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Correspondence to rich@hoover.stanford.edu

Freemasonry, The Greeks, and Stepping

Paul Rich

David Merchant

University of the Americas - Puebla, Mexico

We want to thank Dr. Elizabeth Fine and the other organizers very much indeed for this opportunity, which challenged us to think about stepping, the Freemasons, and the African-American fraternities. Copies of the paper are available tonight and on the Web, and this presentation is going to be about the paper rather than impose a reading of the paper.

It is important to keep in mind that fraternities and sororities have a much longer history than most of their critics realize, and are part of a larger group that can be described secret and ritualistic societies, many of which trace their origins to Freemasonry. The history of secret¹ and ritualistic² organizations is confusing and has never received the attention that the subject deserves.³ So this conference has special importance.

Dr. Elizabeth Fine in her new book *Soulstepping: Development and Transformation of African American Step Show*, has an anecdote about the African American fraternity Alpha Phi Alpha, who had their first initiation in a Masonic lodge hall. The brothers opened some of the lockers and used lodge attire to enhance the rites.⁴

African American fraternities, indeed almost all fraternities, were indeed influenced by Freemasonry. The question is how much influence Masonic rituals may have had on stepping. Jacqui Malone in that very useful book *Steppin' on the Blues: The Visible Rhythms of African American Dance*, mentions the Prince Hall Masons *en passant* but is more interested in African and mutual aid societies and in that black benevolent societies in North America that “were culturally informed by an African heritage.”⁵

A web site for the African American “Big Nine” remarks, “During the turn of the century, times were extremely difficult for Blacks in America. One organization in particular that was working to improve the condition of life for those individuals was an order known as Free and Accepted Masons. While striving towards the upliftment of the quality of life for Blacks, this organization was somewhat limited in what it could do because of the requirements for membership. Only males who had reached the age of 21 and had proven themselves to be of good character were allowed to apply for membership, which meant that mostly blue collar workers could be Masons. [?] However,

our founders (ALL organizations) had visions as to how to crate a shortcut, or place a stepping stone if you would, for the Masonic fraternity.”⁶

Still another similarity between fraternities and Freemasonry is a sometimes poor public image, nurtured by traditions of secrecy. As we think this audience knows, college fraternities are the subject of much misinformation, the target of film fun as well as deserved criticism for low intellectual standards, panty raids, and brutal hazing. Evidently things have not changed much as *The Chronicle of Higher Education* recently reported on the ritual initiations of Kappa Sigma at Eastern universities, a fraternity which includes as members Robert Redford and Bob Dole. Student candidates were urinated on and covered with molasses.⁷ Frequently accused of political intrigue and black magic, the Masons know something about having a bad press.

Social history is replete with associations whose members are enjoined to be tight-lipped about the initiations and about the modes of recognition. Despite the manifest differences between all the branches of this fascinating group, their attraction to members, which we think partly relies on secret ritual, has a commonality whose consideration has been neglected and the research problems they present for scholars have similarities.⁸

One aspect of fraternalism that you might consider is that our own research suggests that secrecy and ritualism often go together, although for many societies the secrecy is no longer as strong as it once was.⁹ However, ritual remains one of the major characteristics,¹⁰ making the organizations that fall into the secret and ritualistic category distinct from a large number of other groups that may have a few ceremonies such as passing along the chair’s gavel or investing new members with lapel pins but which are chiefly issue-oriented.¹¹ By this definition, Rotary and Lions are not rally part of the category. Fraternities are.

For the most part, the influence of Masonry on fraternities is personal,¹² dependent on individuals who were Masons and who helped to found and lead fraternities, and no means can we then take a leap and assert that Masonry was the principal source of stepping -- which certainly owes much to African tradition rather than American lodges.¹³ Nevertheless, Freemasonry has a certain amount of choreography in its rituals, and African Americans who were members would have absorbed that. By the end of the nineteenth century, the Masons as well as other orders had established uniformed degrees such as the Knight Templars who had elaborate drill exercises. Moreover, gala dances were often sponsored by lodges.¹⁴ Some Masonic organizations had buildings with not one but several ballrooms and drill halls. There is also a tradition of Masonic canes, some of which I am showing in the acetates tonight.¹⁵

The fact is that many African Americans in the nineteenth century were dedicated fraternalists.¹⁶ They often belonged to the Prince Hall version of Freemasonry but they also joined other African American versions of the principal orders such as the Odd Fellows and Pythians, as well as creating their own orders such as the True Reformers, Good Templars, St. Lukes, Good Samaritans, Gaililean Fisherman, and United Brothers of Friendship.¹⁷ These lodge halls played an important role in African American community and frequently were used for dancing. The Odd Fellows hall here in Blacksburg is an example, mentioned in the Black Appalachians Oral History Project.¹⁸ All of this African American fraternal activity long precedes the establishment of Alpha Phi Alpha in 1906.

Masonry has provided a bank account of rituals and ceremonies on which other organizations could draw. Fairly typical is the experience of Sigma Nu, founded at Virginia Military Institute in 1868, whose ritual was written by James Hopkin, a Freemason. "thus" comments a member, "the tenets of

Freemasonry found their way into the initiation ritual of Sigma Nu and remain essentially unchanged today.”¹⁹ A history of Phi Beta Sigma claims that stepping “...began with singing or chanting associated with the process of crossing the burning sands.”, and the phrase “burning sands” which is widespread in African American fraternities has been associated with Masonic Shrine initiations since the late nineteenth century.²⁰ The African American Shriners had a great influence on black culture, particularly on Moorish Science and hence indirectly on the Nation of Islam.

Of course, one of several other plausible suggestions is that stepping arose spontaneously as part of the early conventions in the 1920s, when each organization “strutted its stuff”. However, the Phi Beta Sigma history remarks that “Of course many practices are based upon the Masonic influence...”²¹ An elderly Sigma asserts that “The white fraternities started the singing part, but the black fraternities took it to another level. Much like we did with basketball and football. I don’t think that any one fraternity can lay claim to stepping, more than likely it evolved.”²²

Regardless of the different explanations, the fact remains that basic to all college fraternities and sororities is a set of initiation and identification rituals, and when the origins of stepping are discussed, it is interesting to look at the rituals of Freemasonry. They involve a good deal of parading about the lodge to music, referred to as rituals of *circumambulation*.

Fraternities and sororities have existed in the United States since the founding of Phi Beta Kappa in the eighteenth century. They can be considered in two major groupings, the honor or recognition societies,²³ which are an unlikely place to find stepping, and the so-called Greeks or social fraternities that are so characteristic of a portion of academia and which in the case of the

African American ones are such a support of stepping. This separation into honorary and social fraternities did not at first exist. At the very start the ritualistic element rather than the academic or social element loomed large:

In their decision to expand the society, as well as in the development of their ritual, the Phi Beta Kappa leaders were acting at least partially under the influence of Masonry. A Masonic lodge had existed in Williamsburg as early as in the 1750s, and in 1773 it received a charter from the grand lodge in England. In 1778, as citizens of an independent commonwealth, the Masons of Virginia set up their own grand lodge, with authority to charter other lodges within the state. Eventually Masons in other states did the same. John Heath himself [the fifteen-year old founder of Phi Beta Kappa] was not a Mason while a student at William and Mary, but Thomas Smith belonged to the Williamsburg lodge before joining Heath as one of the five Phi Beta Kappa founders. Smith served as the first clerk of the Phi Beta Kappa Society and became its president on May 3, 1777. Nine other members of the society joined the Masonic lodge during the next year. At least a dozen of the fifty men admitted to Phi Beta Kappa during these first four years were associated with both groups at one time or another.²⁴

There is little to Phi Beta Kappa's activities today which suggest its ties with ritual or with purely social affairs. Today the honorary fraternities devoted to scholarship, which have done so much to foster intellectual activity on campuses, stand in peculiar contrast to their cousins, the social fraternities. Arguably some of the social fraternities have done as much damage to intellectual life with their Lord of the Flies initiations as the honorary fraternities have done in the way of encouragement.²⁵

The honorary fraternities retain ritualistic features but it is not their focus. It is the social fraternities that often have kept elaborate ceremonies, many of which are suggestive of Masonry.²⁶ How did this division occur? The

metamorphosis of some of the Greek societies into purely social organizations is sometimes blamed on their acquisition of property in the nineteenth century: “It is tempting to see the arrival of the fraternity chapter house as the closing of the fraternity’s intellectual, moral, and cultural ‘golden age’. When a fraternity got together only once a week or so for a chapter meeting, the occasion was extraordinary. Gathering in a rented hall or classroom, fraternity brothers could invest their time together with a sense of special purpose. Whether they met to discuss a passage from Aristotle’s *Nicomachean Ethics* or Erasmus’s *Agagia*, they could engage each topic, serious, or not, with undistracted freedom.”²⁷ The rituals also allegedly changed:

Spectacle and mystery, rather than humane learning and ancient wisdom, came to prevail. Primeval myths, powerful in austerity, were distorted into gorgeous but ludicrous pageants. What the Greeks of old may have inspired, latterday vulgarians did their damndest to obscure and confuse. Coffins and hooded robes, burning crosses and stakes, swords and armor, cauldrons and grails, lions and dragons, terrifying oaths and incantations, the regalia of crusaders, cavaliers, feudal knights, holy pilgrims and sainted martyrs, stage machinery and special effects — all these were elevated into the mythical means that transformed lowly pledges into bonded brothers. What light and truth may have failed to accomplish, sensation dared to attempt.²⁸

It is curious that Phi Beta Kappa was forced to jettison rather than embellish its cryptic ritualistic traditions in the early 1800s at the same time that other Greek fraternities were being established with many of the same objectionable features.²⁹ The society’s members found themselves being lumped with the Freemasons and the Illuminati as evil-worshippers and infidels.³⁰ Some chapters reacted by closing down, but at Harvard the brethren coolly responded: Animated by a consciousness of right, the noble mind rises superior to

opposition. Should it be our fate then to be traduced, let us as individuals boldly profess our attachment to our society: — let us declare to teeth of clamor, that it is not only harmless, but virtuous in its objects, & useful in its effects: — that the circumstances of its origin here [whatever the circumstances of its origin at William and Mary!] indicated, not a design to sow infidelity with sedition, but a benevolent wish to enlarge the heart & improve the mind; & that our initials are only expressive of a submission to true wisdom from a love to true virtue. Should we meet the rude shock of persecution let us stand firm & undaunted, steady in our resolutions, & more energetic in our exertions.³¹

The significant point to be made about this period in the history of college fraternities in the United States is that the anti-Masonic agitation helped to create two groups of Greeks, one the scholastic and service honoraries and the other the social Greeks with their stepping activities.³² There are no 64th degree Phi Betas Kappas. However, honor societies encouraging scholastic excellence patterned on Phi Beta Kappa multiplied.³³ Tau Beta Pi for engineering started in 1885, and Sigma Xi for scientists began in 1886. Depending on whether one counts professional societies which admit students on the basis of interest rather magna grades along with the more academic honor societies, there were at least 100 by the time the tenth edition of Baird's Manual of Greek College Fraternities appeared in 1923.³⁴ This was the environment into which the Divine Nine were born.³⁵

The international aspects of these groups are even more neglected by scholars than their American activities.³⁶ An intriguing question is why fraternal groups such as the Knights of Columbus or masons spread around the world but the Greeks never did. The general question of the place of secret ritualistic movements in history remains equally undeveloped. One possible explanation

as to why general histories of America, or for that matter of most countries, give scant attention to secret and ritualistic societies is that they do not present an open door to inquisitive non-members.³⁷ The Freemasons are an excellent example of this. Yet they are especially important because an understanding of their history is necessary to any serious research into fraternities or into other secret and ritualistic organizations in general. Stepping therefore is a happy phenomenon because it has become an extremely public display that dispels notions of secret machinations..³⁸

The accessibility of the collections that might throw more light on the origins of stepping is variable; lodge and fraternity members themselves do not always get a cordial welcome.³⁹ This is especially a possibility if details of the rituals are sought, ,⁴⁰ but rewarding.⁴¹

An equally serious problem is understanding the special language and usages that fraternities employ. The more ritualistic the society, the more arcane will be the terminology found in papers.⁴² On occasion, the researcher will face documents that have been rendered into cipher or have had critical words removed.⁴³ He or she will also encounter vast amounts of allegory and metaphor, so that without an advance immersion in the rituals the text will be unintelligible. The symbolism of fraternal orders requires the researcher to be thoroughly prepared before confronting archives. Still another difficulty frequently encountered is that friends and enemies of these societies have been guilty of fabrications and falsifications to advance their claims. Ambrose Bierce wrote:

An order [sic]...which originating in the reign of Charles II, among the working artisans of London, has now been joined successively by the dead of past centuries in unbroken retrogression until it now embraces all the generations on the hither side of Adam and is drumming up

distinguished recruits among the pre-Creational inhabitants of the Formless Void. The order was founded at different times by Charlemagne, Julius Caesar, Cyrus, Solomon, Zoroaster, Confucius, Thothmes, and Buddha. Its emblems and symbols have been found in the Catacombs, of Paris and Rome, on the stones of the Parthenon and the Chinese Great Wall, among the temples of Karnak and Palmyra and in the Egyptian Pyramids — always by a Freemason.⁴⁴

So emotive is the subject of secret societies that the literature is often little more than propaganda and sometimes deliberately misleading.⁴⁵ However, having called attention to the difficulties of this sort of research, the surprising variety and amount of materials which are encompassed by this field should be stressed.⁴⁶ There are great research possibilities for those interested in African American fraternalism.

Most of the established fraternities and sororities have long runs of journals and at least one lengthy if boring history.⁴⁷ Depending on the packrat mentality of individual branches, there can be treasure troves of menus, sheet music, visiting cards, membership applications, and of course minutes by the ton. These organizations offer interesting opportunities for social historians.⁴⁸ Studies of international relationships within and between such movements are waiting to be done, as well as research into the way in which these movements served specific ethnic and religious groups.⁴⁹ Jacqui Malone emphasizes a point made by the folklorist John Roberts about the importance “of vernacular activity that has evolved in black social clubs, sororities, fraternities, lodges, and various religious denominations.”⁵⁰

The success of these groups is partly because of their ritualistic features, and it is no accident that the honor fraternities have not entirely lost their Greekness and Masonic heritage, although often the line of descent has become

tenuous. The profane world has intruded into the Greek temple, even into the Phi Beta Kappa temple.⁵¹ Obviously there has been much borrowing and stepping has been influenced by several sources.

The Masons, so far as is known, have never greatly protested over fraternities filching their format. In fact, some Masonic lodges have a membership requirement that applicants be members of fraternities. While the frat house on the local campus, the graduation ceremony awarding Phi Beta Kappa keys, or the stepping phenomenon we are examining this weekend are far removed from Freemasons meeting in Virginia taverns in the eighteenth century, they nevertheless are descendants, and we strongly suspect that on at least some occasions the conviviality of the brothers and sisters, if not the ritual, might recall those distant forbearers.

NOTES

1. Sometimes members of what appear to be secret societies, including those in Masonic organizations, assert that there is really nothing secret. After all, the buildings are self-evident and exposes are regularly published. “There are no secrets in Freemasonry. There never have been. Soon after the formation of a Grand Lodge in England exposes appeared in newspapers, tracts, books, and by other means of disseminating information.” Allen E. Roberts, *Freemasonry in American History*, Macoy Publishing, Richmond (Virginia), 1985, 1. “Freemasons habitually compose their own definitions for their own use, expecting the world at large to accept them without question. We have self-defined ‘secret society’ to exclude the Craft, but we must realize double-talk does not change reality, anymore than you can repeal the Law of Gravity..secret societies have six common elements. (1) SECRECY, particularly as to forms and ceremonies. (2) EXCLUSIVENESS, with strict admission requirements. (3) HIERARCHICAL, requiring a progressive status system. (4) ORDEAL, calling for an Initiation trial of greater or less rigorousness. (5) MYTHIC ORIGIN, sometimes semi-factual, sometimes outright imaginary. (6) SELF-CONTAINED, by separating themselves from the common world.” “Secrecy”, *Royal Arch Mason*, Vol.18 No.4, Winter 1994, 118.

2. “The trend of Masonic thought at any given period is probably better reflected in the rituals in use at that time than anywhere else, and this phase of Masonic study and research has been sadly neglected, probably due to the many difficulties confronting the one undertaking it.” Wm. L. Cummings, “Rites and Ritual”, *Royal*

Arch Mason, Vol.18 No.4, Winter 1994 (originally published in the June 1944 issue, 179-183), 107.

3. See S. Brent Morris, *Why Thirty-Three?*, Scottish Rite Research Society, Dallas (Texas), 1991. (Originally a paper presented at the second meeting of the SRRS, 21 October 1991. Also, “Why another Research Organization?”, *The Scottish Rite Research Society Newsletter*, Vol.1 No.1, October 1991, 1. Norman d. Peterson, “Scottish Rite Research: Conjectures, Ambitious Proposals, and The Third Millennium”, *The Plumblin*, Scottish Rite Research Society, Vol.2 No.4, December 1993, 1-4.

4 “History of Stepping”, Latins Step! com, <http://latinosstep.lcom/history/>

5 Jacqui Malone, *Steppin’ on the Blues: The Visible Rhythms of African American Dance*, University of Illinois Press, Urbana and Chicago, 1996, 5172-174.

6 “Why Pledge a Fraternity?” at <http://www.geocities.com/Athens/Agora/9223/Greeks.html>

7. “Fraternity leaders...”, *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, 15 November 1996, A49.

8. “The subject of men’s fraternal organizations was, until recently, not one to elicit much scholarly attention. Generally white, and middle-class, the Masons, Rotarians, et. Al., arguably belonged neither to the ‘great thinkers’ nor to the ‘struggling masses’ — hence their limited appeal to intellectual and Marxist historians alike. Fortunately, new interest in popular culture, and in gender-related issues is making fraternalism seem less the plaything of Mencken’s ‘booboisie,’ and more a significant register of cultural change, a fit subject for academic

inquiry.” Clifford Putney, “Service Over Secrecy: How Lodge-Style Fraternalism Yielded Popularity to Men’s Service Clubs”, *Journal of Popular Culture*, Vol. 27 No.1, Summer 1993, 179. Putney argues that “The ‘anti-progressive’ character of Victorian fraternalism becomes even clearer once one accepts that, rather than charity, it was ritualism upon which lodge members concentrated, ritualism which provided their main source of activity.” *Ibid.*, 182.

⁹. In April 1971, Elihu, one of Yale’s secret societies, sent a letter to the *Yale Daily News*: “In the present era, we find ritual, mystery, chauvinism, and self-serving elitism to be anachronisms at best.” Anyone interested in membership was told to call 865-9881. A. Bartlett Giamatti, *History of Scroll and Key, 1942-1972*, Published by The Society, New Haven, 1978, 39.

¹⁰. “Dedicated as the Hall [Scroll and Key building] is to the ideals of truth and beauty and troubadour, conscious as it is of the force of ritual, those ceremonies that contain and continue the best of the past into the new day, it is not finally in ideals or ritual that the life of the Hall goes on. The life goes on as the ideals are embodied in ritual, and the rituals shape the behavior, and are animated by the zest and passion, of human beings.” Giamatti, 49-50.

¹¹. Sometimes it is hard to demarcate between a ritualistic and issue-oriented movement. While the Grange, for example, is certainly an agricultural lobby, it has always had a strong ritualistic side. Rotary or the Lions would seem to be more on the service side, but we have all met members who were as enraptured by the Rotary wheel as anyone ever was by the Masonic square and compass.

¹² *E.g.* Lawrence Ross, whom we will be fortunate to hear tomorrow, mentions in *The Divine Nine* that A. Langston Taylor, a founder of Phi Beta Sigma, was a 33rd

degree Mason Lawrence C. Ross Jr., *The Divine Nine: The History of African American Fraternities and Sororities*, Kensington Books, New York, 2000, 107-108.

¹³ “Step routines are derived from tribal dances performed in Africa. These routines consist of handclapping, footstomping rhythmic movements done in unison by a group. This cultural artform has been enhanced and popularised through the years by the performances of the nine predominantly Africa American national collegiate fraternities and sororities.” “We are Family” at http://srwa.tripod.com/id2_m.htm

¹⁴ James P. W. Goss, “The Moon in Masonic History”, The Masonic Forum on American On line, <http://members.aol.com/forumlead/Symbolism/Freemasonry~moon.htm>

¹⁵ “The History of the Cane: Why Kappas Have Canes”, <http://www.ukans.edu/~kappa/cane.html>

¹⁶ E.g. Thomas Tunsel Pages was a Mason, Pythian, Red Man, Mosaic Templar and Calanthe. “Thomas Tunsel Page”, <http://www.wvculture.org/history/histamne/page.html>

¹⁷ Anita Wills, “The Founder of the Order of True Reforms: The Story of William Washington Browney”, African American Genealogical Society of Northern California, <http://www.aagsnc.org/library/feb99col.htm>

¹⁸ “Interview with Christine Price, interview 1”, Black Appalachians Oral History Project, Special Collections Department, Virginia Tech at <http://spec.lib.vt.edu/spec/arc/bltime/cprice.htm>

¹⁹ “Masonry and the College Fraternity”, <http://srjaarchives.tripod.com/1997-07/Hill.htm>

²⁰ See Timothy L. Wilson, “Terminology” in “Cool Like That: Exploring the World of historically Black Fraternities and Sororities”, <http://www.uvm.edu/~vtconn/journals/1996/wison.html>

²¹ Brother Terrence A.B.Lewis and Brother Ahab El’Askeni, “The History of Stepping”, at <http://3n1promo.com/temple/step.html>

²² “The History of Stepping” at “Stepping Sigma Style”,
<http://members.tripod.com/~HRAM/SIGMAS>

²³. An instance of a secret university society which is neither honorary nor social in the normal sense is Scroll and Key at Yale. The Yale secret societies have a culture of their own, but Scroll and Key too owed something to Phi Beta Kappa. Maynard Mack, *A History of Scroll and Key, 1841-1942*, Scroll and Key, New Haven, 1978, 4-5. “Though endowed from the beginning with a winning doctrine, the society’s real strength has flourished from its ritual, in which it has generally been happy.” *Ibid.*, 42.

²⁴. Richard Nelson Current, *Phi Beta Kappa in American Life: The First Two Hundred Years*, Oxford University Press, New York and Oxford, 1999, 10.

²⁵. See Hank Nuwer, *Broken Pledges: The Deadly Rite of Hazing*, Longstreet Press, Atlanta (Georgia), 1990, *passim*.

²⁶. “Phi Beta Kappa might continue to call itself a fraternity, but undergraduates would have to look elsewhere on campus for a real sense of brotherhood. For comradeship, students could look to new Greek-letter fraternities and other campus clubs that spring up in great profusion from 1825 on. These featured the characteristics that Phi Beta Kappa was losing. They kept secrets...Phi Beta Kappa students themselves started the new fraternity movement, their object being to keep what they liked and to gain what they lacked as brothers in the existing ‘fraternity’. Nine seniors at Union College met in 1825, in a room that two of them shared, to organize under the name of Kappa Alpha. Seven of the nine were or became members of Phi Beta Kappa.” Current, 61.

27. Kent Christopher Owen, "Reflections on the College Fraternity and Its Changing Nature", Jack L. Anson and Robert F. Marchesani Jr. eds., *Baird's Manual of American College Fraternities*, Baird's Manual Foundation, Indianapolis (Indiana), 1991, I-2. Cf. Christopher Shea, "Hamilton College to Bar Students From Living in Fraternities", *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, 17 March 1995, A32.

28. Owen, I-3.

29. "Phi Beta Kappa. The members of this institution have recently removed the injunction of secrecy imposed by its obligations, and have left the world to form a just notion of its moral and social principles. This event has doubtless been hastened by the development of its mysteries published in the first edition of this Ritual. This act of the Phibetian society shows the good sense of its members; and also that its purposes were not political. Had politics, as in Masonry, been its main object, it would have held on with tenacity to its principles, as to the threads of life, and, disregarding its departure from sound morals, or patriotism, would still have contended, with the infatuation of a Mormonite, for the enjoyment, in secret, of that which in the eye of the public would overwhelm its members in confusions." "A Traveller in the United States", *A Ritual and Illustrations of Free-Masonry and the Orange and Odd Fellows' Societies, Accompanied by Numerous Engravings, and a Key to the Phi Beta Kappa*, S. Thorne, Devon (Shebbear, near Hatherleigh, England), 1835, 251.

30. "Of all the zealots, none aroused hotter indignation among Federalists than did the president of Yale College, Timothy Dwight. In his baccalaureate address of

September 9, 1797...Dwight thought the peril imminent. He could cite as an incontrovertible authority the just-published book by the University of Edinburgh's Professor John Robison, *Proofs of a Conspiracy against All the Religions and Governments of Europe, Carried on in the Secret Meetings of Free Masons, illuminati, and Reading Societies....* Good Federalists among the Phi Beta Kappa members, listening to Dwight's harangues or reading them in pamphlet form, could hardly avoid twinges of concern and even of guilt. Plainly a secret society could be a devilish thing, and they belonged to a secret society, which had originated in Virginia at the College of William and Mary — the state and the college of the Jacobinical Jefferson himself. And the society's very name stood for 'philosophy the guide of life,' which was precisely the satanic error that Dwight warned against. Perhaps God-fearing, right-thinking members of the thing ought to terminate it before it developed its potential for mischief." *Current*, 32-33.

31. *Catalogue of the Harvard Chapter of Phi Beta Kappa: Alpha of Massachusetts. With the Constitution, the Charter, Extracts from the Records, Historical Documents, and Notes*, Cambridge, 1912, 112-13, qtd.*Current*, 34.

32. One indication of whether an organization has retained more than a pro forma interest in ritualism is the offering to the already initiated of additional initiations or degrees. Many of the social fraternities confer additional honors or awards, often to alumni, while the honorary fraternities are content with their basic induction ceremonies. Phi Beta Kappa never acquired a complex honors system like that of Freemasonry, although such a suggestion was made on at least one occasion. A partisan of giving additional honors wrote, "Why do you suppose that there are 32nd degree Masons? Because the Masonic system is adapted to human

nature. Then why not 64th degree Phi Beta Kappas? Why not a scheme of honors for intellectual attainments — so many points for a scholarly book, so many for a course of reading, a task of memory, the points to be awarded by democratically organized graduate chapters?” Edwin J. Akutowicz to “Gentlemen”, 30 April 1994, *American Scholar* records, qtd. Current, 199.

33. The “higher doctorates” would seem an example of how what appears to be a terminal distinction such as the Ph.D. can be trumped. Americans are unfamiliar with these degrees, given in countries with a British heritage. They are awarded some years after the Ph.D., after submission of books or other accomplishments. In the United States, an LL.D. is generally an honorary degree — but at the University of Western Australia, where Rich gained his Ph.D., it is one of the higher doctorates, a sort of academic equivalent of the Masonic 33rd degree.

34. American honorary fraternities were slow to expand overseas. In 1907 Americans at Oxford petitioned for a Phi Beta Kappa chapter, but the Senate and Council of Phi Beta Kappa never authorized one. Current, 109.

35. The gulf that developed between the honorary Greeks and the social Greeks has remained and even deepened. There has been no successful repetition of the early nineteenth century fraternity with intellectual and social aspiration. Why this has proved impossible deserves research. Indeed, considering how widespread that secret and ritualistic societies and their progeny became, not just on college campuses but for all kinds of people and in every village and town. — recalling, for example, the Redmen, Odd Fellows, the Pythians, Moose, Eagles, Elks and others — social scientists might give more attention to this aspect of popular

culture: “Young Protestant middle-class men sought their rituals not only in the fraternal and beneficiary lodges, but also in scores of voluntary associations with primarily religious, reform, political, or economic objectives. College fraternities are an obvious example, but they involved few men and their initiations were brief and underdeveloped. Fraternal initiation was more important in Mormonism, temperance societies, the Know-Nothings and the Knights of the Golden Circle, the Grange, labor and veterans’ organizations, and the life insurance industry. Historians of each of these subjects have commented on the peculiar role of initiation, which they generally have attributed to shield members from blacklisting, and fraternal life insurance firms used ritual to remind members to pay premiums. What is less appreciated is the extent to which founders and members regarded ritual as important in and of itself.” Mark C. Carnes, *Secret Ritual and Manhood in Victorian America*, Yale University Press, New Haven and London, 1989, 6. “Fraternal orders are vehicles for exploring the experiences and values of specific groups. Moreover, as institutions flourishing in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, they enhance our understanding of the changes accompanying America’s industrialization, urbanization, and modernization.” Lynn Dumenil, *Freemasonry and American Culture, 1880-1930*, Princeton University Press, Princeton (New Jersey), 1984, 221.

36. The differences between countries can be extraordinary. For example, the Odd Fellows, which in the United States and England have always been a lower middle class movement, are elitist in Scandinavia. The Orange Order, such a disturbing political influence in modern day Ireland, was primarily social in the United States.

37. See Carnes, 161.

38. Few public or university libraries take seriously the collecting of material on the Masons or indeed fraternities, so the serious researcher must get permission to use Masonic and fraternal archives and libraries. A number date from the nineteenth century and have large holdings. An idea of what they might contain is indicated by the classifications of the Library of the Supreme Council of the Scottish Rite in Washington, which dates back to 1888 and even then had more than eight thousand volumes. Categories include philosophy and symbolism, church and state, paraphernalia, glassware, benevolent and educational institutions, hospitals, cemeteries, architecture, poetry and drama, humor and satire, and women in Masonry. See William L. Boyden, *Classification of the Literature of Freemasonry and Related Societies*, Supreme Council 33^o, Ancient and Accepted Scottish Rite of Freemasonry of the Southern Jurisdiction of the United States of America, Washington, 1959 [1946]. Boyden was appointed librarian in 1893 and served until his death in 1939, recognized as the dean of Masonic librarians of his era. Cf. United Grand Lodge of Free and Accepted Masons of England and Shadwell H. Clerke (Grand Secretary), *Catalogue of Books in the Library at Freemasons' Hall*, London, George Kenning, London, 1888.

39. "In 1934 J. Ray Shute, then Secretary of the North Carolina Lodge of Research and Grand Master of the Cryptic Rite, visited the office of Quatuor Coronati Lodge [in London] in the company of William Moseley Brown, Grand Master of Virginia, expecting a cordial welcome from its 'distinguished Secretary, William J. Songhurst.' What they encountered was rather different. Shute 'felt that we were

due and doubtless would receive some attention and co-operation. Alas and alack, such was not the case. He was pompous and, to us at least, arrogant. In fact, Bill lost his temper when he presented his card as Grand Master and requested to visit Grand Lodge headquarters and was rebuffed.” R.A.Gilbert, “To See Ourselves as Others See Us”, privately circulated copy of paper delivered before Quatuor Coronati Lodge, London, n.d., 4. Such papers, several of which are cited, are circulated to members of Masonic research lodges for their comments and criticisms, which are then read by the secretary of lodge have the presentation of the lecture. In the case of Quatuor Coronati, they often then appear in the lodge’s proceedings.

40. Just to take one aspect of these groups, their function as “a means for assimilating aspiring members of the idling classes into the ranks of the elite” would make prosopography rewarding. Trevor Burnard, “A Tangled Cousinry? Associational Networks of the Maryland Elite, 1691-1776”, *The Journal of Southern History*, Vol.LXI No.1, February 1995, 43.

41. Studying the Tuesday Club, an eighteenth-century Annapolis, Maryland society, Trevor Burnard remarks, “It is important as a guide to elite associational patterns in two respects. First, an analysis of the regular membership of the club illustrates that elite networks were not ‘fortress[es] designed to hold a hostile world at bay, but rather [were] sprawling and spatially discontinuous domain[s] open to, interspersed with, and elaborately enmeshed in [their] environment.’ Second, the nature of the club demonstrates that colonial Marylanders were eager to learn the ways of gentility.” Burnard, 40.

42. . As an example, a considerable problem for the researcher is the dating system used by different Masonic bodies. Ordinary Craft or blue lodge Masons who have taken the first three degrees of Entered Apprentice, Fellowcraft and Master Mason use the Anno Lucis system, adding 4000 years and giving the year as dated from the Creation. Thus a blue lodge Masonic document of 1995 would be 5995. Royal Arch Masons begin the calendar with the start of work on the Second Temple at Jerusalem in 530 B.C., so that this is the year 2525. Royal and Select Masters number the years from the completion of the original King Solomon's Temple in 1000 B.C. making this the year 2995. Masonic Knights Templar date documents from the founding of the Order in 1118 and hence this is 877See "Anno Lucis Stands Not Alone", *The Diadem*, April 1994, No.14, 17.

43. The ciphers number in the hundreds, so it is not a matter of simply learning a 'standard Masonic cipher'. Describing one such document, S.Brent Morris writes, "The cipher has some semblance of Chinese ideographs, and certain pages are decorated with pen sketches that have a masonic tone. Representative illustrations include blazing stars, a cubical stone with a square resting on it, a carpet with an hourglass and cross between a square and compasses, and a sketch of what seems to be the layout of a lodge room." S.Brent Morris, "The Mystery of the Folger Manuscript", advance copy of a paper delivered to Quatuor Coronati Lode No.2076, London, 4 September 1992, 32.

44. Ambrose Bierce, *The Enlarged Devil's Dictionary*, Penguin, Harmondsworth (England), 1971, 134, qtd.Christopher Haffner, *Workman Unashamed: The Testimony of a Christian Freemason*, Lewis Masonic, London, 1989, 57.

45. Ironically, the enemies of secret societies are often willing to accept outlandish claims of their longstanding influence. Pat Robertson of the 700 Club

and CBN fame is one of the more recent recruits to the conspiracy theories which make the study of such societies so difficult: his book *The New World Order* is replete with references to the Illuminati, the Masons, and the idea that a cabal has been behind the French Revolution and assassination of Lincoln. Much of the hysteria arises from using sources which border on the fictional. *E.g.* “The real test of Masonic acceptance of the Ancient Mystery theories of Mackey and Pike is to study the writings of serious Masonic historians from the authentic school, not those from the romantic period. The publications of Quatuor Coronati Lodge No.2076, the American Lodge of Research, the Texas Lodge of Research, the Ohio Chapter of Research, and others show that these absurd theories have been politely ignored. They have died the quiet death they deserved. The pathetic irony is that only one group today believes the tall tales of Mackey and Pike — not the Grand Lodges, not the Scottish Rite, but the antimasons. Our enemies are so anxious to believe the worst about us, they rush to embrace hypotheses long since abandoned, if ever widely accepted. Whether they are incompetent as historians or simply facile liars is for other to decide.” S.Brent Morris, “The Letter ‘G’, *The Plumblin*, Scottish Rite Research Society, Vol. 1 No.3, September 1992, 2.

46. There is a considerable Masonic press, with publications appearing in many countries. A British observer comments about the American situation that, “There appears to be an entire industry devoted to Masonic literature which ranging from the ‘official’ journals of the more or less orthodox Craft to a plethora of ‘fringe’ publications which take in the widest variety of themes and organizations and which seem to have only the vaguest of associations of Masonry as we know it.” Engelsman, 1.

47. British Masons were less inclined to appear in public in Masonic costume than were American Masons, but the willingness in the 1870s of the then prince of Wales (later King Edward VII) to be photographed in Masonic regalia has been considered “to have opened the floodgates for members of the Craft to be photographed in masonic regalia, for although brethren had for some time been photographed while displaying appropriate masonic gestures, very few had been photographed in masonic regalia. It thus seems that the portrait of the Prince gave the Royal seal of approval to similar photographs; certainly it was very popular as copies of the portrait can be seen to this day in many Masonic Temples throughout the Provinces.” David Peabody, “The Portraits of the Quatuor Coronati Lodge No.2076”, privately circulated copy of a lecture to Quatuor Coronati Lodge No.2076, London, 8 September 1994, 6.

48. Moreover, the role of ritualism in international relations is still little researched. See Michael Antolik (Department of Government, Manhattan College, New York), “Informality: The New Ritual of Conference Diplomacy” paper prepared for the 36th annual convention of the International Studies Association, Chicago, 24 February 1995.

49. “The level of research within the Craft is low, and mostly concerns the local history of lodges or remembrance of folk heroes or other famous Americans who were freemasons. Whether their membership of the Craft was the cause of their becoming famous or not, is irrelevant but in general the ‘Hall of Fame’ syndrome is well established in American society, as I learned when once in California a Texan brother dragged me along to see a masonic apron said to have belonged to

Davy Crockett.” Michel Brodsky, “Breaking the Ring”, privately circulated advance copy of lecture to Quatuor Coronati Lodge No. 2076, 10 November 1994, 3.

⁵⁰ Malone, 5.

⁵¹. In the early 1950s the Bates Shoe Company began advertising a line of Phi Bates, but the attorneys for Phi Beta Kappa advised against bringing suit. Upsetting were the Fybate Lecture Notes, a commercial venture of cram outlines that enabled students to pass exams without taking classes. Equally annoying was a line of Phi Beta panties and brassieres that was introduced in 1963. A letter of complaint from Phi Beta Kappa was dismissed with the company’s reply that “I am sure you will agree, however, that there was no trade mark infringement involved because of the dissimilarities of the goods and services involved.” Max Factor makeup followed with an eye makeup promoted as Eye Beta Kappa and Bloomingdale’s opened boutiques in its stores under the name of Phi Beta Caper. When Capuchino High School in San Bruno, California, started an honor society named Phi Beta Cap, Phi Beta Kappa protests fell on deaf ears. The school’s attorneys replied that “In reviewing the law on this matter we have concluded that the letters Phi Beta, being of common usage, are not the sole property of any organization or fraternity...The question then resolves as to whether the terms ‘Cap’ and ‘Kappa’ are the same or similar enough to be misleading. In our humble opinion, they are not.” So Capuchino High School students still join Phi Beta Cap. Current, 241-243.