



SCOTT
MEREDITH
LITERARY
AGENCY INC.

March 9, 1981

Mr. Don Elkins

Dear Mr. Elkins:

RE: THE LAW OF THE ONE (RA SESSIONS)

First of all, Mr. Elkins, I'd like to thank you for giving us this opportunity to take a look at your work and consider it for its market potential and possible representation. We've always taken a special interest in new or unestablished writers in all genres and on all topics -- indeed, we pride ourselves on the many discoveries that we've made over the years. But I must say that I took a particular interest in your submission, when it came across my desk this morning, along with my editors' extensive commentary.

Occult and esoteric topics have long fascinated me, ever since I was a young man. I've long taken a serious professional interest in them, as well. I'm proud to represent such unconventional storytellers as the late H.P. Lovecraft, Max Ehrlich, Robert Bloch, Philip Jose Farmer, and Arthur C. Clarke -- but truth is often stranger than fiction -- and a lot more compelling. So I've never hesitated to represent the iconoclastic books of adventurous writers like Jess Stearn, Immanuel Velikovsky, or Sydney Omarr -- the public has a right to know about these things, no matter how hard they are for them to accept. So you can see that THE LAW OF THE ONE is right up my alley, in a manner of speaking. I'm genuinely glad to be working with you, Mr. Elkins; and I sincerely hope that this will prove to be just the beginning of a long and ultimately profitable relationship for both of us.

Well, my editors and I have now read your submission closely (and the additional material that you forwarded us), and we've considered it long and carefully. You've given us the material for what could be a very captivating book. This sort of thing isn't new to us -- Jane Roberts' SETH books have enjoyed an enormous success, as have a number of books about the late Edward Cayce; while James Merrill's MIRABELL, a long poem composed, in part, by a ouija board only

recently won him a Pulitzer Prize -- and echo, many of my literary friends have suggested, of the work of another far greater poet -- W.B. Yeats, whose A VISION was based on the automatic writings of his wife. William Blake, one of the greatest writers who's ever graced the surface of our planet relied on his visionary experiences for much of his poetic and philosophic material.

So the idea of a book that's composed by a disembodied entity, that's only communicating through an individual that's in a trance state doesn't strike us as being intrinsically off the wall -- in fact it strikes us as just the opposite -- something that, if it was handled properly, could become an enormous commercial and philosophical success.

But as we read through your script, we found that it suffered from a number of quite serious problems, which finally forced us to conclude that it just isn't something that we could take on, simply because we feel that if we were to let this loose on the marketplace, its chances would be negligible, if not nonexistent. So we're going to have to decline this opportunity to represent THE LAW OF THE ONE on today's intensely competitive marketplace, and send it back to you, with our regrets. We're also going to have to recommend against your revising or augmenting this, since we found those problems to be quite deeply rooted in both the concept and the structure of your book. It's not just a simple matter of some amplification, explication, or editing, Mr. Elkins. I'm afraid that this just isn't a viable offering.

I know that you must be quite disappointed by these tidings -- well, to be quite frank with you, we are too. We really do wish that we could have decided otherwise. But I'd like to help you to salvage something of value from this unfortunate experience, by giving you an opportunity to learn from your mistakes. So what we're going to do, in the remainder of this report, is to tell you, quite candidly, just where we think this script goes wrong -- and perhaps more importantly, we'll give you some pointers, some guidelines, to help you in your future writing projects -- of which we sincerely hope there will be many.

First of all, although we're all intimately familiar with this sort of approach, you're not considering the general reader at all. You're just plunging him into these transcripts, in media res, as it were, without telling him just what's going on. And an introduction by another author won't do the trick, Mr. Elkins. A preface can acquaint the reader with the particulars -- who you are, how you got in touch with RA, your reasons for believing that the transcripts are authentic -- but to really effectively hook the reader, you've got to continually work on his credulity, throughout the text, anticipating his questions, and reinforcing your answers.

But even assuming that you did that, the reader is still going to be asking an even stickier kind of question -- it's the question that readers have always asked, ever since writing was invented. He'll want to know why he should be interested in your material, what should compel him to keep reading it, all the way to the bitter end. You can't take a reader's interest for granted when you're writing for the general marketplace, and not a captive, professional audience.

Well, you tell us in your cover letter that you're going to address and resolve

all of the following mysteries -- the process of evolution, the missing link, the stone heads of Easter Island, the lines at Nazca, all of the pyramids, Atlantis, Lemuria, UFO's, and as if that wasn't enough, "many others," as well.

In other words, you're going to address every one of those chic, trendy mysteries that so many writers have been making their bread and butter out of in these days, in the pulp tabloids and the paperbacks that crowd the racks in our supermarkets and bus stations. You even deal with bigfoot, in the additional material!

But then we have to ask the most serious question of all. If those topics are going to guarantee your readers' interest, will RA's discussion hold their interest? Does he address them in a persuasive and fascinating way? Are his remarks so intriguing that we don't care whether or not he does really exist? (Many readers will never yield ground on that point, no matter how much evidence you adduce). But the answer to that all-important question, I'm afraid, is an emphatic no.

His language is so dense, so convoluted, so overburdened by his pseudoscientific jargon that it creates a virtually impenetrable barrier to our comprehension and our edification. He obfuscates much more than he elucidates, I'm afraid. So when we read passages like the following one (a completely representative sample, I think), our efforts are only rewarded by confusion:

. . . We must add that many systems of teach/learning the healing/patient nexus are proper given the various mind/body/spirit complexes. We ask your imagination to consider the relative simplicity of the mind in the earlier cycle and the less distorted, but often overly complex views and thought/spirit processes of the same mind/body/spirit complexes after many incarnations. We also ask your imagination to conceive of those who have chosen the distortion of service and have removed their mind/body/spirit complexes from one dimension to another, thus bringing with them in totally latent form many skills and understandings which more closely match the distortions of the healing/patient process.

No entity that wreaks such havoc with the English language is going to ingratiate himself with the general reading public. This has all the denseness of THE NEW ENGLAND JOURNAL OF MEDICINE, or the JOURNAL OF ENGLISH AND GERMAN PHILOLOGY, or a Ph.D. dissertation on epistemology -- but it's also so void of information -- of content -- that it makes a reader positively squirm with impatience. If you carefully analyze that passage, you'll realize that all of those things could have been said in two or three short sentences, composed exclusively of one and two syllable words. You (or your contact) seem to be showing off, rather than earnestly endeavoring to communicate.

Not only that, but the few tidbits of solid information that we are able to glean from that prose are really, well, old hat. Perhaps RA's message has already been widely disseminated -- but most of what he's telling us sounds tremendously familiar. It's just been transmogrified, into that convoluted form. All of that talk about the pyramids, about the fifth and sixth dimensions, about the God-like aliens, ministering to benighted South Americans centuries ago has a depressingly familiar ring. We've

heard it all already. And the whole mystic system of unity underlying all of this has been written about extensively since Parmenides. And by mortals, too. So even if your contact is an authentic one, which I'm inclined to believe, (though I doubt that many readers would be) he's still not going to make much of an impact on the market. As far as the general reader is concerned, he's heard it all already -- in far more eloquent, or at least readable, prose.

Another problem here lies in the fact that you make no effort to break the transcripts up -- to structure them, and intersperse them with your own commentary. RA needs a lot of explaining, for one thing, and for another thing, the dialogue form gets pretty tedious after a while. It was all the rage in Athens for a while, I know, and its popularity continued all the way through the neoclassic renaissance -- but it died out shortly afterwards, and I don't think that it's about to be revived. /

If you were to look at some of those SETH books, you'd see that she caters to the reader's doubts by breaking in to explain or justify. The straight SETH transcripts usually only take up about half of her books. That's been the case in almost all books of this sort. For one thing, you've got to always remember that most of your readers aren't going to believe in your entity, and for another, you've got to remember that even if they do, you can still vitiate that interest by boring them to death. Variety is the spice of life, Mr. Elkins. But what's needed even more than variety is some organization. This whole book is rather scattered. If you'd endeavored to structure it in such a way that it would form a fully developed argument, then it would have been infinitely more effective. Unity, Mr. Elkins, is as important in books as it is in the universe.

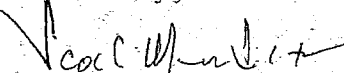
So I'm sorry that I couldn't be more encouraging here, Mr. Elkins. I'd have liked to see you succeed in your project, but as it stands so far it's just not something that I could take out and sell. And I don't see how you could ameliorate that situation. Those problems are quite intrinsic to this, as you can see.

I'd welcome another opportunity to work with you, someday, with some more promising material, towards a more profitable result. I think that you sound like an intriguing individual, someone that's got a lot of important things to say. So I'll be sending you one of our style sheets, to acquaint you with the preferred manuscript format.

Well, I've enjoyed working with you, Mr. Elkins, and I do hope I'll be hearing from you again, some time. I hope that I've been helpful to you.

For now, then, all best wishes.

Sincerely,


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