

The Tarot of Philip Marlowe: Raymond Chandler's *The Long Goodbye* as an Esoteric Roman À Clef

Jon Woodson

Abstract

Raymond Chandler was one of many authors in an extensive esoteric literary network. His detective novels take up the esoteric realism of the emblematic novel that was originated by Carl Van Vechten. This article examines *The Long Goodbye* (first published in 1953) to determine how and why these complex double-voiced texts were authored. *The Long Goodbye* is a roman à clef and a covertly satirical exposé of the Fourth Way esoteric school in America. In order to read at the hidden level of the novel, it is required that the reader begin with the more accessible phonetic clues and proceed through them to the more demanding levels of the hidden text. The article breaks down the various levels of coded information in Chandler's novel and reveals the identities of the actual people that he brought into his narrative. The article relates various characters to Tarot cards. Philip Marlowe is a reflection of Chandler's interest in Gurdjieff's scale of humanity.

Keywords

G. I. Gurdjieff, Raymond Chandler, Tarot, *The Long Goodbye*, esoteric literature

Introduction

Raymond Chandler's hard-boiled detective novels are far more complex than their entertaining narratives. Chandler was a follower of the esotericist A. R. Orage, a teacher of the Gurdjieff Work or the Fourth Way. Orage, an important instigator of modernist literature, moved to the United States in 1925 and organized a vast literary network that included writers, publishers, editors, and reviewers. Orage was assisted by patron and best-selling novelist Carl Van Vechten.¹ Raymond Chandler, one of many of the authors in this extensive esoteric literary network, wrote detective novels in the form of the emblematic novel that was originated by Carl Van Vechten. Van Vechten derived his new form of the novel from the combined stylistic experiments of Ronald Firbank, Joris-Karl Huysmans, and George Moore. Van Vechten's novels also employed two important esoteric components, the alchemical phonetic code—the cabala—and the Rider-Waite Tarot deck. This new type of modern esoteric novel is described in full in a my monograph analysing a critical study of novels by Van Vechten and Nella Larsen, *The Emblematic Novel: Esoteric Realism in the*

Jon Woodson is a Howard University emeritus professor of English. He published *The Emblematic Novel: Esoteric Realism in the Harlem Renaissance and the Lost Generation* in 2023. Email: transuranium@fastmail.com.

¹ Jon Woodson, *To Make a New Race: Gurdjieff, Toomer, and the Harlem Renaissance* (Jackson: University of Mississippi Press, 1999).

Harlem Renaissance and the Lost Generation.² In this article attention will be given to the examination of one of Raymond Chandler's novels, *The Long Goodbye*.³ This article applies the method of close reading used in *The Emblematic Novel* to compare Chandler's practice to that of Van Vechten's *The Blind Bow-Boy* (first published in 1923). Many difficult questions are raised by these works of literature, and in particular it is hoped that such a comparison may shed some light on how and why these complex double-voiced texts were authored.

Though Chandler's investment in esotericism seems altogether improbable, through close examination it is evident that the Chandler novels bear many characteristics of the esoteric realist novel. Moreover, Chandler's seven novels are testimony of Chandler's progressive psychological self-development through his participation in Orage's self-development school. Chandler absorbed and expressed the Oragean ideology at the beginning of his run of seven novels, and over the course of the composition of his Philip Marlowe novels Chandler concerned himself to an increasingly greater degree with the internal politics of the Fourth Way esoteric movement in the United States. Chandler's concern with esoteric politics culminated in *The Long Goodbye*, which is a roman à clef that takes the form of a covertly satirical exposé. It is partly because of Chandler's unique treatment of the internal politics of the American Fourth Way movement in *The Long Goodbye*, in which he reveals unique insights, that we will subject that novel to a close reading. And Chandler's investment in esoteric politics in turn will be studied as it relates to the composition of the novel.

The Oragean Ideology

We must begin the examination of *The Long Goodbye* by considering certain aspects of the Oragean ideology. In the first place, soon after Orage arrived in America to teach G. I. Gurdjieff's method of spiritual development (The Work), there was an ideological split in the movement on the part of Gurdjieff's American school that resulted in a rejection of the person of Gurdjieff while maintaining an embrace of the Fourth Way teachings. Given the nature of the rift, it is arguable that what Orage's followers came away with was not actually the Gurdjieff Work but only a portion of the teaching. However, the nature of Gurdjieff's teaching is a highly controversial subject, as Gurdjieff changed his method repeatedly. Gurdjieff scholar Sophia Wellbeloved states that:

Change is inherent in Gurdjieff's teaching because he both embraced and provoked change; in relation to the needs of his pupils and also in accordance with contemporary interests. This has made it difficult for the teaching to be passed on in one form only, and in fact the Work has fragmented into many streams.⁴

² Jon Woodsen, *The Emblematic Novel: Esoteric Realism in the Harlem Renaissance and the Lost Generation* (Providence, RI: Wild Pineapple Press, 2023).

³ Raymond Chandler, *The Long Goodbye* (London: Penguin, 1998 [1953]).

⁴ Sophia Wellbeloved, "Changes in Gurdjieff Teaching 'The Work'", Paper presented at CESNUR, London (2001).

Thus, the history of Gurdjieff's esoteric school is replete with fractures that produced offshoots. In the case of Orage's split with Gurdjieff, this mutinous process is traceable through the many texts written by Orage's followers in which Gurdjieff is subjected to many forms of parody, ridicule, and satire, while the texts express Gurdjieff's teachings, though often the doctrines are disguised through the use of code or literary indirection. While Orage's followers considered themselves to be pursuing Gurdjieff's teachings, in truth the Oragean school had formulated a doctrine that radically departed from the line of work of Gurdjieff's Institute for the Harmonious Development of Man. While the Orageans accepted Gurdjieff's central proposition that the planet Earth was out of alignment with planetary energies so that mankind was subject to some imminent form of doom, the Orageans arrived at a plan to counter this apocalypse that was not a part of the Gurdjieffian scheme. According to Gurdjieff humanity was in an unfavorable position in the cosmos:

The evolution of humanity beyond a certain point, or, to speak correctly, above a certain percentage, would be fatal for the *moon*. The moon at present *feeds* on organic life, on humanity ... If all men were to become too intelligent they would not want to be eaten by the moon ... Nature does not need this evolution and does not want it." Our only chance for success, according to Gurdjieff, is due to the fact that the cosmic feeding cycle is so enormous that a few individuals can slip by, just as "the presence or absence of one cell will change nothing in the life of the body"⁵

Indeed, it is likely that Gurdjieff merely foisted the idea of planetary destruction to focus the energy of his students on their own self-development. In support of this idea that for Gurdjieff world destruction was merely a means of inspiration, we can note that Ouspensky quotes Gurdjieff as saying: "You must understand...that ordinary efforts do not count. Only superefforts count. And so it is always and in everything. Those who do not wish to make superefforts had better give up everything and take care of their health."⁶ In contrast to the need for individual efforts, the Oragean salvation of the planet would come about through an historical drama in which a secular messiah would concentrate the energies required. That this was the Orageans's plan is not a matter of speculation, for the previous historical dramas are described in C. Daly King's book, *The Oragean Version*:

About us, in the creeds, the sects and the distortions of modern Christianity lay the fragments, of another work of Objective Art, the life of Christ, so it has been said. According to that account the story of the Christ, a messenger of God upon this planet, was and is Objective Drama, played not on a stage but in life by the Essene initiate, Jesus. This play had its origin far earlier, in ancient Egypt, as the drama of the life, death and resurrection of Ausar (Osiris), the God-in-Man; its function was to present ultimate human truths through the medium of consciously acted roles. For centuries, we are told, the later Essene brotherhood, a School itself deriving from Egyptian origins, had held the aim of

⁵ P.D. Ouspensky, *In Search of the Miraculous: Fragments of an Unknown Teaching* (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1949), pp. 57-58.

⁶ Ouspensky, *In Search of the Miraculous*, p. 239.

presenting this drama in life rather than as a prescribed mystery play and for generations had trained its postulants to that end. Eventually the cast of thirteen was complete with Jesus, who had been sent to Egypt for temple training there, cast as the leading actor and Judas, who must play the next most difficult role, that of the betrayer, fully prepared for his part. With the necessary modifications demanded by the local scene and times, the action began.

It is difficult for us to appreciate the magnitude of such an undertaking. The immediate audience is also without knowing it, the unconscious part of the cast and the conscious actors must not only fulfill the requirements of their own roles, thereby objectively demonstrating the truths they have self-selected themselves to manifest, but in addition they must consciously and deliberately so affect their unconscious counterparts (the priests and money-changers at the temple, Pontius Pilate, the Jewish mob, the Roman soldiers, and all the rest) that the latter are forced to enact their own roles, too. Even with all possible preparations made beforehand, it may well be imagined what hitches in the performance unforeseen and unpredictable circumstances must threaten and what consummate ability must be required in order to meet these difficulties and keep the drama upon its course. No comparable type of acting, the playing so successfully of conscious roles upon the objective stage of real life, has ever been reported. This was Objective Art.⁷

The Oragean Version is a highly technical exegesis of Gurdjieff's system of self-development: it is very similar to Ouspensky's *In Search of the Miraculous*, which formerly served as both a manual and a popularization of the Gurdjieff Work. While *In Search of the Miraculous* assisted greatly in the dissemination of the Gurdjieff Work, King's *The Oragean Version* had no reach beyond the Oragean membership, and though it has been published it remains an obscure tract. For that matter, the entire Oragean movement has been unrecognized due to scholarly disinterest in the occult in America.

Raymond Chandler and the Esoteric

To return to Chandler, we must note where his interests lie within the scope of the developments described above. Chandler in his first novel, *The Big Sleep* (1939), brings us directly into the presence of a stand-in for Gurdjieff. In conformation with the negative treatment of Gurdjieff, Chandler presents the esotericist as a decrepit old man: General Sternwood is severely ill and dying. His lower body was crushed in a horse racing accident many years before and he now spends his time either in bed or in his scorching orchid greenhouse, waited on by his butler, Mr. Norris. Sternwood's military rank alludes to Gurdjieff's nickname (Mr.G /General) as well as his esoteric leadership, and gur/ster marks some phonetic kinship. Norris is a distant, ironic rendering of Orage's name, and it is paralleled and sharpened by the orchid-filled setting. Gurdjieff was given to the overuse of alcohol, but in Chandler's sneering parody the general is too far gone to drink,

⁷ C. Daly King, *The Oragean Version* (London: Book Studio, 2016), pp, 163-164.

and so must absorb his alcohol vicariously through observing Marlowe. Sternwood's incapacitating accident alludes to Gurdjieff's nearly-fatal automobile accident that resulted in the serious injuries that shifted him from teaching sacred dances to writing esoteric books.

Chandler's sixth novel, *The Long Goodbye*, contains a series of textual clues that are graduated from the simple to the more difficult. In order to read the hidden level of the novel, it is required that the reader begin with the more accessible phonetic clues and proceed through them to the more demanding levels of the hidden text. The first rank of clues consists of the names of the characters. There are forty-three (43) names in the novel. The names manifest to different degrees of importance in the narrative, so that some are the names of major characters and some are merely names referred to in passing by the characters who play an active role in the narrative. The names that are entry-level clues are those that take the form of clichés when they are decoded. The use of names that decode as clichés may be thought of as an error-correction device that Chandler used to alert the reader to the presence of the phonetic code and to confirm that the reader was correctly interpreting what was being said.

What Chandler did with the names of his characters was a standard technique in the emblematic fictions written by Orage's followers. This feature has seldom been remarked upon by reviewers and critics. One instance of this usage was noticed by Arthur Vidro who commented about its presence in the novels by C. Daly King. However, having noticed the hidden meanings in the King's names, Vidro's curiosity came to an end. Vidro comments that:

In his novels, Daly King freely drew upon his wealth of knowledge in psychology, and probably had a ton of fun naming his characters. In *Obelists at Sea*, he gives us four psychologists, each with his own specialty in the field: Dr. Frank B. Hayvier (conditioning), Dr. Malcolm Plechs (inferiorities), Professor Knott Coe Mittle (middle grounding), and Dr. Love Rees Pons (dominance). Read those names aloud, slowly. *Obelists Fly High* (his most acclaimed and most reprinted novel) gives us Dr. Cutter, a surgeon; Cutter's seductive niece, Fonda Mann; her unfeminine sister Isa Mann; a pilot named "Happy" Lannings; and a clergyman named Reverend Manly Bellowes. Other Daly King stories brought us film star Gloria Glammeris and a psychiatrist named Usall Backenforth (sounds like a Marx Brothers movie character who should be played by Groucho). *Obelists en Route* gives us a very efficient secretary called Entwerk. His full name is Xavier Lewis Entwerk. Which can be reduced to X.L. Entwerk. (Excellent work, get it?).⁸

Daly King was known to have been a close associate of Orage; as we see below, King succeeded Orage in heading Orage's esoteric group once Orage had returned to England. During Orage's tenure in New York, King led groups in the Gurdjieff Work, one of them being the group attended by Harlem Renaissance writers. Once Orage abandoned New York in 1931, the official version of the group's leadership is that Orage's group dispersed. In reality, Orage's departure marked the

⁸ Arthur Vidro, "They Wrote Because EQMM Asked: C. Daly King", *Something is Going to Happen*, 27 April (2023). At: <https://somethingisgoingtohappen.net/2023/04/27/they-wrote-because-eqmm-asked-c-daly-king-by-arthur-vidro/>.

commencement of a new and dynamic esoteric movement. King produced a written account of Orage's teaching titled *The Oragen Version* and went on to lead groups and to integrate the methods of Gurdjieff's esotericism into mainstream psychology through academic research and publishing. Like Chandler's seven Philip Marlowe novels, King's seven detective novels were written in the alchemical cabala. King's novels also contain esoteric doctrines, though King did not freight his writings with the elaborations of Tarot and alchemy in the emblematic manner of Van Vechten and, to a lesser degree, Chandler. King has been brought into the discussion for comparison to Chandler. We can note the similarities between the handling of the novels by King and by Chandler. Remember, these coded names are entry-level devices, meant to be discoverable. It is clear that the names used in the novels by King and Chandler are constructed along the same rules—some being familiar phrases in disguise ("excellent work") while others render the chief features of the characters ("Fonda Mann").

The entry-level names in *The Long Goodbye* are Sergeant Green, Bernie Ohls, Captain Hernandez, Colonel Carne, Roger Wade, Sewell Endicott, and Spranklin. When the cryptograms have been solved, the names say green giant, slow burn, herding cats, kernel corn, go away, end well, and rank. The predictability of the cliches helps to solve the puzzles. For instance, in the case of Spranklin (rank) we are told, "His fingernails were dirty and he smelled."⁹ Each name divulges something of the nature of the character associated with it as a further guide to the correct solving of the code. Another set of names is less definitive than the seven presented above: Lonnie Morgan and Chick Agostino are not easily solved. Lonnie Morgan is Lone Ranger; it is an incomplete rendering and depends on the familiarity of the Lone Ranger. Chick Agostino is a difficult rendering of stinking hog, and the correspondence of man and odor is somewhat indirect.

With these developments in mind, when we come to the names of the major characters, we are prepared to understand their hidden meanings. The name Philip Marlowe is a cryptogram that says low morals. Since Marlowe evidences a high moral standard, this reading of his name is markedly out of step with the depiction of his character. However, Marlowe is constantly underestimated by those with whom he comes in contact, so his name may have been generated by the first impression that he gives within the narrative and not by his true worth. This misperception is in keeping with the Fourth Way's central teaching that people are asleep: it is because Marlowe's associates are asleep that they misread his character. Marlowe's character is interrogated at many points in the novel but never more explicitly than by Mendy Menendez. When Menendez enters Marlowe's office, there is an odd bit of business:

He looked me over unhurriedly. "Tarzan on a big red scooter," he said.

"What?"

"You. Marlowe. Tarzan on a big red scooter. They rough you up much?"

This overture is followed by Menendez repeatedly assassinating Marlowe's character. Menendez finishes with this final insult:

⁹ Chandler, *The Long Goodbye*, p. 46.

I didn't say anything. After a moment he grinned slowly. "Tarzan on a big red scooter," he drawled. "A tough guy. Lets me come in here and walk all over him. A guy that gets hired for nickels and dimes and gets pushed around by anybody. No dough, no family, no prospects, no nothing. See you around, cheapie."¹⁰



Figure 1. The Wheel of Fortune

The Importance of the Tarot

The solution to this puzzle is found in the Tarot. Based on the name Mendy Menendez and the last syllable in judgement, and combined with Mendy's signal activity in the episode, Menendez may be identified as the Tarot's Judgement trump card. Strangely, there is little in the text that reflects the imagery shown on the Tarot card—an angel blowing a horn over a host of people standing in their open graves. Chandler has allowed the mysterious phrase, "Tarzan on a big red scooter," that Menendez directs toward Marlowe a number of times is both a pointer to the Tarot (Tar-zan / teroo) and an allusion to another trump card, The Wheel of Fortune, shown in Figure 1. The Wheel of Fortune is a highly figurative presentation, and by referring to Marlowe as 'Tarzan', Menendez is comparing Marlowe to the red devil or Anubis figure that appears beneath the giant wheel ("scooter") covered in esoteric symbols and the word ROTA / TARO. In contrast to Menendez's judgment, there is what Marlowe says about himself. Just as Menendez's depiction is couched in the symbolism of the Tarot, Marlowe's revelation is also obscured by relating his inner meaning to the Tarot:

Much obliged, Captain. Thanks for the time. You forgot to have me open my mouth. I have some nice inlays and one very high-class porcelain jacket crown. Eighty-seven dollars worth of porcelain jacket crown. You forgot to look inside my nose too, Captain. A lot of

¹⁰ Chandler, *The Long Goodbye*, p. 63.

scar tissue in there for you. Septum operation and was that guy a butcher! Two hours of it in those days. I hear they do it in twenty minutes now. I got it playing football, Captain, a slight miscalculation in an attempt to block a punt. I blocked the guy's foot instead--after he kicked the ball. Fifteen yards penalty, and that's about how much stiff bloody tape they pulled out of my nose an inch at a time the day after the operation. I'm not bragging, Captain. I'm just telling you. It's the little things that count.¹¹ (42)

There are 78 Tarot cards in the pack. Marlowe gives the value of his false tooth as eighty-seven (87) dollars. This reversal constitutes a double intentional error in that not only is the number eighty-seven (87) a mistake but it describes a false tooth. The incompetent football play that Marlowe describes is yet another mistake. The triple intentional errors point to the esoteric significance of the passage. When the passage is read through the cabala code, we learn that Marlowe's "porcelain jacket crown" casts Marlowe as the Four of Pentacles. The por in porcelain is the number four. The figure on the Four of Pentacles wears both a jacket and a crown.



Figure 2: The Four of Pentacles.

As a further clue to Marlowe's place in the Tarot, Menendez's insistent labeling of Marlowe as a "cheapie" who is "hired for nickels and dimes"¹² alludes to the suit of Pentacles, or coins, in the Tarot. Waite interprets this card as signifying "The surety of possessions, cleaving to that which one has, gift, legacy, inheritance."¹³ Marlowe's card belongs to the Minor Arcana, which is perhaps

¹¹ Chandler, *The Long Goodbye*, p. 42.

¹² Chandler, *The Long Goodbye*, p. 63.

¹³ A.E. Waite, *Pictorial Key to the Tarot* (Online: Sacred Texts, 1911). At: <https://sacred-texts.com/tarot/pkt/index.htm>.

another reason why Menendez insists on calling him Cheapie: the “four bits” shown on Marlowe’s Tarot card would only amount to one dollar. However, Waite’s reading of the card underlines Marlowe’s positive qualities. We are not done with Menendez, for based on his physical description, the fictional character can be identified as Jean Toomer.

A man was sitting by the window ruffling a magazine. He wore a bluish-gray suit with an almost invisible pale blue check. On his crossed feet were black moccasin-type ties, the kind with two eyelets that are almost as comfortable as strollers and don't wear your socks out every time you walk a block. His white handkerchief was folded square and the end of a pair of sunglasses showed behind it. He had thick dark wavy hair. He was tanned very dark. He looked up with bird-bright eyes and smiled under a hairline mustache. His tie was a dark maroon tied in a pointed bow over a sparkling white shirt.¹⁴

The above passage compares favorably to the photograph of Jean Toomer shown in Figure 3.



Figure 3: Jean Toomer (<https://www.georgiaencyclopedia.org/articles/arts-culture/jean-toomer-1894-1967>).

After taking a good deal of verbal abuse from Menendez and some eccentric physical humiliation, Marlowe strikes Menendez a violent blow. The passage quoted above is a difficult cryptogram using the phonetic cabala. It states that Jean Toomer’s Gurdjieff classes were a mockery (moccasin eyelets strollers handkerchief sunglasses). The use of the color blue in the description of Toomer’s clothing is a clue alluding to his poem, *The Blue Meridian* (blue/magazine/ruffling/window). Toomer taught the Gurdjieff Work for a brief period in Carmel, California, where Chandler might have encountered him. But after the split between Gurdjieff and Orage, Toomer was not a follower

¹⁴ Chandler, *The Long Goodbye*, p. 59.

of Orage. Given the punishing treatment of other teachers of the Fourth Way in *The Long Goodbye* (see below), Chandler's rough handling of Menendez/Toomer is a demonstration of his rejection of yet another false prophet.

The character that plays opposite Philip Marlowe in *The Long Goodbye* is Terrence William Lennox. He is most frequently designated as Terry Lennox. Because he has aliases, Terry Lennox sustains three other names over the course of the novel—Silvano Rodriguez, Mario de Cerva, and Paul Edward Marston (Paul Marston). Terry Lennox has unique physical characteristics: "Lennox is a hard man to hide, Marlowe. With most people you need a photo and a good clear photo. Not with a guy that has scars all over one side of his face. Not to mention white hair, and not over thirty-five years old. We got four witnesses, maybe more."¹⁵ The white hair and young age singles Terry Lennox out as Carl Van Vechten, as shown below in Figure 4:



Figure 4: Carl Van Vechten at a young age with white hair (Henry W. and Albert A. Berg Collection of English and American Literature, The New York Public Library. New York Public Library Digital Collections).

However, since Van Vechten had a flawless complexion, this attribute introduces an enigma: "The right side of my new friend's face was frozen and whitish and seamed with thin fine scars. The skin had a glossy look along the scars. A plastic job and a pretty drastic one."¹⁶ Chandler provided Terry Lennox with the scars in order to reinforce the identification of Lennox as Carl Van Vechten, since in the phonetic cabala the word scars equates to the name Carl.

Terry Lennox's alternative names create a complex portrait of Van Vechten. Chandler uses variations of ter (tar, tor, tir) to point to the Tarot. Thus the ter in Terry establishes the Tarot as applying somehow to Terry Lennox. Lennox is significantly more difficult to parse. By reference to the cabala code, the name may be read as eunuch. This identification is highly deceptive, as

¹⁵ Chandler, *The Long Goodbye*, p. 50.

¹⁶ Chandler, *The Long Goodbye*, p. 3.

eunuch does not apply directly to Van Vechten's sexuality; instead, eunuch is an allusion to the common playing card nickname for the suit of spades (swords), which in 15th century France was known as the *ogier* or eunuch (Roya). Terry Lennox is the Page of Swords. Waite explicates the Page of Swords as indicating "secret service, authority, overseeing, spying."¹⁷ In this way, Raymond Chandler identifies Carl Van Vechten as being a major figure in the hierarchy of Orage's esoteric school.

Under his Paul Marston alias, Terry Lennox was in the military and married illegally. The name Paul Marston is a coded rendering of all arts, a reference to Carl Van Vechten's multimedia interests that included music, dance, literature, theatre, film, and photography. Terry Lennox employed two names during the episode in which he faked his own death. The Silvano Rodriguez pseudonym is associated with the qualities of power and being a famous ruler. Mario de Cerva means manly stag. The name Mario de Cerva is Italian not Spanish, so if the name is understood to be a mistake, it indicates the use of the esoteric at this point.

Many of the other names given to characters in *The Long Goodbye* are merely instructional aids in pointing the reader to Chandler's use of the cabala phonetic code. This includes such names as Randy Starr (Tarot, the Star, and stranded), Sylvia Lennox (sly fox), Curt Westerheym (court yesterday), Captain Gregorious (gregarious), Candy (can do), Eileen Wade (leeway), Linda Loring (alluring), and Dr. Edward Loring (warden).

In a sense the most important name in the novel is Dr. V, the clue that sends Marlowe to investigate psychologists. The name Dr. V. has the added relevance of relating to the case that Marlowe has set out to investigate, thus definitively setting it off from the names that belong to the subtext of the novel. Marlowe first applies to the Carne Organization for some help from an investigative operative, George Peters. This material constitutes an important component of the esoteric subtext of Chandler's project, for The Carne Organization is Chandler's depiction of The Gurdjieff Foundation of New York. The Carne Organization is headed by Col. Gerald C. Carne (kernel corn). Even the operative employed by The Carne Organization, George Peters, disparages the organization and its head, so we have little doubt that Chandler thinks little of the worth of The Gurdjieff Foundation. In reality, the Foundation was headed by a man commonly known as Lord Pentland:

The president of the Gurdjieff Foundation of New York was Henry John Sinclair, 2nd Baron Pentland, Lord Pentland from its formation until his death in 1984. It was then led by Dr. William J. Welch until his death in 1999, after which it was led jointly by Paul Reynard, a painter and teacher of Gurdjieff Movements, and Frank R. Sinclair, author of *Without Benefit of Clergy* and *Of the Life Aligned*, until Reynard's death in 2005. Frank R. Sinclair continued as president until 2011 and is currently president-emeritus.¹⁸

Chandler's treatment of the search for Dr. V. is somewhat confusing, since it is a blend of satire and literality. Here is how Marlowe describes George Peters:

¹⁷ Waite, *The Pictorial Key*.

¹⁸ 'Gurdjieff Foundation', *Wikipedia*, 19 January (2025). At: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gurdjieff_Foundation.

He sat down in one of the hard gray chairs. I stared at him. He was a gawky longlegged man with a bony face and receding hair. His skin had the worn weathered look of a man who has been out of doors a great deal, in all kinds of weather. He had deep-set eyes and an upper lip almost as long as his nose. When he grinned the bottom half of his face disappeared into two enormous ditches that ran from his nostrils to the ends of his wide mouth.¹⁹

If we compare Marlowe's description of Peters to a photograph of Lord Pentland (Figure 5) it is evident that Chandler had Pentland in mind when he described Peters.

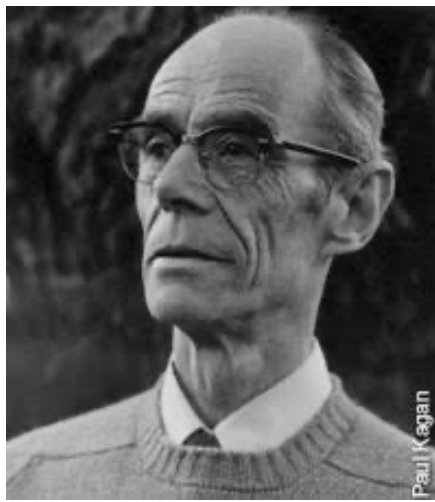


Figure 5. Lord Pentland (<https://gurdjiefflegacy.org/40articles/tribute.htm>).

Lord Pentland appears in *The Long Goodbye* as both Col. Carne and George Peters, though we never meet up with Carne. After consulting The Carne Organization's files, George Peters offers Marlowe the names of three doctors that operate facilities for drug abusers, Dr. Amos Varley, Dr. Lester Vukanich, and Dr. Verringer. Hoping to find Roger Wade at one of the retreats, Marlowe visits all three doctors.

The first on the list is Dr. Varley, but Varley is the third visit that Marlowe makes. Marlowe first surveys Dr. Vukanich:

"Then we have Dr. Lester Vukanich. Ear, Nose, and Throat, Stockwell Building, on Hollywood Boulevard. This one's a dilly. Office practice mostly, and seems to sort of specialize in chronic sinus infections. Rather a neat routine. You go in and complain of a sinus headache and he washes out your antrums for you. First of course he has to

¹⁹ Chandler, *The Long Goodbye*, p. 90.

anesthetize with Novocain. But if he likes your looks it don't have to be Novocain. Catch?"²⁰

Marlowe's assessment of Vukanich is negative: "He was a thin-faced man with an uninteresting pallor. He looked like a tubercular white rat."²¹ The doctor pushes drugs and indulges in an intoxicating injection during Marlowe's visit. Marlowe eliminates Vukanich as having hidden Wade and exits. The doctor's name is intricately coded so that he is identified as belonging to the Tarot (Lester—Les/ter). As the doctor's name also provides the word falcon, we can see that he is the Nine of Pentacles on which a falcon appears, as shown below in Figure 6:



Figure 6: The Nine of Pentacles.

The doctor is intoxicated, so the reversed meaning of the Nine of Pentacles applies: "Roguery, deception, voided project, bad faith."²² Using all of Chandler's clues and the presentation of the name in the above quotation in the phonetic cabala (Stockwell/seems/complain sinus antrum/likes looks Novocain), we can identify the unflatteringly described Dr. Lester Vukanich as Willem A. Nyland, one of the founders and trustees of the Gurdjieff Foundation; see Figure 7 below.

²⁰ Chandler, *The Long Goodbye*, p. 92.

²¹ Chandler, *The Long Goodbye*, p. 103.

²² Waite, *The Pictorial Key*.

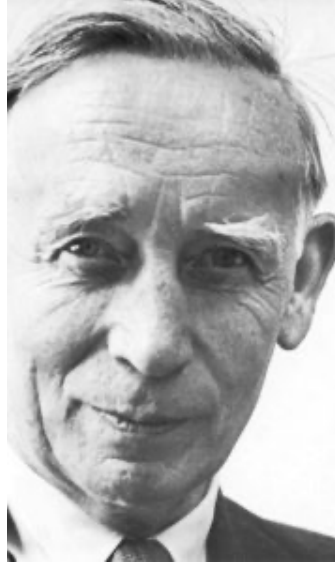


Figure 7: Willem A. Nyland (<https://gurdjieff-nyland.org/landhouse-publications/>).

Marlowe next makes a visit to Dr. Amos Varley:

Dr. Amos Varley was a very different proposition. He had a big old house in a big old garden with big old oak trees shading it. It was a massive frame structure with elaborate scrollwork along the overhang of the porches and the white porch railings had turned and fluted uprights like the legs of an old-fashioned grand piano. A few frail elderly people sat in long chairs on the porches with rugs tucked around them.²³

The above passage includes a coded presentation of P. D. Ouspensky's name in house/garden/oak trees. The relatively long distance that Marlowe travels to Varley's location is a clue to the fact that Ouspensky was teaching in Europe. Marlowe describes Varley as, "a big bald-headed guy with a cheery smile."²⁴ This description is a conscious discrepancy, as Ouspensky (shown below in Figure 8) has hair on his head and is uniformly grim in every photographic portrait.

Marlowe's next visit is to Dr. Verringer. This episode is a complex narrative that is filled with clues hidden in the dramatic encounters that he makes on the Verringer property. The most significant clue to Verringer's identity is an allusion to Katherine Mansfield's death on Gurdjieff's property at his Paris-based Institute:

"Screw him. Our last offering today is a man named Verringer. The operative who filed on him is long gone. Seems a lady poet suicided at Verringer's ranch in Sepulveda Canyon one time. He runs a sort of art colony for writers and such who want seclusion and a congenial atmosphere. Rates moderate. He sounds legit. He calls himself doctor, but doesn't practice medicine. Could be a Ph.D. Frankly, I don't

²³ Chandler, *The Long Goodbye*, p. 106.

²⁴ Chandler, *The Long Goodbye*, p. 106.

know why he's in here. Unless there was something about this suicide." He picked up a newspaper clipping pasted to a blank sheet. "Yeah, overdose of morphine. No suggestion Verringer knew anything about it."²⁵



Figure 8: P. D. Ouspensky (<https://www.hermetics.net/media-library/tarot/the-symbolism-of-the-tarot/>).

In keeping with the inexact accounts that Chandler uses to describe the three doctors, Mansfield's death by tuberculosis is transformed into the suicide of a lady poet. Mansfield's death could be interpreted as suicide, since she ignored medical advice and went to Gurdjieff seeking a miracle cure.

In a further departure, Mansfield wrote fiction not poetry. However, Mansfield is recognizable and gives useful evidence to the identification of Verringer as Gurdjieff. Also, in keeping with Chandler's exaggerated use of intentional mistakes, Gurdjieff's prominent moustache is transformed into Verringer's heavy eyebrows: "He hoisted a couple of eyebrows that would have interested a Fuller Brush man."²⁶ Chandler's placement of Gurdjieff in California dissolves the realism of the depiction of the Gurdjieff Work in *The Long Goodbye*. What Chandler pursues in *The Long Goodbye* is a doctrinal dispute conducted as satire. If we review the Wade case from Marlowe's perspective, we realize that Wade has brought Marlowe into contact with three sordid quacks who belong to a criminal underworld. Dr. Varley even threatens Marlowe with violence if he continues to investigate Varley's activities. Understood as a description of esoteric politics, Chandler's novel speaks to the hollowness of the factions that claim to follow Gurdjieff other than the Oragean school. Presumably, Chandler's claim is based on the Oragean school's dedication to action; Chandler sees the Oragean school as a group of super-beings actively engaging in the

²⁵ Chandler, *The Long Goodbye*, p. 92.

²⁶ Chandler, *The Long Goodbye*, p. 97.

salvation of the planet. In contrast to the Orageans, the Foundation is shown to be a spurious group as fast asleep as the rest of a doomed humanity.

The Critical Misreading of Chandler

Chandler's literary concern with the politics of a fragmented esoteric school is a curious enterprise. In the first place his exercise has remained invisible: the way in which Chandler has written his novel has rendered the revelations made in this essay absurd, since decades of critical reception have already established what Chandler was doing in his novels—merely writing high quality detective fiction. And even if Chandler's inner meaning had come out, it is hard to see that it would matter at all to his audience. Gurdjieff and his esoteric school is not a matter of great concern to the reading public; and the esoteric has been suppressed and disallowed by American literary scholars. While all of this is true, it misses altogether Chandler's relationship to his novels. We can barely see what Chandler is getting at, though if we pay intimate attention his meaning can be ascertained.

Jonathan P. Eburne's essay marks what we can take as the outer limit of concern with Chandler and high modernism. Eburne states that

“Though it would, of course, be inaccurate to claim that Chandler wrote *The Long Goodbye* about T. S. Eliot, the numerous references to Eliot and his poetry in the novel, and in the letters Chandler wrote as he was composing it, suggest that Chandler was, at least, glancing over his shoulder at Eliot.”²⁷

Eburne has set out to interrogate Chandler's interest in Eliot. Since Marlowe is responsible for the introduction of Eliot into the novel, Eburne frames the handling of Eliot in terms of Marlowe's characteristically ironic, offhand linguistic maneuvers, his chess playing, and his misogyny. However, the rationale for Chandler's interest in Eliot does not come close to what Chandler has derived from *The Waste Land*. Eliot's poem is notorious for many of Eliot's inclusions, and the Tarot ranks as one of the most significant of Eliot's literary gestures in his poem. It is not surprising that Eburne does not bring the Tarot into his consideration of the novel given the disregard of the esoteric in American literary studies. Ironically, Eburne touches the esoteric in his concluding paragraph, where he mentions reincarnation:

Whereas Eliot, at the moment when Chandler was writing *The Long Goodbye*, had staved off the despair and uncertainty intimated in *The Waste Land* by clinging, as Harriet Davidson has written, to the most stable identity he could find -royalist, Anglican, Englishman- Chandler was coming face to face with mortality as his wife's health deteriorated and he sunk further and further into alcoholism and despair. Soon after the book's publication, Cissy did die, and Chandler himself attempted suicide in a manner uncannily similar to Roger Wade's attempt in *The Long Goodbye*. Perhaps it would be fair

²⁷ Jonathan P. Eburne, 'Chandler's Waste Land', *Studies in the Novel*, vol. 35, no. 3 (2003), p. 378.

to say that in his revision of *The Waste Land*, Chandler reverses certain changes Eliot himself made. Eliot had retitled the section called "in the cage" -a suicidal reference, referring to the aging Sibyl of his epigraph who longs to die but cannot -to "a game of chess." In a novel in which only letters, suicide notes without bodies, are left to testify to deaths and motives that are never explicitly confirmed, the narrative's economy of guilt and innocence, life and death, never arrives at closure, but decays into a ghostly cycle of the "long goodbyes" of figures returning from the dead. Like Eliot's Sibyl, and like Terry Lennox's numerous reincarnations, this cycle neither ends nor regenerates, but merely grows older, uglier, and more despairing. Chandler's own games of chess leave the impression that *The Long Goodbye* can be read as both an elegy and as an early, though perhaps only half-intended, suicide note, a "letter from a dead man" who had not yet died.²⁸

While it has not entered into the critical-theoretical understanding of *The Waste Land*, (which consistently inscribes an indictment of the modern world) the underlying theme of Eliot's poem is reincarnation, and reincarnation comes into the poem through the Tarot card reading in the poem. What Madame Sostres tells her subject through her reading is that because he never resolves his karmic debts, he is repeatedly reborn only to die each time by drowning. This aspect of the poem has been obscured due to the tendency of Eliot's critics not to look past Eliot's insertion of an invented Tarot card, the drowned Phoenician Sailor. The new card interposed by Eliot allowed him to insert "Phlebas the Phoenician, a fortnight dead."²⁹ In a subsequent passage: in this way Eliot recapitulated the cosmic scheme that he derived from Ouspensky's novel, *The Strange Life of Ivan Osokin*, an exploration of eternal recurrence in which the subject fails to correct his mistakes when given a chance to relive his past. That this is accomplished through Tarot cards that Eliot invented in part introduced enough distractions to have thrown off most who would closely read the poem. In the case of Eburne, the passage quoted above shows that he has resorted to philology to account for the shape of Chandler's novel, and so has gone astray. Chandler has written a systematically esoteric novel that is derived from Van Vechten's emblematic novels (in which the Tarot has been used extensively) and thus *The Long Goodbye* uses conscious discrepancies as guideposts for the reader to steer by. Chandler's use of the Tarot is multidimensional but is in part a clue that operates as a reflection of Eliot's employment of the Tarot in *The Waste Land*.

To be specific, Eburne's misunderstanding of *The Long Goodbye* derives from taking what Chandler has provided at face value: Eburne states that

Marlowe rationalizes his own neurasthenia in a way which, nevertheless, describes the extermination of individuals and their history as a blight upon modern culture that is no better, nor any worse, in Los Angeles than it is anywhere else. Meanwhile, Chandler's rejection of the "sacrificial rite" itself is suggested in Marlowe's agony over the "sheer unadulterated torture" of another chess problem called the Sphinx, an eleven-mover which "justifies its name ... [and] ... is a nice quiet way to go crazy." Unlike the Sphinx riddle in

²⁸ Eburne, 'Chandler's Waste Land', p. 381.

²⁹ T.S. Eliot, 'The Waste Land', *Poetry Foundation*. At: <https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/47311/the-waste-land>.

Oedipus or the Fisher King's sacrifice in *The Waste Land*, this problem cannot help Marlowe resolve the blight he sees in modern culture: he explains that its author, the English chess wizard Blackburn, "wouldn't get to first base in the Cold War type of chess they play nowadays." Rather than gaining him the upper hand in urban social relations, Marlowe's "historical sense" ends up overwhelming its contemporary usefulness with an unproductive, haunting sense of futility: the chess games, after all, are out of books, and their authors have been dead for years. In a novel so much about lost friends, lovers destroyed by war, and suicide—whether real suicides or feigned ones—Chandler's appeal to the past functions elegiacally, as a way of thinking not just about the hosts of the living but of the unburied dead as well, that is, of making "a long goodbye."³⁰

Chandler's treatment of what Eburne calls the "Sphinx riddle" chess problem is rife with intentional mistakes—a practice used by Van Vechten to indicate the presence of an esoteric subtext.

I put the chessboard on the coffee table and set out a problem called The Sphynx. It is printed on the end papers of a book on chess by Blackburn, the English chess wizard, probably the most dynamic chess player who ever lived, although he wouldn't get to first base in the cold war type of chess they play nowadays. The Sphynx is an eleven-mover and it justifies its name. Chess problems seldom run to more than four or five moves. Beyond that the difficulty of solving them rises in almost geometrical progression. An eleven-mover is sheer unadulterated torture. Once in a long while when I feel mean enough I set it out and look for a new way to solve it. It's a nice quiet way to go crazy. You don't even scream, but you come awfully close.³¹

Chandler's intentional errors include the incorrect spelling of Mr. Blackburne's name, the incorrect number of moves in chess problems, and the imposition of The Sphynx, a nonexistent chess problem. Below is an account of the correct information about Blackburne, also known as the Black Death:

In 1899 Blackburne published his book, "Mr. Blackburne's Games at Chess, selected, annotated and arranged by himself." It contains 407 games (divided into match, off-hand and blindfold games), 28 problems and a short biographical sketch. The book was edited by P. Anderson Graham who also wrote the introduction. Of the 28 problems, 8 are 3-movers and 20 are 4-movers and their dates of creation span his entire chess career up to that time. They are all clever, and while I've found alternate solutions to some of those ones I've examined, I haven't found any to be cooked.³²

³⁰ Eburne, 'Chandler's Waste Land', p. 380.

³¹ Chandler, *The Long Goodbye*, p. 235.

³² Batgirl, 'Problems of the Black Death', *chess.com*, 4 May (2019). At: <https://www.chess.com/article/view/problems-of-the-black-death2>

As we can see in the passage below, Eburne has picked up Marlowe's intentional mistakes and carried them uncritically into his discussion of the novel.

I will mention in passing that it is likely that Chandler is alluding to Gurdjieff's doctrine of voluntary suffering in his description of the painful effect of contemplating chess problems: voluntary suffering means introducing tiny inconveniences into our daily life to remind oneself to be present. Without properly registering the esoteric literary system behind *The Long Goodbye* Chandler's novel has been reduced by its critics to merely what they have imposed on the text out of a reductionist approach. For example, David Richter sums up that:

It may not be going too far to suggest that *The Long Goodbye* was intended as a tragic work, and that Marlowe's tragedy, like that of Jake Barnes at the end of *The Sun Also Rises*, involves giving up the last vestiges of self-deception about a relationship that has meant a great deal to him. Like Jake, Marlowe as suffered in body and in spirit, has transgressed against his own moral code, for the sake of this relationship. But ultimately both works must end with an askesis in which the protagonists pay the necessary debt to the truth. If *The Long Goodbye* has struck many readers as sentimental more than tragic, that may be because Marlowe's emotional investment in Terry Lennox seems willful rather than inevitable, a mistake he didn't really have to make. But whatever our ultimate response to Marlowe's bitter self-realization, our sense of the moral significance of Marlowe's askesis derives in part from the grey men and dope doctors that populate the background action of *The Long Goodbye*. Without using the "centrifugal plot" of *The Big Sleep*, Chandler employed different techniques to convey the same ideology. Just as in *The Big Sleep*, Marlowe's moral authority takes shape against a sullied world, in which the most respected American profession appears to consist either of criminals or of pompous fools and hypocrites, in which crime bosses and business tycoons are far more alike than they are different, a fallen world that needs a knight to redeem it.³³

Yet, when we confront the novel as a totality, we immediately realize that Chandler's handling of the esoteric elements of the emblematic novel vary from what has been seen in Van Vechten and the other followers of Van Vechten. In the first place, Chandler has used the word Cadillac to designate the cabala, a ruse that is nearly impenetrable: compare to Van Vechten's Gabalis. And where Van Vechten used the word green to point consistently to his employment of the green language, the cabala (as well as showing the color green in the frontispiece of *The Blind Bow-Boy*), Chandler has a character with the name Sergeant Green (green giant), thus generating many iterations of green that are limited to the name itself. However, green is used to indicate a coded passage in Chapter 15 when Marlowe visits The Carne Organization: there the several insistent

³³ David H. Richter, 'Background Action and Ideology: Grey Men and Dope Doctors in Raymond Chandler', *Narrative*, vol. 2, no. 1 (1994), p. 39.

repetitions of green hint at the presence of the code. Chandler's most telling departure is his use of the word mistake (or variations on mistake) as a substitute for actual mistakes. In Chapter 49 during Marlowe's important assignation with Linda Loring Chandler gives "incorrect," "not very likely," "jumping at conclusions," "error," "mistaken," and "mistake" over the course of a brief chapter.³⁴

The crucial business coded into Chapter 49 was a contemporary report on the current state of the Oragean movement in the United States: the Orageans intended to raise the level of planetary energies through improving race relations in America. Chandler's handling of this theme is so subtle as to be nearly indecipherable and undetectable in the surface text. While the "middle-aged colored driver," Amos, makes a brief appearance in Chapter 49, his modest contribution is deceptive. The essence of Chapter 49 is the subtextual meaning what Linda Loring says about herself, and it relates directly to Amos:

"Oh, I see," she said, suddenly angry. "I'm just to be a fill-in until someone more beautiful and attractive comes along. Thank you so very much. Now you've hurt my feelings, but I suppose it's something to know that I'm safe here. If you think a bottle of champagne will make a loose woman out of me, I can assure you that you are very much mistaken."³⁵

Lacking the background of what the Oragean Movement has been attempting, the above passage above is merely a tantrum. On the esoteric level, Linda Loring is Zora Neale Hurston (for a dozen/fill-in/her, hurt standing). The Oragean Movement had been trying since 1929 to create a so-called secular messiah centering on the Scottsboro Nine. Lacking a charismatic protagonist, this initial awkward effort failed. However, the program to create a subsequent secular messiah continued. The secular messiah theme was introduced into Chandler's novel in Chapter 8 with the phrase "wire mesh", —twice repeated in the passage quoted below—which is the word messiah in the phonetic cabala:

In the corner of the cell block there may be a second steel door that leads to the show-up box. One of its walls is wire mesh painted black. On the back wall are ruled lines for height. Overhead are floodlights. You go in there in the morning as a rule, just before the night captain goes off duty. You stand against the measuring lines and the lights glare at you and there is no light behind the wire mesh. But plenty of people are out there: cops, detectives, citizens who have been robbed or assaulted or swindled or kicked out of their cars at gun point or conned out of their life savings. You don't see or hear them. You hear the voice of the night captain. You receive him loud and clear. He puts you through your paces as if you were a performing dog. He is tired and cynical and competent. He is the stage manager of a play that has had the longest run in history, but it no longer interests him.³⁶

³⁴ Chandler, *The Long Goodbye*, pp. 292-297.

³⁵ Chandler, *The Long Goodbye*, p. 295.

³⁶ Chandler, *The Long Goodbye*, p. 41.

The above passage names the second person who was attempted to erect as a secular messiah, Angelo Herndon, though the passage merely sounds out Herndon. Read through the esoteric lens, the above passage addresses the concept of what the Orageans called historical drama: the play referred to above is the previous ancient messianic drama involving Osiris in ancient Egypt and Jesus (as an Essene) in Roman Judaea. The real mystery that concerns Chandler's novel is the identity of "the stage manager" of the modern secular drama. This unknown figure resembles Fritz Lang's Dr. Mabuse in that he organizes a conspiratorial historical drama around a secular messiah just as Dr. Mabuse builds a "society of crime" using an extensive network of agents. In short, Marlowe and Linda Loring are stand-ins for the Oragean stage manager's agents Raymond Chandler and Zora Neale Hurston. The above passage names C. Daly King (tired/cynical; kicked savings, captain performing) as the stage manager. Having said this, the passage is composed in an extremely reticent adaptation of the phonetic cabala, so that King's name barely come through.

Conclusion

Chandler's *The Long Goodbye* was composed after the failure of the Orageans' second attempt at creating a secular messiah using the Communist activist, Angelo Herndon. Angelo Herndon comes into Chandler's novel most evidently when in Chapter 49 Amos quotes T. S. Eliot's lines to Marlowe: "In the room the women come and go/Talking of Michael Angelo."³⁷ The overnight case or bag that dominates the discussion between Marlowe and Linda Loring is the coded word government (overnight went). Loring states that she is there without preamble, the "government" is placed inside the front (door), and Loring/Hurston insists on having the champagne/campaign continue by serving as a fill-in "until someone more beautiful and attractive comes along."³⁸ Chandler's "car stopped out front" alludes to the Popular Front, the democratic, multiracial movement in the arts and daily life that was sponsored but not controlled by the Communist party in the US from 1935-1939. Given the failure of the effort organized around Angelo Herndon, a Communist accused of treason (tray/door or traitor repeats throughout Chapter 49), the campaign that Loring/Hurston now advocates favors a religious figure, as symbolized by Amos, who bears the name of a biblical prophet and who is viewed in the esoteric subtext as having prophesied concerning the messiah. As the next secular messiah has not been selected, Zora Neale Hurston/Linda Loring is suggesting that she serve as a temporary place holder. Loring's chauffeur, Amos, uses the quotation from Eliot's poem, "I grow old... I grow old... I shall wear the bottoms of my trousers rolled,"³⁹ to prophetically justify the historical drama, speaking for the Black race in effect to say *our role on the bottom has grown old and we are determined to make a change*. Hurston's position in the interim campaign may be visualized through her publications, such as the essay "Why the Negro Won't Buy Communism" published in *The American Legion Magazine* in

³⁷ Chandler, *The Long Goodbye*, p. 292.

³⁸ Chandler, *The Long Goodbye*, p. 295.

³⁹ Chandler, *The Long Goodbye*, p. 292.

1951. Throughout the late 1940s and early 1950s, Hurston published similar essays in popular magazines.

Nothing in Raymond Chandler's biography connects him to Zora Neale Hurston, Carl Van Vechten, or to the Gurdjieff work. As a Californian, Chandler was not placed to be in convenient contact with the Oragean movement. These aporias raise many additional questions. As there were Gurdjieffians in California, such as Wallace Thurman and Jean Toomer, we must wonder whether Chandler was in contact with them. Jean Toomer's name is invoked in the coded level of *The Long Goodbye*, and he makes a cameo appearance as Mr. Vannier in *The High Window*. How was it that Chandler was recruited into the ranks of the Oragean movement? Such questions are unapproachable at this time. Perhaps the most interesting of the questions that cannot be answered is about Chandler's novel: did Chandler and Van Vechten suffer a break in their relationship as the roman à clef suggests? This seems unlikely as Terry Lennox's machismo aliases cast him as a positive personality. While these questions are crucial, it is more profitable to think about what can be abstracted from reading *The Long Goodbye*. The question that comes immediately to mind is what can be said about Marlowe in relation to the above discussion. Marlowe is a man apart, a social critic who states that trouble is his business.

As we have seen above, Philip Marlowe's coded name recapitulates his struggle to maintain a moral code while surrounded by human corruption. Marlowe is not the secular messiah, who is a dying god, a sacrifice. Within the Gurdjieff Work there is a ranking system that measures humanity from man one to man seven. It was Orage's advice that everything be placed on an objective order demanded by their depth: "[Orage] would relate our findings to the order of cosmoses in the Gurdjieff system of worlds showing us how to move from one scale to another."⁴⁰ We have already seen above that Chandler has identified Marlowe on the scale of the Tarot, but this does not automatically locate Marlowe on the objective scale of humanity. The politics of the Fourth Way that drive Chandler's subtext in *The Long Goodbye* issue from the moral assessment of Gurdjieff. His loyal followers took him to be man number seven—a superman. The Orageans rejected Gurdjieff and installed Orage as a superman, man number seven. Gurdjieff gives a detailed definition of each of these stages in Ouspensky's *In Search of the Miraculous*, and it is man number four that Marlowe most closely resembles:

Man number four is not born ready-made. He is born one, two, or three, and becomes four only as a result of efforts of a definite character. Man number four is always the product of school work. He can neither be born, nor develop accidentally or as the result of ordinary influences of bringing up, education, and so on. Man number four already stands on a different level to man number one, two, and three; he has a permanent center of gravity which consists in his ideas, in his valuation of the work, and in his relation to the school. In addition his psychic centers have already begun to be balanced; one center in him cannot have such a preponderance over others as is the case with people of the first three categories. He already begins to know himself and begins to know whither he is going.⁴¹

⁴⁰ Louise Welch, *Orage with Gurdjieff in America* (Boston: Routledge, 1982), p. 65.

⁴¹ Ouspensky, *In Search of the Miraculous*, p. 77.

The assessment of Marlowe as man number four is likely what Chandler was hinting at by relating Marlowe to the Four of Pentacles. Marlowe's capacity as a detective reflect the methods that would have come to him from training in an esoteric school. While the Orageans may have rejected the personhood of Gurdjieff, it is Gurdjieff that Marlowe resembles in many respects. We do not see Orage, a sedentary bookish intellectual, behaving in the manner of Marlowe. Gurdjieff was a man of action, a womanizer, a martial artist, a drinker and smoker, a wearer of many disguises, and a destroyer of all man's beliefs about everything existing in the world. In other words, Gurdjieff was the metaphysical detective working on the megacosmic case. Marlowe is to some extent derived from Gurdjieff's Beelzebub, the protagonist of Gurdjieff's 1,000 page science fiction novel, *Beelzebub's Tales* in which the angel-scientist descends to earth to attempt to reform humanity:

During Beelzebub's exile to Mars, he made several extended visits to the Earth. His first descent to this planet took him to Atlantis shortly before its disappearance, and the last involved a three-hundred year stay which brought Beelzebub into the twentieth century. Altogether he descended on six occasions to Earth, his visits spanning a period of several millennia, landing him in times and places as diverse as ancient Babylon and twentieth century America, Afghanistan at the beginning of the seventeenth century, and Russia at the time of the Bolshevik Revolution. Beelzebub built a large observatory during his exile on Mars, and this enabled him to observe events taking place on Earth during his absence from the planet. As a result of these circumstances, Beelzebub was exposed in some fashion to human beings and situations for hundreds of years, and his long interaction with the planet provided him with much food for thought concerning the Earth, its history, and the behavior and psyche of its people.⁴²

While Marlowe does not appoint himself to solving crime at Beelzebub's Megalocosmic level, we can see that what he aspires to is activity at a level far above the complacent fraud of ordinary social-criminal justice.

⁴² Anna Challenger, 'The *Tales* Themselves: An Overview', *Gurdjieff.org*, 1 June (2012). At: <https://www.gurdjieff.org/challenger1.htm>.