memoire by existing lodges. The third or Master's degree, developed during 1720s introduces a new motif: the master's task is »to seek for that which was lost and is now found«, which is »the Master-Mason's Word«. This word, the catechism goes on, was lost with the death of the Temple architect Hiram (in French ritual families, the Temple architect is called Adoniram). Now follows the first version of the so-called »Hiramic legend«, which has been called the most important myth in freemasonry and which is not only the pinnacle of the first three degrees, but the starting point of a number of subsequent higher degrees. The Hiramic legend is an apocryphal continuation of the account of the construction of Solomon's Temple in the Bible.

In Prichard's version, Hiram inspects the Temple in the middle of the day. Three Fellow Craft masons place themselves at the three entrances to the Temple in order to demand the Master's Word from the architect. When he denies them the Word, each of them strikes Hiram with a tool until he finally dies. The murderers temporarily hide the body in the Temple. In the middle of the night, they carry Hiram out of the Temple and bury him on a hill. Fifteen days later, fifteen elected masters sent out by Solomon on a search mission find the decayed body of the architect. Since they fail to find the Master's Word with or on him, they agree to adopt the first word spoken at the discovery of the corpse, which is eventually given as »Macbenah«. The discovery of the body is announced to Solomon, who orders Hiram's body to be carried back to the Temple. When exhuming the corpse, Hiram is raised by the »five points of fellowship«: hand to hand, foot to foot, cheek to cheek, knee to knee, and hand in back. Finally, Hiram is buried in the Sanctum Sanctorum of the Temple. Ritual scholar Jan Snoek has identified no fewer than fifty varieties of the Hiramic legend, but none of them mention any involvement of Balkis. Apart from some scarce references in masonic lore, we find no trace of Balkis in any closer connection with freemasonry, which appears to be entirely a brainchild of Gérard de Nerval.⁵

In his three-volume work on freemasonry in Europe, Yves Hivert-Messeca proposes that a number of nineteenth century intellectuals identified the brotherhood as a sort of meta-religion, a »religion des religions« liberated both from strict rationalism and dogmatic theology.⁶ The goal of such a project, he writes, was to bring about a spiritual syncretism between the individual, humanity, nature and the divine. In



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this sense, a broad range of religions and religious traditions were studied and their joint core defined. According to Hivert-Messeca, Nerval's interest for oriental occultism attempted to investigate two questions: was the diversity of religions and religious practices the outcome of a rupture of a primordial unity? And was it possible to recover this union and bring it in harmony with modernity? Nerval is said to have identified this potential in the Druzean concept of »Din al-Tawhid«, a religion of divine unity, »a singular religion, formed by the debris of all beliefs, enabling its believers to accept immediately all forms of worship« and »basically, the Druzean religion is nothing else than a form of freemasonry, speaking according to modern ideas [...]«. ⁷This ambition informs his re-interpretation of the Hiramic legend, incorporating middle eastern/oriental motifs outside the bible, such as Surah An-Naml (27) from the Quran or the Ethiopian national epos Kebra Negast, blended with Zoroastrian dualism. In this sense, a version of the Hiramic legend including a strong female personality could incorporate major religious traditions and moreover create a theosophical appeal. It also problematized the spiritual needs of modern humanity placed in a tension between romanticism and enlightenment and male and female, propelled by industrialization and urbanization. In this world, the Judaeo-Christian

God had to be stripped of his oppressive hegemony. Nerval's re-mythologized freemasonry could turn into a »refuge and heiress of all religions and spiritualities«. ⁸ In the following, we will see how he created this new mythology for a modern age and how it was received.

— NERVAL'S 'HISTOIRE DE LA REINE DU MATIN ET DE SOLIMAN PRINCE DES GENIES' —

When Nerval's *Voyage en Orient* appeared in 1851, it was a collection of essays and texts written and published since about 1840. ⁹ His much-extended version of the Hiram legend is found in the second volume of the work in a section covering his travels to Lebanon and Istanbul in 1843. Under the heading 'Les Nuits de Ramazan' (Nights of Ramadan) the third part is titled 'Les Conteurs' (The Narrators). Within a frame narrative, twelve sub-sections tell the »Story of The Queen of the Morning and Solomon, Prince of the Spirits«. In the third edition (appearing already during 1851) that I have consulted for this article, the third part covers pages 230–352, approximately between 40 and 50 000 words, subdivided as follows: Une légende dans un café (230–231); I. Adoniram (232–237); II. Balkis (238–251); III. Le Temple (252–266), IV. Mello (267–277); V. La mer d'airain (278–283); VI. L' apparition (284–291); VII. Le monde souterrain (292–302); VIII. Le lavoire de Siloe (303–315); IX. Le trois compagnons (316–323); X. L'entrevue (324–330); XI. Le souper du roi (331–339); XII. Makbénach (340–351). The authoritative study of the structure and motifs of *Le voyage* was published in 1967 by Gérald Schaeffer. ¹⁰ Whereas Schaeffer concentrates comprehensively on *Le voyage* and Nerval's literary style and imagination itself, my main focus concerns the migration and history of reception of Nerval's version of the Hiram legend and its position in esoteric imagination. Therefore, in the following, less attention is paid to the meaning of certain literary motifs in Nerval (and their inter-textual references in his work) and more to how his writings have influenced an esoteric interpretation of the Hiram legend into the twenty-first century.

— In the following, I therefore will present an extensive summary of the most important elements of the plot. First of all, in order to lend the account documentary credibility, Nerval locates the site where stories are told against payment in a café in the artisan-craftsmen quarters of Istanbul. The café is packed with people, the reader learns, and the narrator occupies only a tiny space. He tells well-known stories »based on ancient legends« and »to paint the glory of those ancient workers' associations to which the East gave birth«, heavily embellished and adapted to the narrator's imagination. ¹¹ Each »séance« lasts, according to Nerval, half an hour; sequels are

adjourned at a number of occasions. Nerval also incorporates meta-comments to the legend and emphasizes how the audience discusses aspects of it. In Nerval's version, the three main characters of the story are Adoniram, Solomon and Balkis. Adoniram is described as an ultimate genius, detached and alienated from normality, a dark and mysterious person of unknown origin, participating in the »spirit of light and genius of darkness«, criticising the Temple project as the result of pure vainglory. Adoniram develops his own program for creativity: the aim of art is not to copy, but to invent, searching for what not yet has been represented »in the most bizarre fantasies«. However, God places the true artist under the yoke, matter limits him, and when the genius is plunged into the »vulgarity of form, art is lost«.¹²

In the second part of the story, his young assistant Benoni informs the master builder that the Queen of Sheba arrives to Jerusalem in order to pay Solomon a visit, however Adoniram remains sceptical: How is it possible that a lioness wants to unite with a simple domestic dog? The rest of the séance is devoted to an extensive description of the encounter between Balkis and Solomon. Balkis demonstrates that she is able to command birds, in particular the hoopoe (»Hud Hud«), »very useful for different tasks to the inhabitants and spirits of the air«.¹³ The next day (part 3 of the legend), Solomon and Balkis pay a visit to the Temple and the Queen of Sheba is impressed by its architecture, hailing the master builder. Solomon clarifies that it is his design, however Balkis desires still to know who so ably executes his plans. The king responds: »A certain Adoniram, a bizarre personality, half wild, sent to me by my friend, the king of Tyre« and reiterates self-confidently: »The vision of Adoniram has been limited at the price of my poetic imagination«.¹⁴ The conversation continues now, charged with different assessments of Solomon's talent as opposed to Adoniram's. Finally, Balkis meets Adoniram and questions him about his origin and his conception of art. Adoniram explains to Balkis that he encountered true art in subterranean caves where he found an incredible number of statues, »everything that the dream of imagination deliriously dares to conceive of magnificence.« Solomon interrupts Adoniram and criticises his sympathy for the antediluvian »art of impiety and darkness«.¹⁵ Instead the new temple resembles the clarity of the sun aiming to eternal elevation and opposing the force of Adonai to Baal. Outside the Temple, Solomon, Balkis and Adoniram watch the people of Jerusalem, congregating to catch a glimpse of the Queen of Sheba. Balkis is curious to know if it is possible to meet all those artisans involved in the construction of the Temple. Solomon rejects this idea as an absurd proposal, how should it ever be possible to gather people speaking different languages »from the Sanskrit idiom of the Himalaya to the

obscure and guttural jargons of savage Libya«? However, Adoniram replies to the demand of Balkis by making the T-shaped sign of 'tau' (as a sign of rally among the masonic profession) to the enormous crowd. Within minutes, order is created out of chaos: one hundred thousand people (»directed by unknown superiors«) arrange themselves as an army with three principal divisions, masons in the centre, subdivided into masters, fellows and apprentices, to their right carpenters and to their left precision and metal workers. This enormous workforce now approaches the Temple »as huge waves washing on the beach«. ¹⁶ Solomon is in shock and feels threatened since Adoniram is able to command such a vast crowd of people. The fourth part of the legend is situated in Mello, Solomon's countryside palace in the valley of Josaphat. King and queen discuss existential questions about their respective cultures and religions, their advantages and disadvantages. In short, one of the most important points of discussion concerns in how far human ingenuity is allowed to create civilization or if human civilization just is a reflection of an unalterable divine order. For Balkis it is God who has laid down genius in the human being, recognizing »the ray of his soul with which he enlightens ours«, the prejudices of Solomon's religion »will one day hinder the progress of science, the impulse of genius«. ¹⁷ Solomon on his side is of the opinion that it is dangerous to reverse the order of nature and to create an artificial civilisation, commerce, industry and populations subordinated to the efforts of humans. The episode at Mello is concluded with Solomon's attempts to conquer the heart of Balkis and her endeavours to escape his various traps. Subsequently we are told of Adoniram's complex design of the Brazen Sea to be casted in one piece. The spectacle, meticulously planned to be carried out during the night, attracts large crowds; Solomon and Balkis are welcomed as guests of honour. A conspiracy against Adoniram and his great metal foundry is revealed to Solomon by Benoni who overheard three craftsmen, Phanor, Amrou and Metusael and how they in different ways have sabotaged the entire casting procedure. Although warned by Benoni, Solomon does not call off the work. However, in the sixth part of the story, the catastrophe is a fact. A giant explosion kills huge numbers of spectators and Adoniram, disdained by Solomon, is left in despair. But something tells him to »search in these flames, your element and your enslaved rebel.« ¹⁸ His name is called from inside the torrid ore and in the red smoke Adoniram distinguishes a giant human figure with a huge hammer inviting him to follow to the centre of the globe, »Enoch's subterranean palace, our father's, called Hermes by the Egyptians and honoured in Arabia under the name of Edris.« ¹⁹ The giant reveals himself as Tubal-Kain (the biblical progenitor of metalwork) and explains, having moved to the

bottom of the mythological Mountain of Qaf, that Adoniram is placed in the bloodline of Cain. Adonai's power does not extend to here, it is possible to eat the fruit from the Tree of Knowledge without fear and without destruction. Cain's descendants can find their liberty and defend it against the »jealous tyranny of Adonai«. ²⁰ The subterranean world, filled with bizarre statues and structures from the Enochian dynasty, is explored further in the seventh part of the legend. Both approach a giant cubic stone made out of white chrysotile under mount Serendib and Adoniram learns that it is the grave of Adam. On the spot, Cain, their common ancestor, reveals that although Eve is his mother it is Iblis, the Angel of Light (Lucifer), who has slipped into his bosom and regenerated his race. But moreover, he explains how the eternal split between the children of the Elohim (fire) and the sons of Adonai (earth) and the fratricide against Abel came about. More figures from Cain's dynasty (carrying the sign of tau) make their appearance and the common theme is that it is their industriousness which has provided humanity with civilization through architecture, stonework and urbanization. Having survived the deluge, Adonai aims however at their destruction. Their destiny is gloomy: »Giants of intelligence, torches of knowledge, organs of progress, lights of the arts, instruments of liberty, they alone will remain slaves, scorned, solitary.« ²¹ Adoniram is instructed to defend this legacy, to unite the workers and thinkers which »one day will bring down the blind power of kings, the despotic ministers of Adonai« and he ascends to the surface of the earth equipped with Tubal-Kain's hammer with which he is able to restore the Brazen Sea. ²² On the following day, the narrative (part eight) continues at the Pool of Siloam, to which Balkis has retreated. She discusses the advantages and disadvantages of a marriage and alliance with Solomon. But the Sabaean court ladies in Balkis' entourage sing the praise of Adoniram who after the catastrophe again has resumed the work on the Temple. Suddenly Adoniram appears at the pool and a conversation with the queen unfolds, charged with intellectual and sexual undertones. Adoniram tries to convince Balkis that Solomon is not worth her love and that she is superior to the representative of Adonai. Furthermore, Adoniram is able to command the hoopoe with the sign of tau. This is the moment when the architect and queen confess their mutual love. Plans are made for their meeting in the camp of the Sabaeans and their joint escape from Solomon's power. In the ninth séance, Solomon, together with the High Priest Sadoc, ardently and nervously awaits Balkis arrival to their wedding, which again has been postponed. In an inner monologue, Sadoc reflects on the many negative aspects concerning the union between Solomon and Balkis, embarrassed by the foreign queen and her magic skills. He is also afraid and jealous of Adoniram who

was able to command his workforce with »occult and cabalistic domination«. ²³ In the middle of Sadoc's sinister stream of consciousness Solomon announces the arrival of the three fellow craftsmen (Phanor, Amrou and Metusael) involved in the plot against Adoniram. The craftsmen reveal that the Temple architect has visited Balkis' camp during the night, engaged in secret love and magical works. Solomon pretends to find out the truth himself and to confront Adoniram. This happens in the next part of the legend when they encounter each other (part 10). Adoniram declares that the work on the Temple can continue without him and demands release from his service. Solomon and Adoniram exchange compliments and the master architect prepares to leave Jerusalem for Tyre. However, Solomon again gathers the three craftsmen and triggers them to ask Adoniram to make them masters of their craft in order to receive a higher wage. The craftsmen conspire to force him to reveal the password and then to kill him. Adoniram meets Balkis in the eleventh séance and they pledge to reunite in Yemen. Solomon meets Balkis at Mello, but naturally their conversation develops in a very strained manner. After a tense encounter, Solomon is put to sleep by a narcotic poured into his wine and Balkis leaves Jerusalem in the middle of the night. At the same time Solomon returned to Mello, Adoniram went to the Temple in order to pay his workers for the last time at the column Jakin. He prepares to hand out the salary according to the passwords of each degree. When leaving the Temple through the western gate, Metusael appears and demands the password for the masters. However, Adoniram refuses to give it away whereupon he is hit in the head with a hammer. Trying to escape through the northern gate, Adoniram is stopped by Phanor with the same request, which he refuses and then is stabbed with a chisel. The last escape route is the eastern gate, but Amrou, the carpenter stands in his way with the same demand. Adoniram remains firm and Amrou punctures the heart of the architect with the point of his compass. The three murderers decide to carry Adoniram out of the Temple and to bury him outside the city, the grave marked with the twig of an Acacia. Solomon wakes up from his heavy sleep to find himself abandoned by Balkis, realizing that the plot against Adoniram was carried out and that his plans with the Temple now have come to a dead end. Solomon sends out nine masters to find the body of the architect and to punish the murderers. One of the nine masters discovers the fresh grave-mound with the twig of acacia. While exhuming Adoniram, they decide to change the password of the masters to »Makbénach«. The master architect is buried in the temple. Solomon's growing alienation and mental decline is described in detail and his infinite wisdom finally collapses in bitter solitude. Finally, Nerval returns to his meta-story, the live narrator in the Istanbul café and adds

some documentary (?) information about their business model. This story, the reader is told, took almost two weeks to complete.

— To summarize, the entire Hiram legend in this version has a completely different esoteric dimension as compared to traditional freemasonry. Adoniram and Solomon are opposed to each other, representing two different spiritual antediluvian branches emanating from Eve, Cain and Abel and their respective descendants. Cain's bloodline is associated with rebellious industriousness, whereas the children of Adonai are portrayed as cold rationalists. Balkis is initially trapped between these two impulses but decides to give in to and to unite sexually with Adoniram. The readers are told that the corporations of craftsmen still call themselves the descendants of Adoniram and »sons of the widow« Balkis.

— THE RECEPTION OF Nerval AND ITS WAY INTO THE TEMPLE LEGEND OF RUDOLF STEINER

Nerval's version of the Hiram legend was transformed to an opera with the title *La Reine de Saba* by Charles Gounod (1818-1893) in 1862 and translated to English in 1865 as *Irene*.²⁴ In the opera, Adoniram invokes the support of his industrious ancestors in a famous tenor aria, »Inspirez-moi, race divine!«. It is not clear if the original or the opera adaptation prompted Charles William Heckethorn (1826-1902) to incorporate Nerval's version as an account of »The Legend of the Temple« of freemasonry on page 239-247 in the first of his grand two-volume oeuvre *The secret societies of all ages and countries* (1875, with many further editions and translations). This is indeed strange, since at the time of publication of Heckethorn's vast stocktaking of secret societies across history and the globe (as such worth a separate study), the conventional version of the Hiram legend was widely disseminated and available. Heckethorn's English summary of Nerval is not devoid of its own literary value as the conflict between the different branches of Elohim (fire and earth) for instance is recounted as: »Cain, though industriously cultivating the soil, yet derived little produce from it, while Abel leisurely tended his flocks.«²⁵ One invention of Heckethorn's is that at the time of his murder Adoniram throws a »golden triangle which he wore around his neck and on which was engraven the master's word, into a deep well.«²⁶ Nerval tells us that Balkis gave such a necklace to Adoniram as a token of appreciation when he managed to assemble his enormous workforce. Another difference to Nerval is that the three murderers are said to have committed suicide and that their heads are brought to Solomon. The golden triangle finally also is recovered from the

well into which it was thrown by Adoniram and placed on a triangular altar in a secret vault beneath the Temple.

Heckethorn's account of Nerval's version of the Hiramic legend would however receive a particular place in the writings of Rudolf Steiner (1861-1925), founder of anthroposophy. He owned a copy of Heckethorn's book and used it actively for the preparation of a lecture cycle in Berlin between 23 May 1904 and 2 January 1906, collected under the title »Die Tempellegende und die Goldene Legende als symbolischer Ausdruck vergangener und zukünftiger Entwicklungsgeheimnisse des Menschen« (»The Temple Legend and the Golden Legend as symbolic expression of past and future secrets of development of the human being«).²⁷ Steiner developed his view upon freemasonry, directly incorporating Heckethorn's summary of Nerval and possibly using him as original source. Among the twenty lectures, a number directly engage with Nerval/Heckethorn, such as »The Contrast between Cain and Abel« and »The Essence and Task of Freemasonry from the Point of View of Spiritual Science« I-III, »Concerning the Lost Temple and How it is to be Restored« I-IV, »Freemasonry and Human Evolution I and II« and »The Royal Art in a New Form«.

— For Steiner, »a great number of occult secrets lie hidden in the story of Cain and Abel«, which are placed in an antithetical arch-enmity against each other.²⁸ Without going into Steiner's complex theories of human spiritual and sexual evolution, it suffices to note what he might have been able to read into Nerval's version of the Hiramic legend.

- (1)—Cain is born out of the union between an Elohim (a sort of primordial spirit) and Eve and unites the following qualities: active matter (fire), the masculine spirit, free humanity; as a tiller of the ground, he engages in craftsmanship and art and shows enthusiasm – »creating things for himself« what is »achieved out of his own intelligence«.²⁹ He is represented by Temple wisdom, the Temple Legend / Freemasonry (Manicheanism) – Adoniram is one of his successors (the Sons of Fire).
- (2)—Abel is born out of the union between Adam (created by another Elohim, Yahve/Adonai) and Eve and unites: passive spirit (earth), the female principle; as a shepherd he is engaged in priesthood, detached piety and wisdom – accepting revelation, »life as the Creator has presented it« and »receiving from the spirit«.³⁰ After the fratricide, Seth replaces Abel as the second son of Adam and Eve. Abel is represented by Bible wisdom, the Bible Legend / Priesthood (as for instance represented by Jesuitism) – Solomon is one of his successors.
- (3)—Balkis represents the true soul of humanity and is

placed in an existential tension between detached piety (Solomon) and masterful wisdom (Adoniram). Her choice is to unite with Adoniram and thus to carry on the Cain-current, »the wisdom of the future was hidden under his sign of the Tau«.³¹

Furthermore, picking up the motif of the golden triangle from Heckethorn, Steiner develops a complex interpretation of the word (and the temple) that was lost with Adoniram's death, how it is to be restored and what its future meaning entails. In Steiner's understanding, the Temple Legend is one of the master narratives of humanity. It touches upon the Promethean motif, the belief that the human being with his ingenuity is able to master the elements and fly towards the sun, reaching for the divine in a search and desire for freedom. But more importantly, this master narrative treats two opposed currents in occult world history, the spiritual development of humanity in conflict with each other: the 'Abelite' and the 'Cainite' impulse, the female and the male principle and the pressing need to reconcile them as a foundation for the future, »reaching towards the awareness of the higher humanity beyond sexuality«.³² Steiner speaks about a »concept of uniting both male and female spiritual forces«.³³ During the two years of the lecture cycle, Steiner's treatment of freemasonry clearly develops. Initially he rejects the emptiness of its outer forms. The order in its current state, he writes at a number of occasions, has lost its relevance, its members are completely ignorant about its true meaning. However, much stronger appears that Steiner identifies a fundamental need to rescue the spiritual message of freemasonry, »architecture in relation to the universe«, identifying the three great lights of the order, Wisdom, Strength and Beauty as the »three pillars of civilization«.³⁴ A new form of royal art will be reborn in theo/-anthroposophy, the regeneration of freemasonry is needed »in order to balance a chaotic development that can be casted in the moral form of freemasonry.«³⁵ At the time Steiner presented his lectures he still was a member of the Theosophical Society, but it is not impossible that his treatment of western esoteric currents supported his looming break from Theosophy that finally manifested in 1912. Annie Besant (1847–1933) who at the time was president of the society was also deeply involved in freemasonry and after her initiation in 1902, she started co-masonry for women across Britain and the empire. Steiner had visited Besant in London and they went on a joint lecture trip through Germany in 1904 and might very well have discussed freemasonry and its potential for the theosophical movement.³⁶

As it emerges, Nerval's version of the Hiram legend migrated straight into Steiner's philosophy. The question is if he intended to do more about it than just use it as an expression of the meaning of freemasonry for the future of theosophy. Just

as the Hiramic legend in 1730 not was written like a script, but as a narrative open for performance, it would be possible to use Nerval's »Histoire de la reine du matin« as the raw material of ritual performance. In freemasonry, at the latest in 1745 we find a full adaptation of the Hiramic legend to a ritual. And Nerval's account certainly has a performative potential, not at least proven by Gounod's opera. In 2009, the British writer Peter Oswald turned The Temple Legend into a play with the title »The Temple«. ³⁷ The manuscript has roughly 17 000 words and is a congenial adaptation of Nerval's/Heckethorn's/Steiner's narrative for the stage with some contemporary references. ³⁸ The plot is only altered in so far as Adoniram initiates Balkis as master craftswomen in order to complete the work on the Brazen Sea. In Oswald's play, it is this act which sparks anger from the side of the three fellows eventually killing Adoniram. When his dead body is discovered, the protagonists declare: »The word has died. It will go down with him / Into the mouthless ground from which it came.« ³⁹ But Balkis realizes that the word has been transferred to her through her initiation and that she now can work on the liberation of humankind. Moreover, the Temple itself was a manifestation of the union of the two currents of Cain and Abel. Adoniram tells Balkis: »Listen – I want to tell you about this temple. There is a split in humans, I've discovered – those who have visions, like Solomon, they need us and we need them, us working men – but – we can't get on with them – and they can't get on with us – so everything falls to pieces!« and »even when [the temple is] crumbled to dust it will still be there, the fact that it happened, that he and I worked together well for a little time – like something liquid and solid at the same time – that is an example, so the split will heal in the end [...]«. ⁴⁰ Here, Adoniram refers to the Brazen Sea uniting liquid and solid into one piece. Remembering Adoniram's legacy, the following dialogue unfolds at the end of the play: »BALKIS: This was the diamond – Hiram and Solomon! Together you created the temple! Then you were smashed apart! But you will come together again! / SOLOMON: Not in this world. / BALKIS: Not in this life, you mean, but in another life, you will be one!« ⁴¹

— CONCLUSION —

As the adaptation of Nerval's account forcefully demonstrates, the introduction of the female figure of Balkis into the Hiramic legend transforms its performative potential and translates esoteric imagination effectively into literature. This happens mainly through a diversification and dramatization of the narrative plot and enrichment of motifs. By introducing Balkis, the traditional masonic account of harmony between Solomon and Hiram is disrupted. Instead we witness a triangle drama unfold which not only is about physical attraction, but which at the same time constantly unfolds on a spiritual level. One

of the major esoteric components of the Hiram legend in freemasonry is its ritual treatment of the topic of secrecy, to seek for what was lost through the death of the Master Mason. In conventional accounts, the architect of the Temple is buried in its Sanctum Sanctorum. The continuations of the Hiram legend develop the topic of his rediscovery together with the recovery of the pristine password that promises a restoration of the (destroyed) Temple in the utopian future. But Nerval's account does not follow this unidirectional narrative structure of 'past loss and destruction – contemporary recovery of the key to a prisca theologia – its future redemption/restoration' of a Golden Age, which in one sense is a typical feature of hermetic imagination. The account is far more complex. Nerval places the topic of loss and recovery within an eternal and existential Manichaeic dualism between two cosmic forces – Adonai and Elohim – in which moreover the unification of male and female principle (a 'chymical wedding'?) plays a pivotal role. The Abrahamic God is stripped of his legitimacy and hegemony and instead appears only as one of the players on the spiritual and unalterable chess board. Whether, as Hivert-Messeca has argued, thereby a more tolerant meta-religion was shaped can be questioned. Balkis appears as the ultimate unification of the two dualist cosmic currents: of Solomon's 'cold' rationalism and of Hiram's 'passionate' creativity, of passive mind and fertile matter. Thereby she represents to a certain extent an a-dogmatic syncretism in which different religious currents could conjoin. Nevertheless, Balkis impersonates at the same time a conscious spiritual choice rather than tolerant plurality.

If this was a response to the challenge of modernization and industrialization is difficult to determine. For sure, organized religion, in particular the Catholic Church, was under attack from many sides in France (and Europe) during the period. By incorporating what we today would call 'orientalist' readings of heterodox motifs circulating in the Middle East, Nerval certainly provided a broader basis to the traditional interpretation of a mythology that tens of thousands members of masonic lodges in France had encountered since the early eighteenth-century. Through dramatically pitching Solomon against Hiram, it would be possible to make the case that they are dialectically opposed to each other as thesis and antithesis and that Balkis represents their synthesis. Thus, Nerval's legend could be located within the proto-socialist imagination of the period which sought to bring about the liberation of the industrious and ingenious worker (Hiram) against the exploitation by the oppressive ideological super-structure (Solomon) in an utopian future (represented by Balkis).

We most likely never will be able to establish why Heckethorn included Nerval's version of the Hiram legend into his large work on secret societies and traditions across the globe. But it

provided this far more esoteric reading of masonic mythology with a platform from which it then could be disseminated during a pivotal period of the formation of theosophy and anthroposophy. Thus, it provided material for Steiner's adaptation of Nerval's motifs in the *Temple Legend*. Although she is present rudimentary in some masonic traditions and moreover has a strong Renaissance legacy, Balkis and the triangle drama she causes brings the conflict between Cain and Abel and its occult dimensions drastically to life. Nerval's reinterpretation of the Hiram legend, transported via Heckethorn to Steiner, developed a substantial appeal in his attempts to outline the future potential of theosophy, to accomplish the spiritual transformation of mankind. It is also within anthroposophy, Nerval's transformation of masonic mythology has remained productive, well into the twenty-first century. ■

■ — ENDNOTES —

- 1 Andreas Önnorfors, *Freemasonry: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017)
- 2 Önnorfors, *Freemasonry*, 93.
- 3 Önnorfors, *Freemasonry*, 93.
- 4 Önnorfors, *Freemasonry*, 68.
- 5 For instance »Solomo's Temple. An Oratorio«, included in *Ahiman Rezon* (London: Black, 1764), 217–224.
- 6 Yvert Hivert-Messeca, *L'Europe sous l'Acacia* (Paris: Dervy, 2014), 405.
- 7 Hivert-Messeca, *L'Europe*, 410.
- 8 Hivert-Messeca, *L'Europe*, 412.
- 9 Gérard de Nerval, *Voyage en Orient*, Vol. 2 (Paris: Charpentier, 1851). All translations from French to English by the author of this chapter. On Nerval and freemasonry, see Nerval, Gerard, de, *Dictionnaire de la Franc-maçonnerie* (Paris: PUF, 2006), 847–848 and Hivert-Messeca, *L'Europe*, 408–412.
- 10 Gérald Schaeffer, *Le voyage en orient de Nerval. Étude des structures* (Neuchatel: Baconnière, 1967).
- 11 Nerval, *Voyage*, 231–232.
- 12 Nerval, *Voyage*, 234–237.
- 13 Nerval, *Voyage*, 249.
- 14 Nerval, *Voyage*, 253.
- 15 Nerval, *Voyage*, 261.
- 16 Nerval, *Voyage*, 263–265.
- 17 Nerval, *Voyage*, 269.
- 18 Nerval, *Voyage*, 287.
- 19 Nerval, *Voyage*, 288.
- 20 Nerval, *Voyage*, 289.
- 21 Nerval, *Voyage*, 295.
- 22 Nerval, *Voyage*, 301.
- 23 Nerval, *Voyage*, 305.

24 »Un opera maçonnique français meconnu : 'La Reine de Saba' de Charles Gounod«, accessed March 9, 2018, <https://www.charles-gounod.com/vi/oeuvres/operas/mystsaba.htm>.

See also William Fregosi, »La Reine de Saba«, recording review *The Opera Quarterly* 19, no. 3 (January 2003): 580–583.

25 Charles William Heckethorn, *The Secret Societies of All Ages and Countries* (London: Bentley, 1875), 239.

26 There is no hint in Gounod's opera score of such a scene, but it might of course well have been staged and potentially viewed by Heckethorn either in Paris or London. Heckethorn, *The Secret Societies*, 246.

27 Rudolf Steiner, *The Temple Legend and the Golden Legend* (Trowbridge: Rudolf Steiner Press, 1997), 304–305.

28 Steiner, *The Temple Legend*, 20. He recounts Nerval on a number of occasions throughout the lectures, such as on p. 48–51 and 55 (in connection with the Rosicrucians), p. 69–72, p. 130–132 and 135, p. 149–151, p. 216–220, p. 232–236, p. 268–270. Heckethorn is quoted in full in the notes on p. 316–321.

29 Steiner, *The Temple Legend*, 22–23.

30 Steiner, *The Temple Legend*, 22–23.

31 Steiner, *The Temple Legend*, 219.

32 Steiner, *The Temple Legend*, 241.

33 Steiner, *The Temple Legend*, 288.

34 Steiner, *The Temple Legend*, 78.

35 Steiner, *The Temple Legend*, 275.

36 Steiner, *The Temple Legend*, 295. Steiner also notes that Helena Petrovna Blavatsky was member of a lodge of adoption for women, p. 224 and note 7 on p. 379.

37 The play was first performed in May 2009 at the Glasshouse theater at Ruskin Mills Trust in Stourbridge and toured around England. I was at the time invited to share my ideas concerning the links of the Temple Legend to the mythology of freemasonry in a lecture and in November 2008 organized a workshop titled »The Temple Legend: Links between Freemasonry, Theosophy and Anthroposophy« at the University of Sheffield. »Adventures of a verse playwright in the 20 and 21st centuries«, accessed March 9, 2018, <https://peteroswald.net/about/> and »Students and playwright team up for The Temple«, accessed March 9, 2018, http://www.stourbridgenews.co.uk/news/4342900.Students_and_playwright_team_up_for_The_Temple/.

38 The un-paginated manuscript (a draft titled »Temple2012«) was provided in personal communication by Peter Oswald, Email to author, May 3, 2017.

39 Oswald, »The Temple«, 62.

40 Oswald, »The Temple«, 58.

41 Oswald, »The Temple«, 63.