Orphic Circle Social Network Diagram (Abridged)
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LEGEND

John Varley the Elder (1778-1842) — Key Gateway Node

Richard Morrison (Zadkiel) — Member Node

Frederick Hockley (1808-1880)

FH worked for JD

John Denley

Had Varley's library after his death?

EBL patronized Denley; Denley is bookseller D___ in *Zanoni*

Varley did not have to go very far to gain his most important experiences of spiritualism. In the late 1850s he claimed to have developed mesmeric powers which he used to entrance his wife Ada who, in this state, displayed the apparent ability to perceive distant objects and scenes (clairvoyance) and to communicate with others by thought alone. Ada was one of many Victorian mesmeric subjects whose extraordinary mental skills helped her cultivate apparent powers of spiritual mediumship in which capacity she became the channel through which invisible intelligent agencies manifested themselves to the living, typically via a 'telegraphic' code of raps on furniture. Séances with Ada convinced Cromwell Varley that the invisible agents were genuine spirits of the dead, and sittings with the notable Scottish-American medium D. D. Home persuaded him that Home had the ability to move objects at a distance by some unknown force. Convinced that he was the victim of neither self-delusion nor trickery, Varley proclaimed in 1869 that he was a spiritualist because he had distinctly seen 'spirits', because 'spirits' had relayed information known only to him and deceased persons allegedly communicating from beyond the grave, and because 'spirits' had correctly predicted the time and nature of future events unanticipated by all present in séances. (Richard Noakes, Cromwell Varley FRS, Electrical Discharge and Victorian Spiritualism)

Samuel Varley

uncle/nephew & master/apprentice

Cornelius Varley

father/son

Cromwell Varley

brothers

worked together on Stanhope's estate

Richard Varley

father/son

John Varley the Elder (1778-1842)

Got a skrying mirror for Burton before Burton left for Mecca and Medina (Davies, The Great Secret, p. 104)

Charles Stanhope

father/son

Varley tutored Stanhope ?

FH knew Lord Stanhope

It was at this time (1838) a striking and singular figure might be seen in her drawing-room. This was none other than John Varley one of the founders of the Society of Painters in Water-colours, an artist, a mystic, an astrologer. A man of great stature, his face was rugged and earnest, his eyes had the sadness of the seers. Lady Blessington was sufficiently broad-minded to feel interested in all theories, philosophies, and sciences, and rather than deny the possibility of facts that were outside her own experience, or repudiate statements that seemed incredible and erroneous, she preferred to hear them discussed and explained : deferring her judgment until knowledge had been obtained....None listened to him more attentively than Bulwer, to whose mind all things mystic presented a vivid fascination, and it was from Varley, the novelist took lessons in astrology, as did at a later date young Fred (sic) Burton whose strange career and Oriental travels were foreshadowed by the artist. (J. Fitzgerald Molloy, The Most Gorgeous Lady Blessington, pp.180-184)

Francis Barrett

Thomas Oxley

Robert Cross Smith

Not only languages but philosophy and mysticism attracted [Burton] in the turmoil of this year (1840? 1841?) at Oxford....In London during his winter vacation he met a man named John Varley, a practitioner of occult sciences. Varley was an artist by profession, but, "miserably poor," had taken up "practical astrology" and made it a second profession....Varley seems to have been the instigator of Burton's involvement in the Kabalah.... (Rice, Burton, p. 29-30)

Burton was not the only famous man who was indebted to Varley for aid and guidance in occult studies. Amongst others who went to him for instruction in the quasi-science of astrology and allied subjects was Bulwer-Lytton, whose predilections for studies of this kind is manifest in his novels Zanoni and A Strange Story. He and Varley worked on astrology together, and in the occult machinery of the works named Bulwer is said to have been much indebted to suggestions given to him by the artist. Story, Life of Varley (p. 254).

Lady Blessington

in Gore House circle

in Gore House circle

Friends. First met in 1840.

I had been reading the Rev. Chauncy Hare Townshend's work, "Facts in Mesmerism," and especially his strange experiences with the celebrated somnambulist, Alexis Didier, in Paris. The book appeared to me very fairly written, and the value of Mr. Townshend's testimony was enhanced to me by the fact that Charles Dickens wrote a laudatory introduction to the collection of his "Religious Opinions," acting as literary executor to his friend.

Maurice, Occult Secret, p. 67

Chauncey Hare Townshend

Charles Dickens

THE MERCURII

Both testified before Dialectical Society committee

friends and colleagues

Master of the Chapel Royal (1846-86); Townshend's executor

Linked in Morrison libel action (alternative hypothesis for EHB identification)

Philip Henry Stanhope

Richard Morrison (Zadkiel)

Richard Burton

Mr. Varley drew out my horoscope and prognosticated that I was to become a great astrologer; but the prophecy came to nothing, for although I had read Cornelius Agrippa and others of the same school at Oxford, I found Zadkiel quite sufficient for me." (RFB, quoted in Isobel Burton bio)

Edward Bulwer Lytton

Spent time together around Ramsgate in the 1810s. Experimented together in mesmerism in the 1820s. Broke, and then re-established friendship in 1840 (Life, Letters and Literary Remains of EBL, pp. 173-4) Escott, Life of Lord Lytton, p. 46.

Thomas Helmore

BECOMES

Named as member by EHB

Named as member by EHB

Member 1840-42

EL Blanchard

In occult circle together (Frederick Spencer, Days Before Yesterday)

in Chapel Royal together

Named as member by EHB

Sir Charles Wyke

Corresponded with

knew one another (Bigelow, "Bunsen's Recollections of His Friends" in Century Magazine, Oct. 1899 p. 850)

Thomas Welsh

Never understood by those around me, it was only in after years and when I became *called* and associated with a secret society of Occultists and attended their sessions in London as one of their clairvoyant and magnetic subjects, that I myself began to comprehend why a young girl fairly educated, and blessed with many advantages, should be branded with such peculiarities of disposition as must inevitably shut her of from all companionship with children of her own age and standing.

The society of Occultists to whom I can now only allude, and who are named in " Ghost-Land " as the " Orphic Circle," obtained knowledge (by means I am not at liberty to mention) of those persons whose associations they desired.

None of the members were known as such outside their circles, the existence of the society was undreamed of, and those whom they *chose* to affiliate with *they knew of and called*. I having been thus favoured obtained a clue to my own exceptional early experiences, which the subsequent developments of Spiritualism stamped as natural Seership.

EHB, Autobiography

THE "ORPHIC CIRCLE"

ran in same literary and dramatic circles

"We have had a most agreeable dinner-party at Lord Stanhope's..." (Letters of Baroness Bunsen, 3 March 1842, p. 46)

Emma articled to Welsh 1835-40(?) teaches Welsh's pupils placed by Welsh in venues

Milnes is Burton's patron

was a clairvoyante subject for

Emma Hardinge Britten

Henry George de Bunsen

friends

Richard Monckton Milnes

father/son

intimates

brothers

family spiritualist circle

Christian Karl Josias von Bunsen

possibly the original of Louis de B___ according to Mathiesen

father/son

Ernest (de) Bunsen

Other Bunsen children remained in Germany