

Missing Links and Secret Histories:

**A Selection of Wikipedia Entries
from Across the Known Multiverse**

edited by

L. Timmel Duchamp



Seattle



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Caveat Lector; or How I Ransacked Wikipedias across the Multiverse Solely to Amuse and Edify Readers

Where would we, the postmodern human world, be without Wikipedia? That august institution of the Internet may not be absolutely reliable one hundred percent of the time (as anyone honored with an entry can probably tell you), and it may not be all-inclusive, and entries may change hourly when factions are contesting ownership of an entry with flaming keystrokes, but for now, anyway, there's just nothing like it.

Like most timely ideas, Wikipedia continually spawns a host of offspring, specialized wikis designed to pool information on topics that might be only glancingly mentioned (if that) in the capital-W Wikipedia. Besides all these children of Wikipedia, though, it is time, I feel, to acknowledge the *siblings* of Wikipedia: viz., the many Wikipedias that exist across the Multiverse. *Missing Links and Secret Histories: A Selection of Wikipedia Entries from Across the Known Multiverse* collects a sampling of entries from just a handful of these sibling Wikipedias—entries I thought might shed interesting or edifying light on the familiar narratives we know (and in some cases love) in our own small corner of the Multiverse.

Just as readers are expected to approach the capital-W Wikipedia at their own risk, so they must do with the entries herein. Whether the topic is God, the apocalypse, or relations between the infamous Dr. Moreau and the notorious Colonel Kurtz, caveat lector: the entries that follow are intended for readers' amusement and edification only. I, after all, am only the channel for the entries' transmission and claim no authority for their truthfulness or accuracy in *our* universe.

—Editor L. Timmel Duchamp, Multiverse Explorer

The Five Petals of Thought

Nisi Shawl

The Five Petals of Thought

The Five Petals of Thought, aka **the New Bedford Rose**, refers to a philosophical system dating back to the late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth centuries, which was widely adopted by activists in Anglophone countries, primarily the US and, to some extent, Great Britain.^[1]

Within this article “the Five Petals” and “the Rose” are sometimes used as shortened versions of the system’s full name.

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Introduction

Elements and Structures

The Five Petals of the New Bedford Rose represent Thought, Action (also called “pre-action” and “pro-action”), Observation, Integration, and New Action (also called “re-action”). Thought is the first step in any course. The first petal is thus associated with visualizations, dreams, and all other methods of forming concepts. Action is next; its alternative names of pre-action and pro-action refer to the idea that any action taken will serve as a prequel or prologue to another action. Observation occurs both during and after Action, and provides material for Integration into the original concept. Integration then leads to New Action.^[2]

Many followers of the New Bedford Rose stipulate its application as cyclical in nature, saying that New Action should be followed again by Observation, Integration, and further New Action.^[citation needed]

African Influences

Descendants of formerly enslaved Africans are among the earliest proponents of the Five Petals,^[citation needed] but controversy surrounds the assertion that African-based philosophies underlie them. Skye, writing in the most popular book on the subject, *The Five Petals of Thought*, uses several Yoruba, Igbo, and other West African words and phrases. Primary sources appear to ignore them in favor of European-derived terminology. This could be attributed to cultural deracination, or it could mean that originally there was no such connection.

Asian Influences

Despite comparisons to the Five Elements philosophies of China and Japan and parallels in Hinduism and related East Indian religions, no direct path can be traced between these traditions and the Five Petals.

American Influences and Others

Strong evidence exists that members of South Carolina's Lumbee tribe participated in the founding of the Five Petals community on Harker Island.^[3] However, too-great assimilation combined with the subsequent near-erasure of Lumbee cultural identity makes it impossible to assess the degree to which the philosophy borrowed from Lumbee or other indigenous traditions.

Due to the undeniable presence of formerly-indentured Irish and English and other immigrants^[citation needed] in the Harker Island, North Carolina community and throughout the history of the Five Petals, European influence on the philosophy's systematization is safe to assume, though controversial in its extent.

History

Harker Island

As recounted in Elvira Coker's 1858 memoir The Three Rivers, this was the site of the philosophy's first Utopian community. A large contingent from an inland village of Lumbees joined forces with manumitted black slaves and formerly-indentured whites. Coker claims the community operated according to the Five Petals system between its 1755 founding and its dissolution in 1816. Nothing in local records contradicts her assertions, and though she admits that she could have been little more than a child, and then only during the community's final years, her detailed and colorful account is all modern historians have to draw on. A sample:

Aunt Abby spoke to all of us gathered there like a Gypsy princess, gazing into the heart of the bonfire like looking in a crystal ball, telling all our futures. We [were] to fly all over the country, as [if we were] little birds or spinning seeds, or drops of water from a big wave, or sparks from that selfsame fire. Oh, it was poetry! Her black hair was whipping around in the wind, and her pretty glass beads were shining and I wanted to be her.

Responding apparently to threats of violence by those surrounding them, the community split up, with “Aunt Abby” (Abigail Day), her brother Pursell, and a few others traveling to New Bedford’s manufactories.

Ramblin School

The 1833 lease for the grounds and buildings originally housing the Ramblin School is the earliest historical record of the existence of the Five Petals of Thought. Louanne Gonder, with the financial backing of her sister “Bee” (Carlotta Beatrice Day), founded the school. A prospectus from its early years promises “training in the principles of the New Bedford Rose for young girls about to enter employment or marriage.”

The school continued operation until its closure during the second wave of the influenza epidemic of 1918. Though in August of that year staff appeared unaffected by the disease, administrators deemed it prudent not to open and risk exposure and possible infection.^[4]

Civil War and Reconstruction

It was during the US Civil War that Ramblin School and the Rose as a whole first became closely identified with medicine and nursing.^[citation needed] Resistance to white supremacist backlash during Reconstruction helped spread and popularize its teachings.^[1] Five Petals teachings are credited with preventing the destruction of Wilmington, North Carolina’s black majority.^[3]

The Great War

Unwilling to fight as soldiers, followers of the Five Petals found themselves forced to ally with religious Conscientious Objectors, usually Quakers and Christadelphians.^[1] Mass sentiment turned against them as pacifism became equated in the public's mind with cowardice, and the dissolution of Ramblin School during this period seemed to confirm the movement's death.

Depression-Era Efforts

Despite the economic downturn most of the US experienced in the 1930s, or perhaps because of it, the Five Petals flourished.^[2] Establishing farms and cottage industries that dealt in trade items reminiscent of those produced long ago on Harker Island, Five Petals communities sprang up throughout New England and the Great Lakes Region. Brooms, crockery, blankets, and similarly simple household goods supplemented farm produce offered to individuals and institutions at prices they evidently found affordable.^[5]

Somewhat sparser but still noteworthy Rose distribution could be found in the Northwest, with one community (Black Diamond) forming in Idaho.^[6]

The success of these business efforts was attributed by adherents to the correctness of the Five Petals philosophy; their enthusiasm and the system's rising popularity averted the collapse that had once seemed inevitable.^[2]

Pacifism and “Women's work”

Participation in the “just” war against Nazism proved even more difficult to resist than in previous conflagrations.

Drawing on farming, crafting, medical, and educational expertise, and putting to use their well-honed skills in social organizing, those who practiced the Five Petals made themselves indispensable to the military in a variety of noncombat roles.^[1] Some of these practitioners were women, and the rest were men unafraid

of so-called women's work, which reinforced in the men charged with recruiting soldiers the idea of their unfitness for service, at least at first. Avowed and ascribed sexual proclivities also tended to exempt Five Petals adherents from military duty.^[2] In many cases earlier ties to pacifistic religions were reaffirmed; through various strategies all WWII's 640,000-plus active followers of the New Bedford Rose in the US, Canada, Great Britain, Australia, and New Zealand managed to escape combat.^[1]

On the "Home Front," Five Petals organizers launched study groups and established cooperative nurseries, causing former homemakers to seriously consider the movement's philosophy. Often this consideration ended in their becoming new members.^[2]

In contrast to the deleterious effects of WWI, adherent numbers rose slightly during this period, and outsider opinion of the Five Petals significantly improved.^[1]

Red and Pink

After WWII, with very few exceptions, the influence of the Five Petals of Thought shrank. Certain labor unions remained true to their roots, but many more capitulated to increasingly entrenched corporate interests; anti-communist sentiments and cries of "Pinko!" eradicated the most recent gains in popularity.^[1] Exceptions to the general disaffection included the East Village community, insulated perhaps by its sophisticated urban surroundings^[2] and, conversely, the farm on Whalen Island in Oregon's Sandlake Estuary.^[citation needed]

It is during this period, due most likely to the influence of the Beats or Beatniks, that the Five Petals became associated with Asian philosophy.^[2]

Despite the above exceptions, the Rose was again quiescent for some time.

Black Power and Blacklight

The Civil Rights Movement provided followers of the Five Petals philosophy with a natural field of exercise. The Reverend Dr. King's covert espousal of their methods is now well known; after his death in 1970, and in concert with protestors' radicalization, acceptance grew wider and wider. Student opposition to the Vietnam War fed off this pool of activism and fed into it. Countercultural acceptance of the Five Petals of Thought blossomed, so to speak. ^[1] Much of the philosophy's current preservation is owing to its expansion during that time. This, in turn, has helped its current resurgence.

Adherents

Early Practitioners

Though its origins were highly localized, the Five Petals quickly spread to become a global phenomenon. Early followers include Dorothy Gale, initially a Kansan but eventually a Queen of Oz. ^[citation needed] Two others from roughly the same period were British citizens: Wendy Darling and Jean Muir (Lady Coventry). Darling learned the principles of the New Bedford Rose some time after the girlhood Barrie chronicled, ^[citation needed] but Muir stated emphatically that she owed the crowning success of her acting career, the performance that won her Sir John's marriage proposal, solely to her application of the Five Petals of Thought. ^[7]

Unacknowledged Adherents

In times of the movement's retreating influence few admitted to studying the Five Petals, much less espousing them. ^[1] Still, skilled detective work reveals that among those who must have owed much to the Five Petals philosophy was Mardou Fox. Her carefully cryptic diary reflects the period's lack of openness, yet tells more of her internal states than Beat author Jack Kerouac manages to

convey in his booklength account of their love affair. Repeated appointments with “Missy C.” and “Doctor Dee” indicate that she met with code-named activist organizers now understood to have been deeply involved in the Rose’s recruitment efforts.^[8]

Other possible secret adherents under investigation include Claudine Willy and Emma Peel.^[citation needed]

Current Celebrity Practitioners

Today’s accepting atmosphere means that open avowals of support for the Five Petals of Thought are common. Geneticist Shori Ina, “retired” rock star Hollis Henry, high-powered LA agent Angela Toussaint, and hacker Marcus Yallow, to name just a few, are all Five Petals proponents. A longer list is available on [the movement’s website](#).

Rediscovery

The immensely successful popular psychology book *The Five Petals of Thought* by Melissa Skye is undoubtedly responsible for the resurgence of the activist philosophy for which it was named. Though it wasn’t published till 2005, Skye has stated in an online interview that she’d worked on the book’s manuscript for over a decade (eleven years) and that her interest in the topic started developing even earlier. This was in part due to her descent from several of the philosophy’s founders.

Translated into twenty languages and also offered in multiple audiobook formats *The Five Petals of Thought* mainly focuses on personal applications of the philosophy. A brief history section relies heavily on quotations from the works of Coker, “Dee,” and other firsthand participants, and a short chapter speculates on things impossible to determine, such as the philosophy’s ontological roots in the remnants of its first proponents’ African belief systems.^[9]

To date more than 100 million copies of *The Five Petals of Thought* have sold worldwide.^[10]

Related Movements

Feminism

The fight for women’s suffrage in the US and other Anglophone countries may have begun independently of any influence of the Five Petals, but this seems unlikely, given the Rose’s long association with egalitarianism and its tradition of overwhelmingly feminine leadership. Certainly the suffrage movement’s relatively easy victories in countries where the Five Petals were well established leads one to conclude that the struggle might have been longer and more bitter without their help.^[11]

Conversely, feminism has obviously offered Observations to be Integrated by the Rose’s practitioners.^[citation needed]

Socialism

The many sorts of socialism embraced by followers of the Five Petals both proves the connection between the two movements and highlights how one didn’t necessarily lead to the other. Predating the First International by decades,^[1] the Harker Island settlement may be viewed as a sort of proto-Socialist experiment. But as a philosophy and methodology for creating change rather than a fixed method of redistributing economic benefits, the New Bedford Rose differs from all forms of socialism on a very basic level. It could be said that the Five Petals are a way of *using* socialism.

Notes/References

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- 5 Traynor, Blake and August Sillough (2002). "Transcontinental Institutional Purchasing Patterns in Response to Depression-Era Economic Considerations: Necessity vs. Convention" in *Explorations in Economic History*, v 11, #3, September.
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Other Resources

- *The Three Rivers* by Elvira Coker, 1858, Tannin and Sweete.
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- "Excerpts from the Diaries of 'Doctor Dee'" www.digitidiaries.edu.

Gerayis (or Gedayis)

Alex Dally MacFarlane

Gerayis (or Gedayis)

It was said of Gerayis that as an infant she lapped at the blood in which her grandmother Tomyris placed the head of Cyrus the Great. Though this story was almost certainly a fabrication, crafted by Gerayis herself, among those today who know of Gerayis it is the most commonly told.^[1]

Little is known of this queen. Herodotus did not mention her in his *Histories* alongside her grandmother Tomyris and father Spargapises;^[2] given her age at the event of Cyrus the Great's final battle, and her more likely location away from the battlefield with the other non-combatants of the Massagetae tribe, this is not surprising. As her marriage took her away from the border of the Achaemenid Empire, she did not feature in any of the Near-Eastern sources, nor in any other written sources—until the 2014 discovery of Subjugated Peoples, authored by Herakles. This text is contested in two key areas.^[3]

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- 2 The Stories of Gerayis
 - 2.1 Early Years
 - 2.2 Queen Gerayis (or Gedayis)
 - 2.3 Death
- 3 Notes/References

Subjugated Peoples

The papyri comprising the substantial surviving portions of Subjugated Peoples were discovered in the desert near Babylon.^[4] The author claims to have travelled with Alexander the Great and documented the peoples encountered on the Macedonian army's conquests. To some, this is already the discovery of the century: a contemporary source for Alexander.^[5] Others believe the text fits more accurately into the Romance tradition, citing the fantasti-

cal nature of some of the peoples encountered, and ascribe to its composition a far later date.^[6] Those are the two major arguments, ranging across numerous articles, reviews, and already two books. A smaller number point to the level of detail in the more “realistic” sections and suggest that the text is an interstitial composite of contemporary fact and later fiction.^[7]

The second area of contention concerns the gender of Herakles. While the author’s name is male, arguments that Herakles was secretly a woman are receiving increased attention.^[8]

Subjugated Peoples begins with a clear statement of intent:

Of the unknown world, there are several known facts: a river or mountain range must be crossed to reach it; the people are often strange, six-legged or winged or ruled by women; there are secrets preserved especially for the people of the known world, placed there by gods or local rulers with little knowledge of what they possessed. Whence these facts came need not be elaborated; they are simply known to all men. Herein I endeavor to lay out the truths of these peoples, whose lives beyond their boundaries with the known world are worthy of their own text. (1.1)

This mission of documenting the “true” lives of the peoples met and subjugated by Alexander’s army lent Herakles an open ear; indeed, of the region in which the Massagetae once defeated Cyrus, the author writes: “Stories blow here on the wind like pollen, ready to land on a patch of earth and grow stubbornly despite the often harsh climate in these great reaches” (3.4).

The Stories of Gerayis

Early Years

Of Gerayis the author first reports the popular blood-lapping story: the bloodthirsty infant, grand-daughter of the queen who took

great pleasure in punishing the corpse of the man who threatened her people with conquest and death (3.12).

Gerayis is again mentioned in the context of the succession struggle following Tomyris's later death. According to the stories heard by Herakles: "This young princess, said to have rushed out of her mother's womb already on the back of a horse and wielding a fearsome bow, posed such a threat to the princes competing for the rule of the Massagetae that she was sent away to marry a distant king" (3.16). The king's name is never given. "Gerayis honored the grave of her famous grandmother one last time before departing for her husband's lands" (3.17) is all the indication given of her reaction to this effective banishment. How strongly she contested for the Massagetae throne, if at all, is unknown. Working backwards from later stories, at this time she was aged 13 or 14.

Queen Gerayis (or Gedayis)

For the next 20 years, Gerayis's life remains a mystery. Herakles re-introduces her in another story, about a land beyond the reach of even Alexander:

Now the city of Ta is so distant from the people with whom I sat, that they described it in quite fanciful terms: a city of bones and burnished gold, of vast teeth dangling from the parapets, of rivers running bright with carnelian and turquoise, of people who speak to eagles and feast on the sand that blows in from the desert in great gusts like waves. After all that I have seen, I do not know which of these details to believe.

For many years, a healthy trade existed between the people of the city and the nomadic peoples living on the great plains nearby. The nomadic peoples brought meat and gold and poetry, which they traded in Ta for certain goods that they desired. This process endured peacefully, until a new king began to fear the nomads, who were ruled by a queen with particularly bright eyes: Gedayis,

who could ride a horse faster than any man and shoot an arrow from across great distances. This is surely the Gerayis of the Massagetae, acclaimed for the same skills.

This Gedayis rode into battle with her three daughters, and they were all arrayed with such gold that they gleamed like the sun, which is worshipped by many people in these parts. Each of the daughters was as fearsome as the mother; together, they made whole cities tremble. Convinced that they intended to take his city, this king closed his gates and refused any further trade with the nomads.

After the failure of negotiations, the nomads saw no other choice but to fulfil the king's fears in order to resume their trade. (3.61-64)

What followed was the expected rout. After installing her single son as the wife of the ruler's sister, a set-up that ensured the ongoing flow of trade, Gedayis and her army rode back to their home lands (3.65-67).

Of her son, it is then said only that he lacked any appetite for battle, but fared well as a ruler. "The men with whom I sat relished this story," Herakles adds, "applying particular detail to the nature of the women: soaked in blood, hungry for the severed heads of the enemies, even given to copulating with the finest corpses. When I spoke to some of the women, they told a very different story of Gedayis and her children" (3.68). It is this care taken by Herakles to speak with the women—and the very different stories given in these conversations—that suggests a female author.^[9]

The women said that all four of Gedayis' children fought with her, enjoying the rush of combat, but behaving in no more disturbing fashion than any other soldier. The son fell in love with the city king's sister, and asked that he might be permitted to live there with her and ensure his people's successful trade; he was no weakling, overshadowed by his fearsome sisters.

The women all agreed that Gedayis and her daughters were formidable, but such is the nature called for by people who must defend their livelihoods. For a female ruler, the need to appear terrifying must be even greater; no doubt this is the origin of her legendary supping of blood. The women agreed that Gedayis and Gerayis were the same, even interchanging their names several times as they spoke. The women then emphasized Gedayis's care for her people and the way she spent her time attending to their concerns, mediating disputes over livestock or brides, sourcing healers for the sick, leading forays against wolves and raiders; and she liked nothing better, they said, than to sit with her children and share the fermented mares' milk that is the preferred drink of her people, singing of sheep and battle and embroidery.

It is said of Gerayis that when she died, instead of falling to the ground, she flung herself into the harsh wind and became a part of it, so that her voice may be heard still, blowing across the plains, singing. I like to fancy that I can hear it—but I am not sure what a woman as admirable as Gerayis could say to me. (3.69-71)

Several further tales of Gerayis followed, but none diverged from the narrative sketched above.

Death

Of her death, Herakles adds a more prosaic story: that an illness took her, late in life, and her children buried her in a grand tumulus not far from a great sea. "Gerayis sang once, of the beauty of horses, her words so mumbled that not even her granddaughter, positioned by her side, heard every word; and then her bowl tumbled from her hand and she died" (3.105).

No other details are attested.

Excavations in 2016 of great mounds 10 km northeast of the Caspian Sea^[10] unearthed a series of buried men and women, arrayed

gloriously in gold;^[11] in one, archaeologists found only a golden comb, a clay bowl, and a horse's skeleton.

Notes/References

- 1 See, for example, the 10 November 2018 episode of QI.
- 2 See Herodotus, *Histories*, 1.205-214 for the conflict between Tomyris and Cyrus.
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