

THE MAGICAL ASTROLOGY OF THE BRITISH OCCULT REVIVAL, 1885-1939

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1. THE REBIRTH OF MAGICAL ASTROLOGY

Throughout most of the nineteenth century, astrology in Britain – at least on the surface – was more concerned with the prediction of events than with the condition of the soul. Toward the end of the century, this pragmatic application of horoscopic traditions inherited from Ptolemy and the Arab astrologers of the early medieval period was forcefully challenged. With the birth of Helena Petrovna Blavatsky's Theosophical Society in 1875, two currents of astrology emerged, one a well-publicised perspective which might be viewed as distinctively 'modern', the other a more complex approach not easily categorised as the product of any specific historical epoch. It is the second current, fostered among the secret societies of the *fin-de-siècle*, which forms the subject of this paper.

The first current was inaugurated by William Frederick Allan (1860-1917), a former travelling salesman who joined the Theosophical Society in 1890 and published an impressive corpus of astrological works under the name of Alan Leo – this being, as he was fond of informing his reading public, the sign in which both the Sun and the Ascendant were placed at the moment of his birth.¹ Leo's stated goal was to reform the astrology of the past and make it more 'spiritual' in accordance with Theosophy's emphasis on the soul's evolution and the imminent arrival of a New Age in which a 'higher' state of consciousness would transform society. The 'newness' of this astrology lay primarily in its emphasis on the

¹ For biographical material on Alan Leo, see Kim Farnell, *The Astral Tramp* (London: Ascella, 1998); Patrick Curry, *A Confusion of Prophets: Victorian and Edwardian Astrology* (London: Collins & Brown, 1992), 122-59; Nicholas Campion, *A History of Western Astrology, Vol. 2: The Medieval and Modern Worlds* (London: Hambledon Continuum, 2009), 231-34; Bessie Leo, *The Life and Work of Alan Leo, Theosophist-Astrologer-Mason* (London: Fowler, 1919). For Leo's own publications, see, *inter alia*, Alan Leo, *How to Judge a Nativity* (London: Modern Astrology, 1903); Alan Leo, *Astrology for All* (London: Modern Astrology, 1904); Alan Leo, *The Key to Your Own Nativity* (London: Modern Astrology, 1910); Alan Leo, *Esoteric Astrology* (London: Modern Astrology, 1913).

delineation of character in the birth horoscope as a means of achieving spiritual growth.² Leo's individualistic focus, which shifted the understanding of astrology from a predictive tool to a map of personal development, profoundly influenced the currents of twentieth- and twenty-first-century astrological practice. But Leo was still concerned with reading natal horoscopes within a Ptolemaic framework.

The second current of astrology emerged as an alternative to, rather than a reflection of, Theosophical doctrines. Blavatsky was opposed to the practice of magic, but some of the Society's most important members – in particular William Wynn Westcott (1848-1925) and Samuel Liddell MacGregor Mathers (1854-1918) – irritated with Blavatsky's insistence on the East as the source of all wisdom, began to cultivate those forms of magic associated with what they understood as the Western Mystery Tradition. Although what is now known as the 'occult revival' of the late nineteenth century is largely credited to the rise of spiritualism in the 1850s and the advent of Theosophy in 1875, it is the magical societies of the last decades of the nineteenth and the early decades of the twentieth century which best epitomise 'occultism', with its translation of esoteric philosophies into magical praxis. These groups, composed primarily of individuals from the British middle classes, cultivated Western magical traditions as a route to mystical experience, enhanced occult powers, and psychological and spiritual transformation. The prestigious Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn, founded by Westcott and Mathers, incorporated horoscopic astrology in its teaching repertoire,³ and newly initiated members learned to cast and interpret their horoscopes in order to achieve knowledge of their strengths and weaknesses as well as assessing the optimum moment for magical work.⁴ But the adepts of the highly secretive Inner Order of the Golden Dawn practiced the astral magic of late antique Greco-Egyptian and Jewish magical traditions: a form of astrology which they believed could transform both the individual and the world.

² Campion, *History of Western Astrology*, 2:231-33.

³ See J. W. Brodie-Innes *et al.*, *Astrology of the Golden Dawn*, ed. Darcy Küntz (Sequim, WA: Holmes Publishing Group, 1996).

⁴ For the sources of these Golden Dawn teachings, see Curry, *Confusion of Prophets*. For the use of astrology in the Outer Order of the Golden Dawn, see Mary Greer, *Women of the Golden Dawn: Rebels and Priestesses* (Rochester, VA: Park Street Press, 1995), 57.

2. ASTROLOGY, MAGIC, AND MAGICAL ASTROLOGY

I would like to look more closely at the ways in which magical astrology – or astral magic, depending on where one wishes to place the emphasis – was sourced, understood, and used by some of the most important British occultists between the late nineteenth century and the Second World War. But first I would like to clarify my use of the word ‘magic’, which has been the subject of intense and ongoing scholarly debate for several decades – especially concerning its relationship with religion, science, and mysticism in different cultural contexts.⁵ As no universal definition of the term appears possible, I will therefore use the word ‘magic’ as a heuristic device to explore particular themes in the British occult revival which, paraphrasing Rachel Elijah’s broad definition, are specifically concerned with developing and maintaining, through the application of the human will, ‘the system of bonds and relationships between revealed and concealed worlds’.⁶

In his comprehensive work on astral magic in medieval Jewish thought, Dov Schwartz points out that astrology, in the ordinarily understood sense, is not ‘magical’; it only becomes magical when celestial powers are ‘drawn down through effigies and other objects (talismans)’.⁷ A talisman is usually understood as a physical object bearing an image of magical potency. Its power is based on the assumption that the talisman, and the celestial force it represents, enjoy a secret identity – an expression of the ancient idea of sympathies or correspondences

⁵ For one of the most comprehensive discussions on magic, see Ronald Hutton, *Witches, Druids, and King Arthur* (London: Hambledon Continuum, 2003), 98-135. See also Fritz Graf, *Magic in the Ancient World*, trans. Franklin Philip (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997), 8-19; Christopher A. Faraone, *Ancient Greek Love Magic* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999), 16-18; Christopher A. Faraone and Dirk Obbink (eds.), *Magika Hiera: Ancient Greek Magic and Religion* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991); Alan F. Segal, ‘Hellenistic Magic: Some Questions of Definition’, in Roelof van den Broek and R. J. Vermaseren (eds.), *Studies in Gnosticism and Hellenistic Religions* (Leiden: Brill, 1981), 349-375; H. S. Versnel, ‘Some Reflections on the Relationship Magic-Religion’, *Numen*, 38 (1991), 177-197; Jonathan Z. Smith, ‘Trading Places’, in Marvin Meyer and Paul Mirecki (eds.), *Ancient Magic and Ritual Power* (Leiden: Brill, 1995), 13-27; Claire Fanger, ‘Medieval Ritual Magic: What It Is and Why We Need to Know More About It’, in Claire Fanger (ed.), *Conjuring Spirits: Texts and Traditions of Medieval Ritual Magic* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1998), vii-xviii; Sarah Iles Johnston, John G. Gager, Martha Himmelfarb, Marvin Meyer, Brian Schmidt, David Frankfurter, and Fritz Graf, ‘Panel Discussion on *Magic in the Ancient World* by Fritz Graf’, *Numen* 46:3 (1999), 291-325; Jan N. Bremmer, ‘The Birth of the Term “Magic”’, in Jan M. Bremmer and Jan R. Veenstra (eds.), *The Metamorphosis of Magic: From Late Antiquity to the Early Modern Period* (Leuven: Peeters, 2002), 1-11.

⁶ Rachel Elijah, ‘Mysticism, Magic, and Angelology: The Perception of Angels in Hekhalot Literature’, *Jewish Quarterly Review*, 1 (1993), 3-53, on p. 16.

⁷ Dov Schwartz, *Studies on Astral Magic in Medieval Jewish Thought* (Leiden: Brill, 2005), 14.

between diverse levels of an interconnected universe, found in Gnostic, Neoplatonic, Hermetic, Stoic, and early Jewish cosmologies, and representing part of the syncretic religious ‘common stock’ of late antiquity.⁸ This type of magic is sometimes known as ‘astral image magic’.⁹ Astral talismans might be represented by the planetary images provided by the eleventh-century Arab magical text, the *Ghayât al-Hakim*, known to the Latin world as *Picatrix*:¹⁰



Figure 1: Planetary images from *Picatrix*

or by a Byzantine amulet from the sixth century portraying Christ healing a bleeding woman, not immediately recognisable as astral save for the gemstone from

⁸ For this ‘common stock’, see Rebecca Macy Lesses, *Ritual Practices to Gain Power: Angels, Incantations, and Revelation in Early Jewish Mysticism* (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 1998), 282-84; Lawrence Hoffman, *Beyond the Text: A Holistic Approach to Liturgy* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1989), 149-71.

⁹ For this classification, see Frank Klaassen, ‘Medieval Magic in the Renaissance’, *Aries*, 3:2 (2003), 166-99.

¹⁰ Images from *Picatrix*, Kraków, BJ 793, fol. 190r, Biblioteka Jagiellonska, reproduced in Benedek Láng, *Unlocked Books: Manuscripts of Learned Magic in the Medieval Libraries of Central Europe* (University Park, PA: Penn State University Press, 2008), 99. For the sources of the *Picatrix*, see David Pingree, ‘Some of the Sources of the *Ghayat al-Hakim*’, *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, 43 (1980), 1-15.

which it is carved: hematite, named after the Greek word for blood and believed by the Romans to be sacred to Mars, offering protection against wounds and bleeding in childbirth.¹¹



Figure 2: 6th-century Byzantine hematite amulet, Metropolitan Museum of Art, 17.190.491

This type of magical astrology relies on the celestial resonances of the substance comprising the talisman, visual representations of the powers being invoked, or both.¹² The influence of early medieval Arab astrology is evident in the neo-Aristotelian idea that it is the ‘rays’ from the planets, acting on the material forms of the sub-lunar world, which are captured in the talisman: an emphasis on the occult properties of substances which avoids any hint of demonic intervention. Astral image magic is also dependent on the appropriate timing of the talisman’s creation – a point where magical and divinatory astrology meet. Also known as ‘Hermetic’ magic, it was understood to originate in Greco-Egyptian texts from late

¹¹ Metropolitan Museum of Art, 17.190.491. For more on gemstone amulets, see also Patricia Aakhus, ‘Astral Magic in the Renaissance’, *Magic, Ritual, and Witchcraft* (Winter 2008), 185-206, on p. 193.

¹² See Klaassen, ‘Medieval Ritual Magic’.

antiquity such as the *Kuranides*, with its detailed lists of healing remedies involving associations between planets, gemstones, animals, plants, and fishes.¹³ But while this type of magical astrology was practiced by British occultists, another understanding of the term ‘talisman’ seems to have dominated their rituals.

Linguistic entities and symbols – particularly the Hebrew letters, Divine and angelic Names, and the strange ring-letters known as *caractères* found in Greco-Egyptian and late antique Jewish magical texts – may also be understood as talismanic, not only when inscribed on an object, but also when uttered in the appropriate ritual. Images, letters, symbols, and colours held in the mind’s eye as a focus for meditation or prayer may also be viewed as talismans.¹⁴ The Hebrew letters, the Divine Names comprised of them, and the angels believed to emanate from them, pervade the magic of British occultists, who adopted an ancient Jewish idea which Moshe Idel refers to as ‘linguo-theosophy’:¹⁵ the view that the emanated universe is generated by and comprised of the dynamic, living potencies of the twenty-two Hebrew letters, synonymous with the emanations of the primal light and with the attributes of divinity, and conjoining in an infinity of combinations to generate the multiplicity of Divine Names and of manifest forms. Also prominent in the magic of the British occult revival are the astrological ‘glyphs’ and ‘sigils’, viewed not merely as signifiers in a horoscope but as powerful magical entities in their own right. This type of magical astrology, blending ‘image’ and ‘ceremonial’ types of magic, provides the basis of most of the grimoires or magical books which comprise the backbone of the Western medieval magical tradition. It is sometimes referred to as ‘Solomonic’ magic, as a number of the grimoires in which it is found are attributed pseudepigraphically to King Solomon, and involve the invocation of supernal entities – usually perceived as angels, demons, or a mixture of the two – associated with the planets and zodiacal signs.

¹³ For *Kuranides*, see Brian P. Copenhaver, *Hermetica* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), xxxiv-xxxv; Lynn Thorndike, *History of Magic and Experimental Science* (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 1923), 3:229-35. For an early modern English translation of *Kuranides*, see *The Magic of Kirani, King of Persia, and of Harpocraton* (London: 1655, repr. Renaissance Astrology, 2005).

¹⁴ See Elliot R. Wolfson, ‘Phantasmagoria: The Image of the Image in Jewish Magic from Late Antiquity to the Early Middle Ages’, *Review of Rabbinic Judaism*, 4:1 (2001), 78-120; Moshe Idel, ‘On Talismanic Magic in Jewish Mysticism’, *Diogenes*, 43:2 (1995), 23-41.

¹⁵ For a discussion of linguo-theosophy and its rituals, see Moshe Idel, *Enchanted Chains: Techniques and Rituals in Jewish Mysticism* (Los Angeles, CA: Cherub Press, 2005).

Magical astrology does not always pursue noble spiritual goals. *Picatrix*, for example, offers a helpful recipe for an astral talisman that will ‘cause discord between any two people’,¹⁶ and the *Sefer ha-Razim*, an important Jewish magical compilation probably originating in smaller textual units or ‘microforms’ between the third and ninth centuries,¹⁷ ends with a moving blessing glorifying the majesty of the Lord, but also provides a useful invocation of the angels of the third heaven to ensure that one’s racehorses ‘will be swift as the wind’.¹⁸ But magical astrology has also been utilised over the centuries to induce a direct vision of deity, elicit supernal secrets, and effect psychological and spiritual transformations.¹⁹ It is this latter emphasis that dominates the magical rituals of the British occult revival.

3. JEWISH ANGELS IN VICTORIAN LONDON

The antecedents of the Golden Dawn’s magical astrology lie in the cosmologies of Babylonia and Egypt. The astral powers of these cultures found their way into late antique and early medieval Jewish texts such as *Sefer ha-Razim*, in which specific groups of angels, under the governance of a particular ‘prince’, preside over the seven ‘firmaments’ or heavens.²⁰ Golden Dawn adepts viewed this type of magic as both ‘Hermetic’ and ‘Kabbalistic’, reflecting the fluid interchange between astrology, alchemy, and various forms of what was understood as ‘practical’ Kabbalah in texts such as Agrippa’s great sixteenth-century compendium of magic, *De occulta philosophia*. The trajectory of the angels from Jewish esoteric lore through

¹⁶ John Michael Greer and Christopher Warnock (trans.), *The Latin Picatrix, Books I & II* (Raleigh, NC: Renaissance Astrology, 2009), 2:10. This translation is derived from David Pingree, *The Latin Version of the Ghayat al-hakim* (London: Studies of the Warburg Institute, 1986).

¹⁷ For ‘microforms’ and ‘macroforms’ in ancient texts, see Peter Schäfer, *The Hidden and Manifest God: Some Major Themes in Early Jewish Mysticism* (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 1992), 6-7.

¹⁸ Michael A. Morgan (trans.), *Sefer ha-Razim: The Book of the Mysteries* (Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1983), 63.

¹⁹ See Schwartz, *Astral Magic*, 14.

²⁰ For astral magic in the *Sefer ha-Razim*, see Gideon Bohak, *Ancient Jewish Magic: A History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 170-75, 241-43; Lesses, *Ritual Practices*, 286-306; Michael D. Swartz, *Scholastic Magic: Ritual and Revelation in Early Jewish Mysticism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996), 191-95; Philip S. Alexander, ‘*Sefer ha-Razim* and the Problem of Black Magic in Early Judaism’, in Todd E. Klutz (ed.), *Magic in the Biblical World: From the Rod of Aaron to the Ring of Solomon* (London: T & T Clark, 2003), 170-90; Chen Merchavjah, ‘*Sefer ha-Razim*’, *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, 13:1594-96. For older traditions of astral magic resurfacing in the Golden Dawn, see Ronald Hutton, ‘Astral Magic: The Acceptable Face of Paganism’, in Nicholas Campion, Patrick Curry, and Michael York (eds.), *Astrology and the Academy* (Bristol: Cinnabar Books, 2004), 10-24, on p. 22.

the conjurations of sixteenth-, seventeenth- and eighteenth-century astrologers such as John Dee, William Lilly, and Elias Ashmole,²¹ to the drawing-rooms of middle-class Victorian and Edwardian London, retains remarkable structural stability as well as cultural adaptability. The thirty-six astral demons appearing in the fifth-century magical text known as the *Testament of Solomon*,²² and later as talismanic images in *Picatrix*, are descendants of the Egyptian system of dividing the circle of the heavens into thirty-six 'decans'; each 'decan' contained a specific group of stars and was governed by an astral power.²³ The seven heavenly spheres, imaged in early medieval Jewish literature as seven heavenly 'palaces', appear to originate in Babylonian astral cosmology,²⁴ from which source they also found their way into the large corpus of Hellenistic astrology and the various magico-mystical currents focused on the soul's ascent through the planetary spheres, recounted in the Hermetic literature, Mithraic iconography, and many Gnostic texts in late antiquity.²⁵

²¹ For Dee's astral magic, see Deborah E. Harkness, *John Dee's Conversations with Angels: Cabala, Alchemy, and the End of Nature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999); Deborah E. Harkness, 'Shows in the Showstone: A Theatre of Alchemy and Apocalypse in the Angel Conversations of John Dee', *Renaissance Quarterly*, 49 (1996), 707-37; György E. Szónyi, 'Paracelsus, Scrying, and the *Lingua Adamica*: Contexts for John Dee's Angel Magic', in Stephen Clucas (ed.), *John Dee: Interdisciplinary Studies in Renaissance Thought* (Dordrecht: Kluwer, 2006), 207-229. For Lilly and Ashmole, see Owen Davies, 'Angels in Elite and Popular Magic, 1650-1790', in Peter Marshall and Alexandra Walsham (eds.), *Angels in the Early Modern World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 309-318; Patrick Curry, *Prophecy and Power: Astrology in Early Modern England* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1989), 36.

²² For more on the *Testament*, see Sarah Iles Johnston, 'The Testament of Solomon: From Late Antiquity to the Renaissance', in Jan N. Bremmer and Jan R. Veenstra (eds.), *The Metamorphosis of Magic: from Late Antiquity to the Early Modern Period* (Leuven: Peeters, 2002), 35-49; Todd E. Klutz, *Rewriting the Testament of Solomon: Tradition, Conflict and Identity in a Late Antique Pseudepigraphon* (London: T & T Clark International, 2005); Jesse Rainbow, 'The Song of Songs and the Testament of Solomon: Solomon's Love Poetry and Christian Magic', *Harvard Theological Review*, 100:3 (2007), 249-74; Sarah L. Schwartz, 'Reconsidering the Testament of Solomon', *Journal for the Study of the Pseudepigrapha*, 16:3 (2007), 203-237.

²³ For more on the decans, see Nicholas Campion, *The History of Astrology, Vol. 1: The Ancient and Classical Worlds* (London: Continuum, 2008), 99-100 and 107-8; Garth Fowden, *The Egyptian Hermes: A Historical Approach to the Late Pagan Mind* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993), 67; Jack Lindsay, *Origins of Astrology* (London: Frederick Muller, 1971), 156-61. For the decans as *daimones*, see Stobaeus, IX.6, cited in G. R. S. Mead (ed. and trans.), *Thrice-Greatest Hermes: Studies in Hellenistic Theosophy and Gnosis* (London: Theosophical Publishing Society, 1906), 3:49.

²⁴ See J. Edward Wright, *The Early History of Heaven* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 144; Adela Y. Collins, 'The Seven Heavens in Jewish and Christian Apocalypses', in John J. Collins and Michael Fishbane (eds.), *Death, Ecstasy, and Other Worldly Journeys* (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 1995), 59-93.

²⁵ For the seven planetary spheres in the *Hermetica*, see Copenhaver, *Hermetica*, CH1.25-26, CHX.16; Dan Merkur, 'Stages of Ascension in Hermetic Rebirth', *Esoterica*, 1 (1999), 79-96. For the planetary spheres in the Mithraic rituals, see Roger Beck, *Planetary Gods and Planetary Orders in the Mysteries of Mithras* (Leiden: Brill, 1988); Roger Beck, *The Religion of the Mithras Cult in the Roman Empire* (Oxford:

These astral angels, who can be invoked by specific ritual formulae, govern not only the planets, but every hour of every day and every day of every week.²⁶

Hours of the Day and Night on Monday

1	♂	Gabriel	1	♀	Amael
2	♂	Cassiel	2	♀	Raphael
3	♂	Lachiel	3	♂	Gabriel
4	♂	Samiel	4	♂	Cassiel
5	☀	Michael	5	♂	Lachiel
6	♀	Amael	6	♂	Samiel
7	♀	Raphael	7	☀	Michael
8	♂	Gabriel	8	♀	Amael
9	♂	Cassiel	9	♀	Raphael
10	♂	Lachiel	10	♂	Gabriel
11	♂	Samiel	11	♂	Cassiel
12	☀	Michael	12	♂	Lachiel

Figure 3: Hourly angels for Monday, the Moon's day, from the 17th-century French grimoire *Clavis or Key to the Magic of Solomon*²⁷

Time itself is thus an expression of the attributes and dynamic interrelationships of the divine realm, embodied in the presiding angels. Although angels are described in biblical literature, Michael and Raphael are the only ones named; but in late antiquity angel names began to proliferate, and some became powerful sovereign entities emanated from and sometimes indistinguishable from the godhead. They

Oxford University Press, 2006); David Ulansey, *The Origins of the Mithraic Mysteries: Cosmology and Salvation in the Ancient World* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989). For the planetary spheres and archons in Gnostic literature, see Ioan P. Couliano, *The Tree of Gnosis: Gnostic Mythology from Early Christianity to Modern Nihilism* (New York: HarperCollins, 1992); Hans Jonas, *The Gnostic Religion: The Message of the Alien God and the Beginnings of Christianity* (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 1963); Roelof van den Broek, 'The Creation of Adam's Psychic Body in the Apocryphon of John', in Roelof van den Broek and M. J. Vermaseren (eds.), *Studies in Gnosticism and Hellenistic Religions* (Leiden: Brill, 1981), 38-57.

²⁶ See Moses Gaster (ed. and trans.), 'The Wisdom of the Chaldeans: An Ancient Hebrew Astrological and Magical Treatise', *Proceedings of the Society of Biblical Archaeology* (20 December 1900), 329-51, repr. in Moses Gaster, *Studies and Texts in Folklore, Magic, Mediaeval Romance, Hebrew Apocrypha, and Samaritan Archaeology*, 3 volumes (London: Maggs Brothers, 1925-1928; repr. New York: Ktav Publishing, 1971), 1:338-55.

²⁷ Ebenezer Sibley and Frederick Hockley (trans.), *Clavis or Key to the Magic of Solomon* (Lake Worth, FLA: Ibis Press, 2009), 81.

could be adjured and even coerced through the use of their names, the vast majority of which end in *-el*, meaning Lord.²⁸ While the origins of many angel names are obscure, some are clearly derived from divine attributes. Of the four great archangels, Ouriel, a favourite in Golden Dawn rituals, is the 'light of God';²⁹ Michael is the 'likeness of God', Gabriel the 'strength of God', and Raphael the 'healing of God'. The angel Raziel, the 'secret of God', reveals the mysteries of the divinity to Adam,³⁰ and it has been suggested that the main transmission of Jewish magical material into the Christian grimoires was through the translation of Hebrew works associated with this angel.³¹ Golden Dawn adepts, freely invoking Raziel in their rituals, understood him to both embody and preside over the sphere of the fixed stars.³² In medieval and early modern Kabbalistic speculations from both Jewish and Christian sources, these angels are sometimes equated with the ten *sefirot* of the Kabbalistic Tree, themselves emanations or aspects of deity.³³

This uniquely Jewish linguo-cosmology seems to have exercised a special fascination for British occultists seeking a justification for the magical invocation of astral intermediaries within a Judaeo-Christian framework. The sources the occultists quote most often are Latin and English translations of Jewish esoteric works; grimoires such as the *Key of Solomon the King*; and early modern Christian interpreters of Kabbalistic lore such as Agrippa.

²⁸ See Elior, 'Angelology', 34-39. For the development of angel names through biblical exegesis, see Saul M. Olyan, *A Thousand Thousands Served Him* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1993).

²⁹ For Ouriel in Golden Dawn rituals, see 'Zelator Ritual', in Israel Regardie, *An Account of the Teachings, Rites and Ceremonies of the Order of the Golden Dawn*, 4 volumes (Chicago, IL: Aries Press, 1937-1940; repr. as *The Original Account of the Teachings, Rites and Ceremonies of the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn*, St. Paul, MN: Llewellyn, 1989), 143; 'Ritual of Consecration of the Four Elemental Weapons', in Regardie, *Golden Dawn*, 325; 'Evocation Ritual', in Regardie, *Golden Dawn*, 404. For further examples of the functional derivation of angelic names, see Swartz, *Scholastic Magic*, 66; Gershom Scholem, *Origins of the Kabbalah* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990), 147-48; Joshua Trachtenberg, *Jewish Magic and Superstition* (New York, NY: Behrman, 1939), 99.

³⁰ See Maureen Bloom, *Jewish Mysticism and Magic: An Anthropological Perspective* (London: Routledge, 2007), 174.

³¹ See Sophie Page, 'Uplifting Souls and Speaking with Spirits: The *Liber de essentia spirituum* and the *Liber Razielis*,' paper delivered at the conference 'Magie und Theurgie: Internationales Symposium an der Friedrich-Schiller-Universität Jena', 31 January-2 February 2002. An extract from Page's paper is available at <<http://digital-brilliance.com/kab/karr/Solomon/LibSal.pdf>> [accessed 1 August 2008].

³² Regardie, *Golden Dawn*, 96.

³³ See Idel, *Enchanted Chains*, 54, for Metatron in Kabbalistic literature as both an angel and a *sefira*. See Scholem, *Origins*, 345, and Elior, 'Angelology', 36, for the supreme angel Anafiel as the first *sefira*, *Keter*. For the equation of Metatron and *Keter* in the Golden Dawn, see Regardie, *Golden Dawn*, 64.

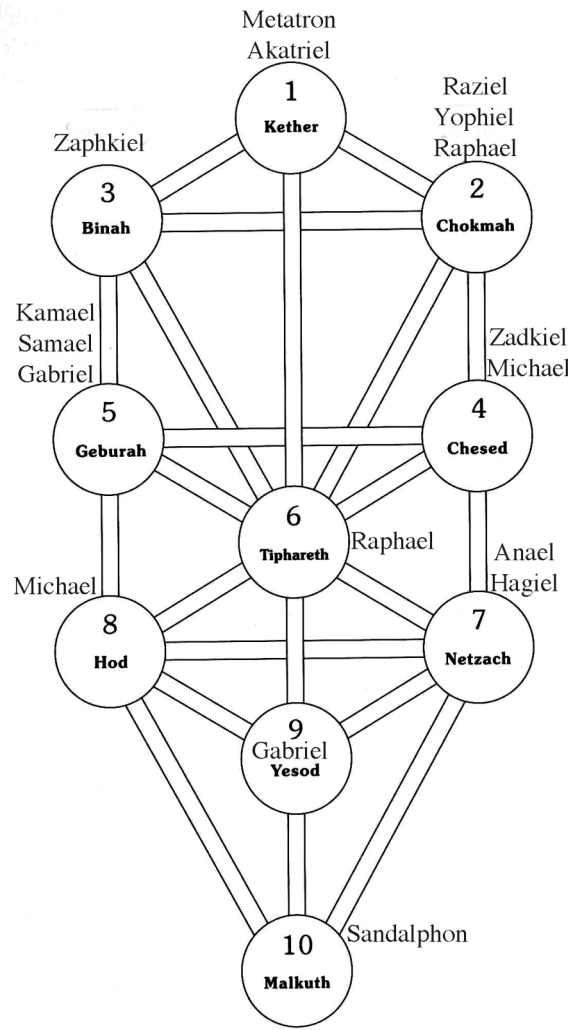


Figure 5: Kabbalistic Tree with various angels associated with the ten sefirot

Golden Dawn adepts believed that the rituals found in the grimoires were derived from ancient Hebrew texts, and thus viewed both Jewish and Christian magical texts as ‘practical Kabbalah’. The importance and magical superiority which British occultists assigned to Jewish esoteric lore is striking, especially since most of them were, at best, indifferent to the Jewish communities around them and, at worst, overtly antisemitic.³⁴ Some of the attraction may lie in the seamless merging in many Jewish esoteric texts of the apparently disparate scholarly constructs of ‘religion’ and ‘magic’, which are blended to the point where it is impossible to view

³⁴ For some examples of overt antisemitic sentiments expressed by occultists, see H. P. Blavatsky, *The Secret Doctrine: The Synthesis of Science, Religion, and Philosophy*, 2 volumes (London: Theosophical Publishing Company, 1888), 1:230 and 2:492-94; R. A. Gilbert, *A. E. Waite: Magician of Many Parts* (Wellingborough: Crucible, 1987), 153; A. E. Waite, ‘The Tarot and Secret Tradition’, *Occult Review*, 29:3 (1919), 157-61; Aleister Crowley, *The Confessions of Aleister Crowley: An Autohagiography*, eds. John Symonds and Kenneth Grant (Paris: Mandrake Press, 1929; repr. New York: Bantam, 1971), 501.

them as discrete entities.³⁵

Another source of the attraction may be that magic in Jewish texts does not usually involve trafficking with the Adversary. It is supported – even if only implicitly, and even in the case of harmful spells – by the sanctity of the Divine Names, the creative power of the Hebrew letters as emanations of deity, and the holiness of God’s angels in their myriad ranks and hierarchies. Purportedly derived from the wisdom of the great magicians Moses, Solomon, and Hermes – the last of whom, from the early medieval period, was equated with the Hebrew prophet Enoch³⁶ – this magic was viewed by Golden Dawn adepts as a legitimate form of mystical aspiration. Gerald Yorke asserts that the real creativity of the Golden Dawn lies in the manner in which its adepts synthesized a vast body of disconnected and widely scattered material into a practical and effective system.³⁷ The synthesis is certainly brilliantly creative, but the material is not as widely scattered as Yorke suggests. The connecting link is Jewish esoteric lore from antiquity to the modern era, which British occultists perceived homogenously as ‘Kabbalah’ and used to bind together Greco-Egyptian magical formulae, alchemical philosophy and iconography, medieval and early modern grimoires, Kabbalistic speculations, Masonic ritual structures, and, as the first decades of the twentieth century passed, the psychological models of Sigmund Freud and Carl Gustav Jung, who were understood – not without reason – to be transmitters of ancient esoteric traditions, clothed in modern scientific garb.

4. INVOKING THE POWERS

One of the Golden Dawn’s main techniques to invoke the astral angels was scrying,

³⁵ For the atropaic magic of the Aramaic bowls, see Joseph Naveh and Shaul Shaked, *Amulets and Magic Bowls: Aramaic Incantations of Late Antiquity* (Leiden: Brill, 1985); Joseph Naveh and Shaul Shaked, *Magic Spells and Formulae: Aramaic Incantations of Late Antiquity* (Jerusalem: Magnus Press, 1993).

³⁶ For the conflation of Hermes and Enoch, see Fabrizio Lelli, ‘Hermes Among the Jews: *Hermetica* as *Hebraica* from Antiquity to the Renaissance, *Magic, Ritual, and Witchcraft*, 2:2 (2007), 111-35; Chaim Wirszubski, *Pico della Mirandola’s Encounter with Jewish Mysticism* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1989), 232; Antoine Faivre, *The Eternal Hermes: From Greek God to Alchemical Magus*, trans. Joscelyn Godwin (Grand Rapids, MI: Phanes Press, 1995), 19-20.

³⁷ Gerald Yorke, ‘Foreword’, in Ellic Howe, *The Magicians of the Golden Dawn: A Documentary History of a Magical Order* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1972), ix.

otherwise known as crystallo-mancy or crystal-gazing.³⁸ Scrying can be found in virtually every culture in the ancient world;³⁹ scrying with the use of the Divine and angelic Names is one of the cornerstones of late antique and medieval Jewish magic, from which the Elizabethan magus John Dee, one of the Golden Dawn's most important sources, derived his practice of conjuring angels in specially designed and consecrated crystals.⁴⁰ Scrying can be performed in water, crystals, or a pool of oil,⁴¹ and the entities visible on the shining surface are called 'princes'.⁴² The 'princes' can be tricky and badly behaved,⁴³ but these intermediaries are not identical with the Christian idea of demons under the dominion of Satan,⁴⁴ as they may sometimes be high angels from the supernal spheres; and even when they are more malicious, they may still suddenly display benign qualities.⁴⁵ British occultists

³⁸ See Theodore Besterman, *Crystal-Gazing* (London: Rider, 1924), 160. For works on scrying by British occultists contemporaneous with Besterman, see 'Frater Achad' [Charles Stansfeld-Jones], *Crystal Vision through Crystal Gazing, or The Crystal as a Stepping-Stone to Clear Vision* (Chicago: Yogi Publication Society, 1923); 'Sepharia' [Walter Gorn-Old], *How to Read the Crystal; or Crystal and Seer; With a Concise Dictionary of Astrological Terms* (London: Foulsham, 1922). For the distinction between scrying and spiritual mediumship, see Harkness, *John Dee's Conversations*, 17.

³⁹ For scrying as an ancient and widespread method of divination, see Sarah Iles Johnston, 'Introduction: Divining Divination', in Sarah Iles Johnston and Peter T. Struck (eds.), *Mantikê: Studies in Ancient Divination* (Leiden: Brill, 2005), 1-28, on p. 7; Georg Luck, *Arcana Mundi: Magic and the Occult in the Greek and Roman Worlds* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1985), 254; E. R. Dodds, *The Ancient Concept of Progress and Other Essays on Greek Literature and Belief* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1973), 186-188; Thorndike, *History of Magic*, 3:33:774; Keith Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic: Studies in Popular Beliefs in Sixteenth- and Seventeenth-Century England* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1971), 230.

⁴⁰ For Dee's 'shew-stones' and crystallo-mancy, see Harkness, *John Dee's Conversations*, 116-118 and n. 73; Harkness, 'Shows in the Showstone'. For scrying involving angelic conjuration in the Talmud, see Swartz, *Scholastic Magic*, 48.

⁴¹ See Samuel Daiches, *Babylonian Oil Magic in the Talmud and in the Later Jewish Literature* (London: Oxford University Press/Jews College, 1913).

⁴² For the translation of the term *sar* as an 'archon', see Elliot R. Wolfson, *Through a Speculum That Shines: Vision and Imagination in Medieval Jewish Mysticism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997), 208-9.

⁴³ See Trachtenberg, *Jewish Magic*, 220-22, for the tendency of the 'princes' to lie.

⁴⁴ For the view of R. Eleazar of Worms that the 'princes' are angels, see Trachtenberg, *Jewish Magic*, 220-22.

⁴⁵ See the surprisingly helpful spirit described in Yohanan Petrovsky-Shtem, 'The Master of an Evil Name: Hillel Ba'al Shem and His *Sefer ha-Heshek*', *AJS Review*, 28:2 (2004), 217-48, on pp. 226-231. For the use of children in scrying practices, see Yoram Bilu, 'Pondering "The Princes of the Oil": New Light on an Old Phenomenon', *JAR*, 37:3, 269-78; Peter Schäfer, 'Jewish Magic Literature', 89-90. For the Jewish tradition of female receptivity to scrying, see J. H. Chajes, 'He Said She Said: Hearing the Voices of Pneumatic Early Modern Jewish Women', *Nashim* 10 (2005), 99-125. For the use of young female scryers in British occultism, see R. A. Gilbert, 'Introduction', in Hamill (ed.), *Rosicrucian Seer*, 11-25, on p. 15. See also Mathers' comments on Cagliostro's use of a child-scryer in S. L. MacGregor Mathers (trans.), *The Book of the Sacred Magic of Abramelin the Mage*, London: John M. Watkins, 1900; repr. New York: Dover Publications, 1975), xlii.

such as the astrologer Frederick Hockley claimed impressive results from their scrying. Hockley's 'prince' called himself the Crowned Angel of the Seventh Sphere,⁴⁶ and dictated an entire book of divine secrets entitled *Metaphysical and Spiritual Philosophy*.⁴⁷ Like the 'princes of the oil', the Crowned Angel was not entirely beatific; he happily passed on to Hockley rituals to invoke lower demonic entities to do the adept's bidding, in the manner of King Solomon.⁴⁸

Verbal adjurations of angels, accompanied by detailed preparatory procedures, are found in the Jewish *heikhalot* or 'palace' texts of the late antique and early medieval period,⁴⁹ which found their way to Provence, Spain, and the Rhineland in the mid-twelfth century and were absorbed into the developing Jewish esoteric literature of the time as well as being reformulated with suitable invocations to Christ in the grimoires.⁵⁰ *Heikhalot* techniques of angel magic surface in Christian texts such as the *Liber iuratus*, in which the ritual intent borrows from earlier Jewish materials the goal of achieving an ascent of the soul through the seven heavens to the ultimate vision of God surrounded by his celestial court and

⁴⁶ For *maggidim*, see Joseph Dan, 'Maggid', in *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, 16 volumes (Jerusalem: Keter Publishing, 1971), 11:698-701; Yoram Bilu, 'Dybbuk and Maggid: Two Cultural Patterns of Altered Consciousness in Judaism', *AJS Review*, 21:2 (1996), 341-366; Louis Jacobs, 'The *Maggid* of Rabbi Moses Hayyim Luzzato', in Louis Jacobs (ed. and trans.), *The Jewish Mystics* (London: Kyle Cathie, 1990), 136-47; R. J. Zvi Werblowsky, *Joseph Karo: Lawyer and Mystic* (Philadelphia, PA: The Jewish Publication Society of America/Oxford University Press, 1977), 257-86.

⁴⁷ See Alexander (trans.), 3 *Enoch*, 17:45-48; Swartz, *Scholastic Magic*, 104; Scholem, *Jewish Gnosticism*, 43-55; Philip S. Alexander, 'The Historical Setting of the Hebrew Book of Enoch', *Journal of Jewish Studies*, 28 (1977), 156-80, on pp. 162-64; Rachel Elior, 'Early Forms of Jewish Mysticism', in Steven T. Katz (ed.), *The Cambridge History of Judaism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 4:749-91, on pp. 760-71.

⁴⁸ R. A. Gilbert, 'Introduction', in John Hamill (ed.), *The Rosicrucian Seer: Magical Writings of Frederick Hockley* (Wellingborough: Aquarian Press, 1986), 16.

⁴⁹ For the ascent in the *heikhalot* literature, see Schäfer, *Hidden and Manifest God*; Peter Schäfer, 'Merkavah Mysticism and Magic', in Peter Schäfer and Joseph Dan (eds.), *Gershom Scholem's Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism: 50 Years After* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1993), 59-78; Scholem, *Jewish Gnosticism*; Lesses, *Ritual Practices*. For the transmission of *heikhalot* literature, see Ra'anan S. Boustán, 'The Study of Heikhalot Literature: Between Mystical Experience and Textual Artifact', *Currents in Biblical Research*, 6 (2007), 130-160; Scholem, *Major Trends*, 47; Elliot R. Wolfson, 'The Theosophy of Shabbetai Donnolo, with Special Emphasis on the Doctrine of *Sefirot* in His *Sefer Hakhmoni*', *JH*, 6:1-2 (1992), 281-316; Wolfson, *Speculum*; Martin Samuel Cohen, *The Shi'ur Qomah: Texts and Rescensions* (Tübingen: Mohr-Siebeck, 1985). For Eleazar of Worms and his influence on the development of the Kabbalah, see Scholem, *Major Trends*, 101-104; Wolfson, *Speculum*, 188-269.

⁵⁰ For the close similarity between Daiches' examples of the 'princes of the oil' and a medieval German magical text, see Richard Kieckhefer, *Forbidden Rites: A Necromancer's Manual of the Fifteenth Century* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1997), 115.

ranks of angels.⁵¹ Such practices reappear in Agrippa's writings, along with entire angelic alphabets and various techniques of magical astrology such as the so-called 'magic squares' of the planets, which seem to have originated in India and were absorbed into the Arab astral magic of the early medieval period.⁵²

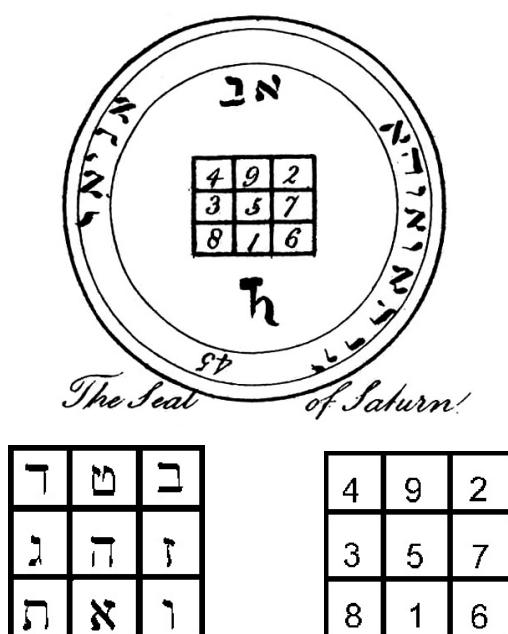


Figure 5: Seal of Saturn, with Saturn's magic square with Hebrew letters and Arabic numerals. The numbers of any column – horizontal, vertical, or diagonal – always total fifteen

The squares, which appear in both Jewish and Christian magical texts, were believed to possess talismanic powers because of the peculiar properties of the numbers, interchangeable with the Hebrew letters and therefore amenable to Kabbalistic linguistic hermeneutics. If the numbers of any column of a planetary square are added horizontally, vertically, or diagonally, they always produce the same total. In the square of Saturn shown here, each column totals fifteen. Golden Dawn adepts were enthusiastic about the potency of these figures; Mathers issued instructions for their use on planetary talismans, and cautioned the aspiring neophyte against their dangers, 'for, if left carelessly about, they are very liable to obsess sensitive

⁵¹ See Richard Kieckhefer, 'The Devil's Contemplatives: the *Liber Iuratus*, the *Liber Visionum*, and Christian Appropriation of Jewish Occultism', in Fanger (ed.), *Conjuring Spirits*, 250-265, on p. 255.

⁵² For the magic squares, see Karl Anton Nowotny, 'The Construction of Certain Seals and Characters in the Work of Agrippa of Nettesheim', *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, 12 (1949), 46-57; Bohak, *Ancient Jewish Magic*, 432.

persons, children, or even animals'.⁵³

Mathers translated a number of grimoires for his Golden Dawn adepts; others were already available in English translations in the British and Bodleian Libraries. The *Holy Almandal*, a late fifteenth-century grimoire ascribed to King Solomon, offers instructions for the ritual invocation of the twelve zodiacal angels.⁵⁴ In the *Goetia*, the astral entities comprise seven groups, each associated with a planet and amenable to being summoned according to the zodiacal placement of the Moon.⁵⁵ In the *Key of Solomon the King*, talismanic seals are given for each planet with the names of the angels written in Hebrew. In the *Grimoire of Armadel* (as distinct from the *Holy Almandal*), seals and adjurations are given for twenty-two angels, one for each Hebrew letter;⁵⁶ each seal bears a planetary glyph, which is itself understood as an image of magical potency. The solar archangel Raphael, whose seal this is, should be invoked 'on a Sunday before Sunrise'.⁵⁷

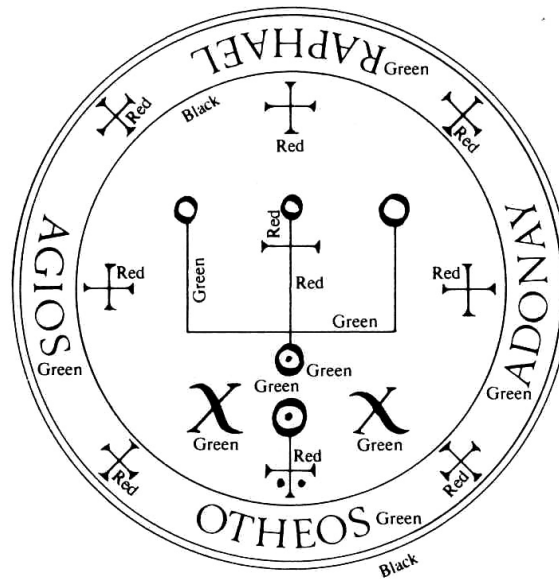


Figure 6: Talismanic seal for the solar archangel Raphael with the astrological glyph for the Sun⁵⁸

⁵³ Mathers (trans.), *Abramelin*, xxxviii.

⁵⁴ See Jan R. Veenstra, 'The Holy Almandel: Angels and the Intellectual Aims of Magic', in Bremmer and Veenstra (eds.), *The Metamorphosis of Magic*, 189-230.

⁵⁵ S. L. Macgregor Mathers (ed. and trans.), *The Goetia: The Lesser Key of Solomon the King* (London: private publication, 1904).

⁵⁶ S. L. Macgregor Mathers (ed. and trans.), *The Grimoire of Armadel* (London: Routledge, 1980), 23-45.

⁵⁷ *Grimoire of Armadel*, 30.

⁵⁸ Image from *Grimoire of Armadel*, 30.

Although the formal structure of the Golden Dawn rituals was based on Masonic prototypes,⁵⁹ the invocation of astral angels provided the language and ritual intent. Assuming that any magical work attributed to Solomon had actually been written by him, Mathers declared the *Key of Solomon the King* to be ‘the fountain-head and storehouse of Qabalistical Magic’.⁶⁰ No Hebrew version of the *Key* older than the late seventeenth century has ever surfaced,⁶¹ but this did not deter Mathers from adopting large sections of the *Key* as well as other grimoires,⁶² including rituals for the consecration of planetary talismans. A talisman for Jupiter was consecrated through a direct adjuration of the angels governing the planet, itself referred to throughout as Zedek, its Hebrew name. Zadkiel, the angel of the *sefira Hesed*, is summoned, as both the angel and the *sefira* are associated with Jupiter. Next comes a call to the angel Yophiel, the ‘Intelligence’ of Jupiter, who is ordered to inhabit the talisman as his ‘dwelling place’:

I command ye to send hither thine Intelligence, the Angel Yohphiel that he may concentrate and bind into this Talisman his life and power. In taking it for his body, let him thereby form a true and wonderful link for me with all those powers of love and wisdom, grace, abundance and benignity which rise rank upon rank to the feet of the Holy Spirit.⁶³

The talisman itself is made of silver, the metal of *Hesed* in Jewish esoteric lore. There is no trace of any Christian symbol in this ritual. Nor, it might be argued, is there any trace of modernity.

⁵⁹ For the Masonic basis of the rituals, see Ronald Hutton, ‘Modern Pagan Witchcraft’, in William de Blécourt, Ronald Hutton, and Jean la Fontaine, *Witchcraft and Magic in Europe, Vol. 6: The Twentieth Century* (London: Athlone Press, 1999), 1-79, on pp. 3-13; Henrik Bogdan, *Western Esotericism and Rituals of Initiation* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2007), 50-51, 121-144.

⁶⁰ S. L. MacGregor Mathers (trans.), *The Key of Solomon the King (Clavicula Salomonis)* (London: George Redway, 1889; repr. San Francisco, CA: Red Wheel/Weiser, 2000), ix.

⁶¹ Hermann Gollancz (trans.), *Sepher Maphtea Shelomoh (Book of the Key of Solomon): An exact facsimile of an original book of magic in Hebrew with illustrations* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1914). For more on Gollancz’ publication of this work, see Hermann Gollancz, *Clavicula Salomonis: A Hebrew Manuscript* (London: D. Nutt, 1903). See also Robert Mathiesen, ‘The Key of Solomon: Toward a Typology of the Manuscripts’, *Societas Magica Newsletter*, 17 (Spring 2007) at <http://www.brindcow.umd.edu/socmag>, and Adam MacClean’s list of English library holdings of the *Clavicula*, available at http://www.levity.com/alchemy/clav_eng.html [accessed 12 August 2008].

⁶² See the heading of the opening paragraph of *Key of Solomon*, 1, which states that the work had been ‘translated from the Hebrew into the Latin language by the Rabbi Abognazar’, and Mathers’ footnote.

⁶³ Regardie, *Golden Dawn*, 413-22.

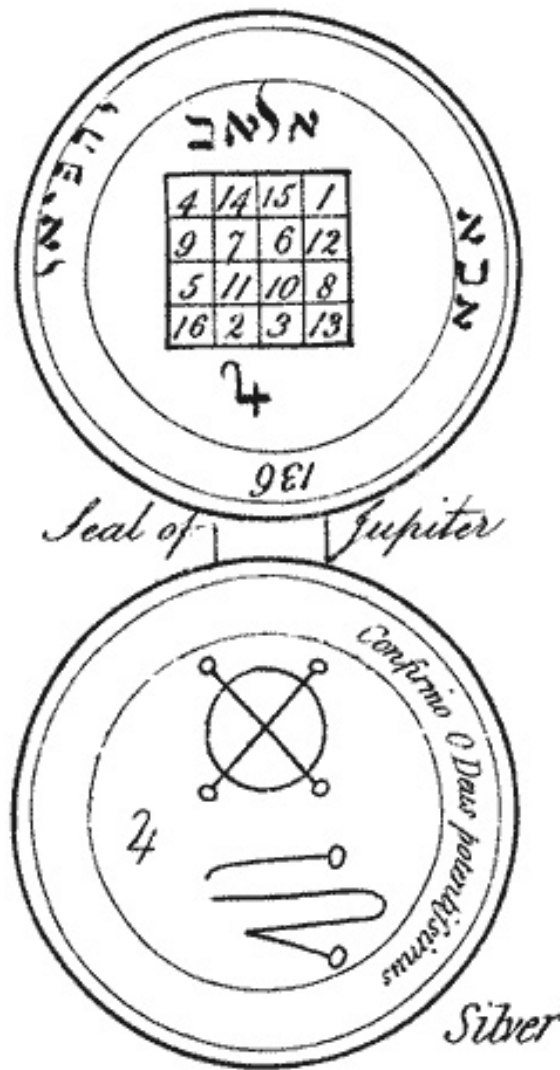


Figure 7: Talisman of Jupiter with planetary glyph and magic square, used in the Golden Dawn ritual 'Consecration Ceremony for Jupiter Talisman',⁶⁴

Mathers believed in the ontic objectivity of the celestial 'forces' he invoked, while he simultaneously understood them as aspects of the individual's imaginal world – a paradoxical perception also expressed in late antique Gnostic, Hermetic, and Neoplatonic as well as medieval Jewish esoteric texts.⁶⁵ As the years passed, Mathers' rituals became peppered with adjurations of Egyptian, Greek, and even

⁶⁴ Regardie, *Golden Dawn*, 413.

⁶⁵ For examples of this perception in Jewish, Neoplatonic, and Gnostic contexts, see Wolfson, *Speculum*; Ingvild Saelid Gilhus, 'Gnosticism: A Study in Liminal Symbolism', *Numen*, 31:1 (1984), 106-128; Gregory Shaw, *Theurgy and the Soul: The Neoplatonism of Iamblichus* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1995).

Norse deities.⁶⁶ But as in the Greco-Egyptian magical papyri, the non-Jewish name most often invoked is Iâo, the Greek rendering of the Tetragrammaton.⁶⁷ While pagan and Christian divinities come and go in the Golden Dawn rituals, the Hebrew god remains and usually gets the last word.

5. CHARACTÈRES AND ANGELIC ALPHABETS

The ‘ring-letters’ known as *charactères* can be found on virtually all the astral talismans used by British occultists.⁶⁸ These mysterious symbols, common in late antique magical literature, were adopted by medieval and early modern magicians of all religious persuasions.⁶⁹ According to the author of *Picatrix*, the *charactères* embody the ‘rays that reach from one [planet or star] to another, and figures and images are calculated from them’.⁷⁰ Many valiant but unsuccessful attempts have been made to decipher their meanings, but some scholars conclude that the *charactères* originated as portrayals of groups of stars associated with specific astral intermediaries.⁷¹

Charactères appear regularly in the Greek magical papyri; this example is from PGM XXXVI, which invokes not only Egyptian deities but also the Hebrew God, accompanied by a remarkable anthropomorphic image:⁷²

⁶⁶ See, for example, ‘Official Document’ Z.1, ‘The Enterer of the Threshold’, in Regardie, *Golden Dawn*, 330-362, which enumerates invocations of, *inter alia*, Thoth, YHVH, the ten *sefirot*, YHShVH, Osiris, Horus, Hermes, Moses, Solomon, Thor, Harpocrates, Isis, Nephthys, the planet Saturn, and ‘God, the Vast One, the Lord of the Universe’.

⁶⁷ See Hans Dieter Betz (ed. and trans.), *The Greek Magical Papyri in Translation, Including the Demotic Spells* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1986; revised second edition, University of Chicago Press, 1992), xlvii.

⁶⁸ See Bohak, *Ancient Jewish Magic*, 272, for possible derivations of the term *charactère* (*kalaqtiraia* in Aramaic), used by Jewish magicians in late antiquity.

⁶⁹ For a Greco-Egyptian example of the *charactères*, see PGM X.24-35, in Betz, *Greek Magical Papyri*, 149, and the various examples in John G. Gager, *Curse Tablets and Binding Spells from the Ancient World* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992). For early modern examples, see the pseudo-Paracelsian *Archidoxis Magica*, written c. 1560, translated into English by Robert Turner in *Archidoxes of Magic: Of the Supreme Mysteries of Nature: Of the Spirits of the Planets: Of the Secrets of Alchemy: Of Occult Philosophy: The Mysteries of the Twelve Signs of the Zodiac: The Magical Cure of Diseases: Of Celestial Medicines* (London: N. Brook and J. Harison, 1656; repr. London: Askin Publishers, 1975); Juris G. Lidaka, ‘*The Book of Angels, Rings, Characters and Images of the Planets*: Attributed to Osbern Bokenham’, in Fanger, *Conjuring Spirits*, 32-75. See also Campbell Bonner, *Studies in Magical Amulets, Chiefly Greco-Egyptian* (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 1950), 12-13.

⁷⁰ Greer and Warnock (trans.), *Picatrix*, 2:5.

⁷¹ See Giulio Busi, *Qabalah Visiva* (Torino: Giulio Einaudi, 2005), 32; Gager, *Curse Tablets and Binding Spells*, 6-11.

⁷² Betz, *Greek Magical Papyri*, 270.

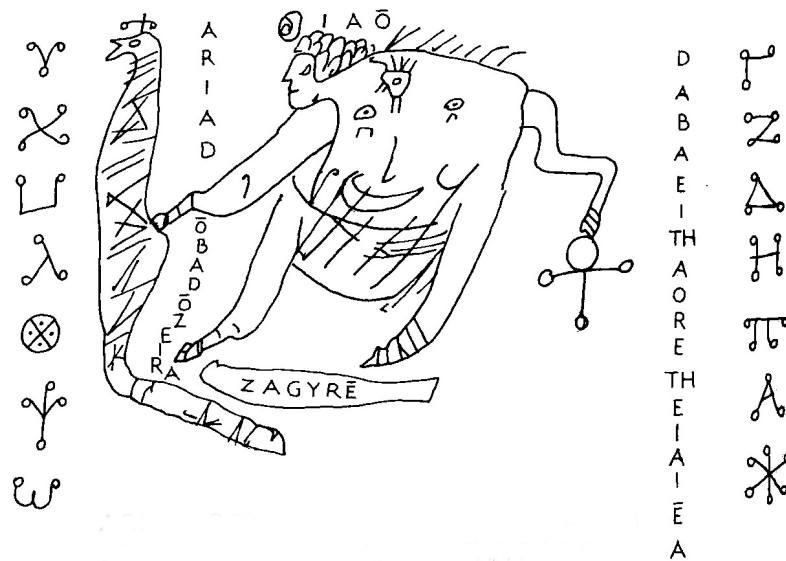


Figure 8: Caractères (left and right vertical columns) from a Greek magical papyrus, with an anthropomorphic image invoking Iâo Sabaoth Adonai Eloai⁷³

The *characterêtes* in the *Sefer ha-Razim* are grouped according to the angels presiding over the seven heavens:

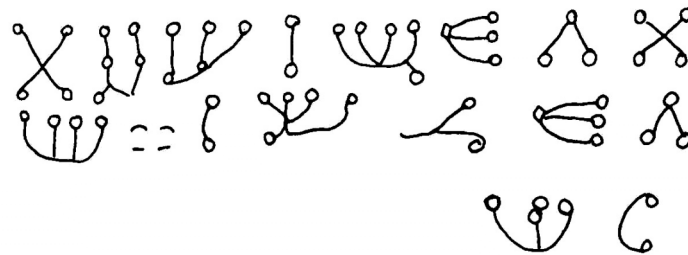


Figure 9: Caractères from *Sefer ha-Razim* signifying the angels of the Second Firmament⁷⁴

During the medieval period, the *characterêtes* were developed into full-blown ‘angelic’ alphabets that were later elaborated by Agrippa and Dee, and by the Rosicrucian-alchemical currents of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.⁷⁵ One likely route of transmission is *Picatrix*, which contains a magical alphabet based on Arabic letters. Another source may be the *Sefer ha-Raziel*, a magical compilation first published in Hebrew in Amsterdam in 1701 but which existed in various manuscript

⁷³ From PGM XXXVI.35–68, in Betz, *Greek Magical Papyri*, 270.

⁷⁴ Morgan, *Sefer ha-Razim*, 63.

⁷⁵ For the *characterêtes* from the *Chymical Wedding*, see A. E. Waite’s version of the text, cited in its entirety in A. E. Waite, *The Real History of the Rosicrucians: Founded on Their Own Manifestoes, and On Facts and Documents Collected From the Writings of Initiated Brethren* (London: George Redway, 1887; repr. Blauvelt, NY: Steinerbooks, 1977), 99–196, on pp. 146, 161, 177. For Agrippa’s *characterêtes*, see Agrippa, *Occult Philosophy*, 3.29–31.

redactions several centuries earlier.⁷⁶ This work contains a portion of the much older *Sefer ha-Razim*, treatises on Divine Names and angel magic from the literature of the German Pietists, and a full alphabet of *characteres*.



Figure 10: Alphabet of characteres from *Sefer ha-Raziel*⁷⁷

The *characteres* for the planetary ‘spirits’ which Golden Dawn adepts used on their talismans are based on these antecedents. The following table of planetary ‘spirits’ is from a work called *Liber runarum*, dating from the late thirteenth or early fourteenth century. In the international fashion typical of magical formulae, it combines *characteres* with Scandinavian runes to invoke angels who are called by

⁷⁶ For earlier MS versions of the *Sefer ha-Raziel*, see François Secret, ‘Sur quelques traductions du *Sefer Raziel*’, *Revue des Études Juives*, 128 (1969), 223-45. For Dee’s use of an early MS version, see Harkness, *John Dee’s Conversations*, 180, n. 1. See also the list of MSS given in Steve Savedow (ed. and trans.), *Sefer Raziel Hemelach: The Book of the Angel Raziel* (York Beach, ME: Samuel Weiser, 2000), 280-286.

⁷⁷ In Trachtenberg, *Jewish Magic*, 141.

their traditional Hebrew names.⁷⁸ Take a closer look at the *charactère* for the ‘spirit’ of Saturn at the top right-hand corner; we will meet it again.

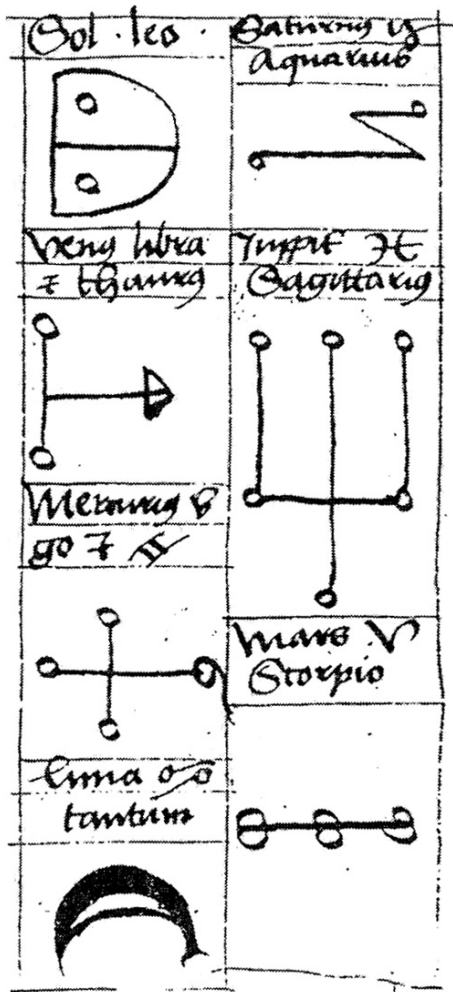


Figure 11: Left, *charactères* for the ‘spirits’ of the planets from *Liber runarum*.⁷⁹ Right, detail of the ‘spirit’ of Saturn

A sixteenth-century English redaction of the *Liber iuratus* presents us not only with *charactères* but with representational images of the planetary angels, wearing helmets and arranged in military formation as befits their Hebrew title of ‘prince’ or ‘captain’. Their planetary associations are designated not only by the text but by the colours of their robes and wings:

⁷⁸ See Láng, *Unlocked Books*, 109–115.

⁷⁹ *Liber runarum*, Dresden, Sächsische Landesbibliothek N 100, fol. 198r, reproduced in Láng, *Unlocked Books*, 111.

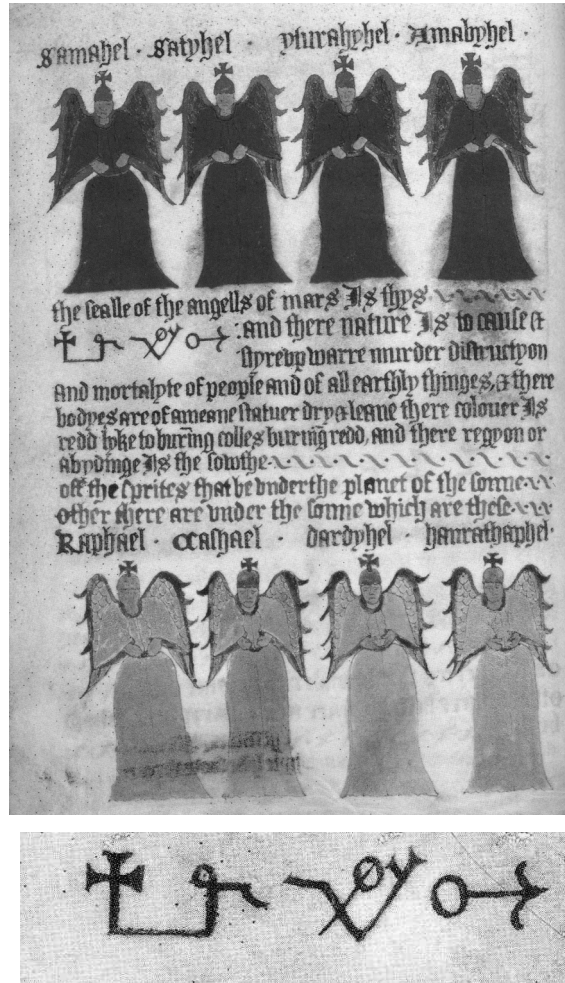


Figure 12: Above, planetary angels of Mars and the Sun in *Liber iuratus*. Below, detail of caractères and planetary glyph for Mars⁸⁰

The angels of Mars, at the top of the page, bear wings and robes of red, and ‘cause war, murder, destruction, and mortality of people and of all earthly things’. First of these Martial angels, on the far left, is the ancient Jewish prince of the demons, Samael. Below him are the astrological glyph for Mars and the planet’s *caractères*; Samael must be invoked on a Tuesday, the day of Mars.⁸¹ The angels of the Sun, at the bottom of the page, begin with the archangel Raphael; he taught Solomon ‘Knowledge and Wisdom’, and should be invoked at sunrise on a Sunday.⁸² These solar angels bear golden colours, and ‘give love and favour and riches to a man and power also to keep him hale’. The *caractères* and presiding angel of Mars

⁸⁰ *Liber iuratus*, Royal MS 17 A XLII, ff. 68v-69, British Library, reproduced in Sophie Page, *Magic in Medieval Manuscripts* (London: British Library, 2004), 46.

⁸¹ Mathers, *Armadel*, 41.

⁸² Mathers, *Armadel*, 30. See Trachtenberg, *Jewish Magic*, 251, for the frequency of planetary associations of Raphael and Michael with the Sun. See also Trachtenberg, *Jewish Magic*, 312, fn. 3, for further sources.

represented in this sixteenth-century redaction of *Liber iuratus* are faithfully reproduced in a late-eighteenth-century translation by the astrologer Ebenezer Sibly, transcribed in the mid-nineteenth century by the occultist Frederick Hockley:

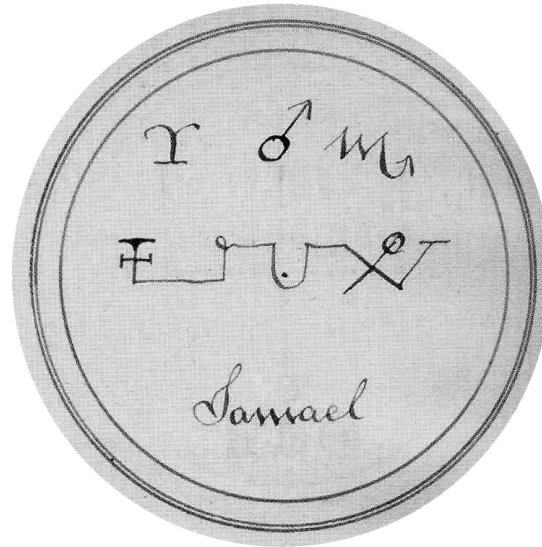


Figure 13: Caractères and glyphs for Mars, his angel Samael, and his signs Aries and Scorpio⁸³

By the early sixteenth century, the ‘angelic’ alphabets were firmly associated in the Christian world with Jewish Kabbalistic magic. Following are two of Agrippa’s angelic alphabets.⁸⁴

Celestial Writing							
Zayin	Vau	He	Daleth	Gimel	Beth	Aleph	
Nun	Mem	Lamed	Kaph	Yod	Teth	Cheth	
Tau	Shin	Resh	Qoph	Tzaddi	Pe	Ayin	Samekh
The Writing Called Malachim							
Zayin	Vau	He	Daleth	Gimel	Beth	Aleph	
Nun	Mem	Lamed	Kaph	Yod	Teth	Cheth	
Tau	Shin	Resh	Qoph	Tzaddi	Pe	Ayin	Samekh

Figure 14: Henry Cornelius Agrippa’s ‘Celestial’ and ‘Malachim’ alphabets based on Hebrew letters

⁸³ Ebenezer Sibly and Frederick Hockley (trans.), *The Clavis or Key to the Magic of Solomon* (Lake Worth, FLA: Ibis Press, 2009), 270.

⁸⁴ Agrippa, *Occult Philosophy*, 3.30.

Agrippa's *charactère* for the 'spirit' of Saturn, on the right, is the same as that used in the *Liber runarum*, on the left, but tilted at a diagonal with its loop reversed:

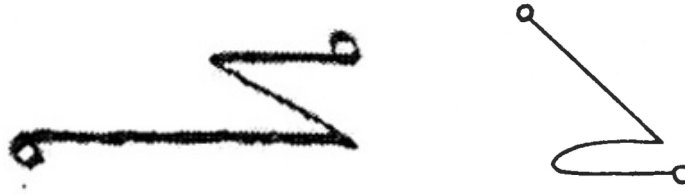


Figure 15: Left, 'spirit' of Saturn from *Liber runarum*. Right, Agrippa's 'spirit' of Saturn⁸⁵

The French seventeenth-century grimoire known as the *Clavis* or *Key to the Magic of Solomon* faithfully reproduces Agrippa's 'spirit' of Saturn:

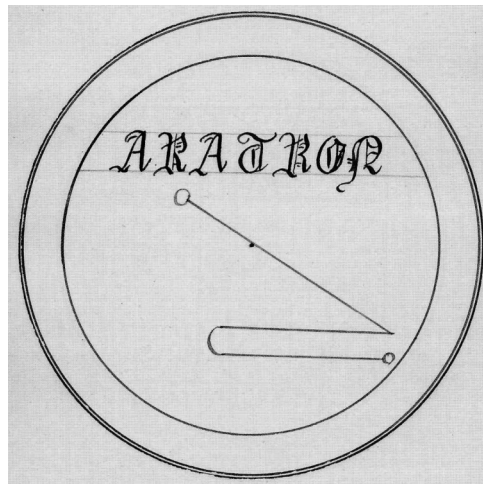


Figure 16: 'Spirit' of Saturn from *Clavis* or *Key to the Magic of Solomon*

Mathers in his turn reproduces the same *charactère* in a paper on talismanic magic published in 1888, the year of the creation of the Golden Dawn:

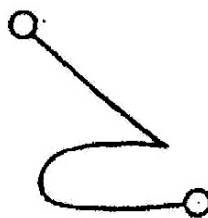


Figure 17: Mathers' 'spirit' of Saturn⁸⁶

⁸⁵ Agrippa, *Occult Philosophy*, 2.22.

Mathers consistently referred to these planetary ‘spirits’ as ‘forces’ which are both interior and objective. They, and the *caractères* that embody them, belong to the liminal zone where the human imagination serves as the organ of perception for patterns or powers that possess no visible form but are embodied in the talisman.

6. THE TALISMANIC TAROT OF THE GOLDEN DAWN

The history of the Tarot cards in late nineteenth-century Britain is a lengthy study in itself, and I cannot explore it in detail here.⁸⁷ The association of the twenty-two Major Arcana of the Tarot with the twenty-two letters of the Hebrew alphabet began in Masonic circles in France in the late eighteenth century, but the perception of the entire 78-card Tarot deck as a pictorial expression of the Kabbalistic Tree with its thirty-two ‘Paths’ is credited to the French magus Éliphas Lévi (1810-1875), who exerted a profound and lasting influence on British occultism from the late nineteenth century onward. For his understanding of the Tarot, Lévi was inspired by Latin translations of the *Sefer Yetzirah*, a remarkable Hebrew compilation dated between the third and ninth centuries, which describes the emanation of the universe through the potencies of the Hebrew letters.⁸⁸ ‘Thirty-two Paths’ are mentioned in the opening lines of the earliest redactions of this text,⁸⁹ and a treatise known as ‘The Thirty-Two Paths of Wisdom’ seems to have been appended at some time in the tenth century, in which the Paths – ten for the *sefirot* and twenty-two for the channels between them – are explained as different states of both human and divine consciousness.⁹⁰ This expanded redaction of the *Sefer Yetzirah* found its way into British occultism primarily through Lévi’s

⁸⁶ From S. L. MacGregor Mathers, ‘Talismanic Magic: Saturn, The Occult Signification of his Square, Seal, and Sigils’, *Lucifer*, 2:7 (1888), 9-14, on p. 14.

⁸⁷ For the history of the Tarot, see, *inter alia*, Ronald Decker and Michael Dummett, *A History of the Occult Tarot 1870-1970* (London: Duckworth, 2002); Ronald Decker, Thierry Depaulis and Michael Dummett, *A Wicked Pack of Cards: The Origins of the Occult Tarot* (London: Duckworth, 1996); Paul Huson, *Mystical Origins of the Tarot: From Ancient Roots to Modern Usage* (Rochester, VT: Destiny Books, 2004); Juliette Wood, ‘The Celtic Tarot and the Secret Tradition: A Study in Modern Legend Making’, *Folklore*, 109 (1998), 15-24.

⁸⁸ For English translations of *Sefer Yetzirah*, see A. Peter Hayman (ed. and trans.), *Sefer Yesira: Edition, Translation and Text-Critical Commentary* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2004); Aryeh Kaplan (ed. and trans.), *Sefer Yetzirah: The Book of Creation, in Theory and Practice* (York Beach, ME: Samuel Weiser, 1997).

⁸⁹ See Hayman, *Sefer Yesirah*, 59.

⁹⁰ See Kaplan, *Sefer Yetzirah*, 297-99.

influence.⁹¹

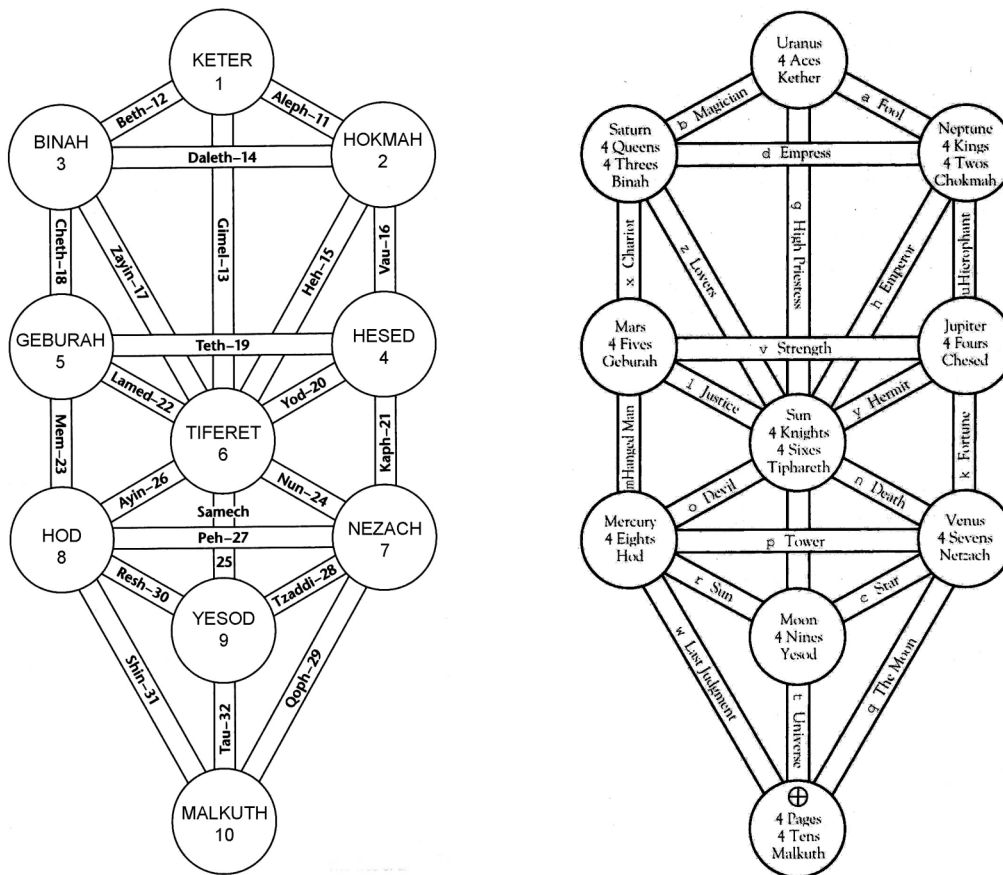


Figure 18: Golden Dawn versions of the Kabbalistic Tree. Left: the ten sefirot with the allocation of Hebrew letters to the Paths. Right: the ten sefirot with allocations of the nine planets known in the early 20th century and the associations of the Major Arcana of the Tarot to the Paths.

Every Golden Dawn initiate was expected to learn the correlations between the Major Arcana of the Tarot, the Thirty-Two Paths, the planets and planetary angels, the zodiacal signs, and the Hebrew letters, by developing personal Tarot designs as a focus for meditation on the supernal powers. Like divinatory astrology, the Tarot as a divinatory tool was included in the Golden Dawn repertoire. But occultists also understood the cards as talismans containing the potency of the ‘forces’ they symbolised. This drawing from Mathers’ private notebook of the Major Arcana card called ‘Temperance’ illustrates the use of the card as a magical focus for meditation.

⁹¹ See William Wynn Westcott (trans.), *Sepher Yetzirah: The Book of Formation and the Thirty-Two Paths of Wisdom* (Bath: Robert H. Fryar, 1887), 25.



Figure 19: The angel Adnachiel as the Major Arcana card 'Temperance',
from Mathers' private notebook⁹²

The crowned entity is the angel Adnachiel (or Advachiel), associated with the Hebrew letter *samech* which, according to the *Sefer Yetsirah*, is equated with the zodiacal sign of Sagittarius;⁹³ Mathers related it to the twenty-fifth Path on the Tree, called 'Testing Consciousness' because it represents the struggle to discern the nature of temptation.⁹⁴ The arrow-glyph for Sagittarius appears on the body of the angel, between the signs of Scorpio and Capricorn beneath the angel's hands. This image was used as a meditative talisman in the 'Ritual of the Portal', which Mathers designed for the elite members of the Inner Order of the Golden Dawn.⁹⁵

The Tarot deck designed by Arthur Edward Waite (1857-1942), published in 1910, is probably the best-known of all Tarot decks. Although these cards, replete with the Rosicrucian symbolism that Waite favoured, were intended as divinatory tools and instruments of esoteric teaching, Waite created another set of designs

⁹² Reproduced in Kathleen Raine, *Yeats, The Tarot and the Golden Dawn* (Dublin: Dolmen Press, 1972),

53.

⁹³ See Regardie, *Golden Dawn*, 305.

⁹⁴ Kaplan, *Sefer Yetsirah*, 299.

⁹⁵ See Regardie, *Golden Dawn*, 198-220.

between 1921 and 1923 for the private use of the initiates of his newly created order, the Fellowship of the Rosy Cross. He called these images ‘The Great Symbols of the Paths’.⁹⁶

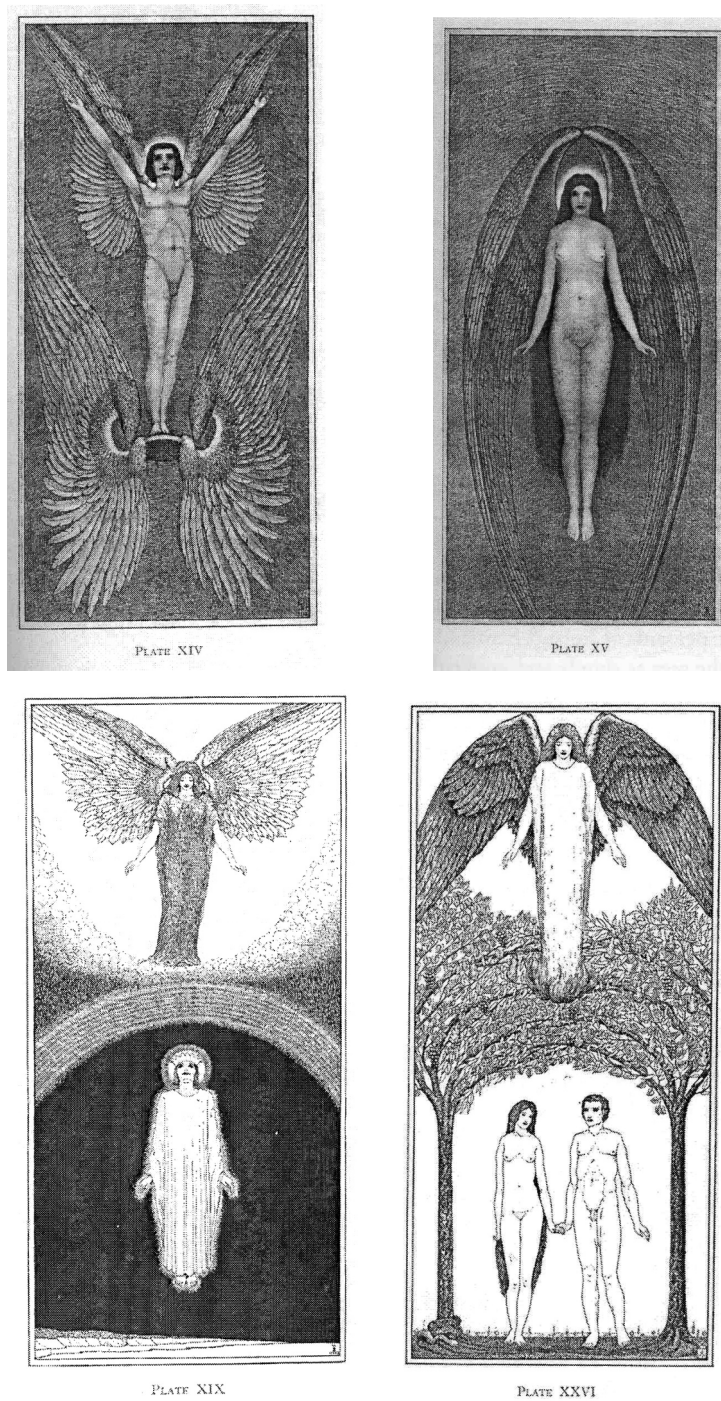


Figure 20: Four images from Waite's 'Great Symbols of the Paths'

⁹⁶ Decker and Dummett, *History of the Occult Tarot*, 158. Images are from K. Frank Jensen, *The Story of the Waite-Smith Tarot* (Croydon Hills, AU: Association for Tarot Studies, 2006), 98-99.

Figure 21: Crowley's Tree with sefirot and planets⁹⁹

Crowley's equation of *sefirot* and planets includes Uranus and Neptune, discovered respectively in the late eighteenth and mid-nineteenth centuries. Although this placing of 'new' planets on the Tree is, of course, a modern addition, Crowley's correlations between the Hebrew letters and the zodiacal signs are derived from the *Sefer Yetsirah*, and the linking of the seven traditional planets with the seven lower *sefirot* follows Agrippa. The twenty-two Paths between the *sefirot*, designating both the paths of the divine emanations into manifest creation and the journey of the individual soul back to its divine source, are given their usual Golden Dawn angelic and Tarot equivalents, supplemented by other symbolic systems such as the hexagrams of the *I Ching*.¹⁰⁰ Crowley's detailed system of correspondences has sometimes been described as a kind of modern intellectual filing-cabinet that enables the synthesis of diverse esoteric components by extracting them from their cultural matrices and thus destroying their original symbolic significance.¹⁰¹ However, for Crowley, the symbols with which he worked were real potencies, not intellectual reference points: 'True symbols', he declares, 'do really awake those macrocosmic forces of which they are the eidola'.¹⁰²

Crowley's magical astrology is best expressed by his Tarot cards. Although they are now usually used for divinatory purposes, they are also astral talismans. The magical use of anthromorphic images, Hebrew letters, and zodiacal glyphs is demonstrated in the card of 'Strength', which Crowley decided to rename 'Lust' – an apparently idiosyncratic personal choice which is in fact rooted in Jewish esoteric lore, in which the *sefira Geburah*, signifying that aspect of deity expressed as strength, can, if unbalanced, emerge in human experience as untrammelled lust and cruelty.¹⁰³ The card of 'Strength', Crowley asserts, is the card of Leo, 'the most

⁹⁹ Diagram from Symonds and Grant (eds.), *Aleister Crowley: Complete Astrological Writings*, frontispiece.

¹⁰⁰ See the 'Tables of Correspondences' in Aleister Crowley, *The Qabalah of Aleister Crowley* (York Beach, ME: Red Wheel/Weiser, 1973; repr. as *777 and Other Qabalistic Writings of Aleister Crowley*, 1986), Book II, 2-38.

¹⁰¹ See Israel Regardie, 'Introduction', in Crowley, 777, iii; Egil Asprem, 'Kabbalah Recreata: Reception and Adaptation of Kabbalah in Modern Occultism', *Pomegranate*, 9:2 (2007), 132-153; Egil Asprem, 'Magic Naturalized? Negotiating Science and Occult Experience in Aleister Crowley's Scientific Illuminism', *Aries*, 8 (2008), 139-165.

¹⁰² Aleister Crowley, *בראשית [Berashit]: An Essay in Ontology*, by Abhavananda (Paris: private publication, 1907; Yorke Collection FBH 929 B26 C.1, Warburg Institute, London), 23.

¹⁰³ I am grateful to Elliot Wolfson for this observation.

powerful of the twelve zodiacal cards'.¹⁰⁴ He incorporates into the image both the Hebrew letter *tet* and the zodiacal animal,¹⁰⁵ drawing on the imagery of *Revelation* to present the lion as the Beast of the Apocalypse (naturally identified with himself) and basing the entire structure of the design on the astrological glyph of Leo, which – not surprisingly, given the importance he assigns to the card – was the sign ascending on the eastern horizon at the time of his birth.



Figure 22: Left, the cursive form of the Hebrew letter *tet*; right, the astrological glyph for Leo



Figure 23: Left, Crowley's Tarot card 'Lust'. Right, the Leo glyph forming the structure of the card, highlighted in black

Crowley's Tarot is a set of seventy-eight astral talismans created to embody and invoke the powers they represent. The cards incorporate symbols not as signifiers, metaphors, social constructs, or forms of communication, but as the imaginal embodiment of that which is portrayed.¹⁰⁶ The symbols themselves have agency, as

¹⁰⁴ Aleister Crowley, *The Book of Thoth by the Master Therion* (London, self-published, 1944; repr. New York: Samuel Weiser, 1969), 92.

¹⁰⁵ Hayman, *Sefer Yetsirah*, §49. See also Hayman, *Sefer Yetsirah*, §52 and §54 for a reiteration of the same equation of letters with zodiacal signs.

¹⁰⁶ For similar definitions of a symbol, see Joseph Dan, 'The Name of God, the Name of the Rose, and the Concept of Language in Jewish Mysticism', *Medieval Encounters*, 2:3 (1996), 228-248; Joseph Dan,

the Golden Dawn adept William Butler Yeats suggested:

Symbols and formulae are powers, which act in their own right and with little consideration for our intentions...They are, indeed, personifying spirits that we had best call Gates and Gate-Keepers, because through their dramatic power they bring our soul to crisis.¹⁰⁷

7. ANGELS AND ARCHETYPES

Violet Mary Firth (1890-1946), better known to her readers as Dion Fortune, never published a Tarot deck. Instead, she produced a large body of work in which both the theory and the practice of magical astrology are presented in considerable detail. Like Crowley, Fortune understood astrology as an integral aspect of magic.¹⁰⁸ Her Kabbalistic-astrological Tree is a model for specific magical practices; focused meditation on its various components is intended to result in visions and personal transformation. In an article written for the journal of her own occult order, the Fraternity of the Inner Light, she describes not only her mode of inducing such visions, but also the results:

I would commence my mental rehearsal of the sacred names...I maintained my concentration on the images arising in consciousness...Out of the sky over the water a vast angelic figure began to form, and I saw what I felt to be an archangel bent above me in a vast curve.¹⁰⁹

The chief product of these meditations was one of her most influential books, *The Mystical Qabalah*,¹¹⁰ in which she presents her synthesis of ritual magic, astrology, and Kabbalistic theosophy.¹¹¹

'Gershom Scholem's Reconstruction of Early Kabbalah', *Modern Judaism*, 5:1 (1985), 39-66; Ernst H. Gombrich, 'Icones Symbolicae: The Visual Image in Neo-Platonic Thought', *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, 11 (1948), 163-192.

¹⁰⁷ William Butler Yeats, *The Autobiography of William Butler Yeats* (New York: Macmillan, 1953), 272, and William Butler Yeats, letter to Florence Farr, cited in Raine, *Yeats, the Tarot, and the Golden Dawn*, 44.

¹⁰⁸ Dion Fortune, *The Mystical Qabalah* (London: Ernest Benn, 1935), 6.

¹⁰⁹ Cited in Gareth Knight, *Dion Fortune and the Inner Light* (Loughborough: Thoth Publications, 2000), 213-214.

¹¹⁰ Knight, *Dion Fortune*, 212.

¹¹¹ Fortune, *Mystical Qabalah*, 2.

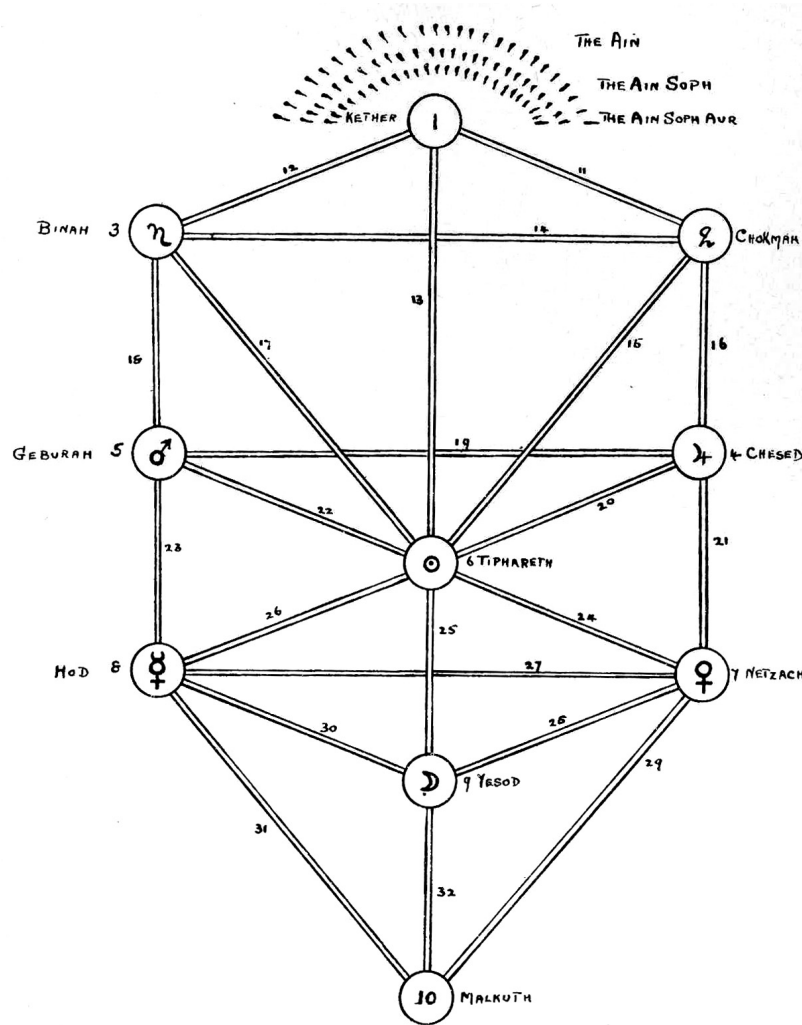


Figure 24: Dion Fortune's Tree, with planets and sefirot¹¹²

Despite her 'modernity', Fortune views this occult lore as a 'received' body of wisdom originating in the angelic powers of the supernal realms.¹¹³ But having steeped herself in the works of Freud and Jung published in English in the first three decades of the new century, Fortune articulated her magical methodology using the languages of the new psychologies, advising her students to use the Tree as the focus of what Jung called 'active imagination': an analytic technique which, through meditation on and emotional engagement with specific images emerging in dreams, spontaneous visions, or structured reveries, is intended to allow the individual access to the 'archetypes of the collective unconscious', resulting in the potential

¹¹² Fortune, *Mystical Qabalah*, 311.

¹¹³ See Fortune, *Mystical Qabalah*, 13-14. See also Dion Fortune, 'The Inhabitants of the Unseen', in Dion Fortune and Gareth Knight, *Spiritualism and Occultism* (Loughborough: Thoთ Publications, 1999), 116-27, on p. 119, where Fortune discusses the objective reality of the angelic hierarchies.

healing of the internal conflicts that generate psychic suffering and distress.¹¹⁴ A degree of mystery surrounds Jung's practice of active imagination and the sources from which he derived the technique.¹¹⁵ Although he first used the term in a series of lectures delivered at the Tavistock Clinic in London in 1935, he had already developed the method as early as 1913.¹¹⁶ Jung insisted that the archetypes 'cannot appear in consciousness except in the form of images',¹¹⁷ and Fortune was in complete agreement:

The instructed person knows that he is using a technique of the imagination in order to clothe with visible form intangible things that would otherwise be imperceptible to his consciousness.¹¹⁸

Fortune's appropriation of Jung's theories gave her a new vocabulary in which she could clothe her magic, which she called 'the symbol-using power of the subconscious mind'.¹¹⁹

8. JUNG'S ASTRAL TALISMANS

In the latter part of 2009, a remarkable text by Jung, written between 1913 and 1930, entitled *Liber Novus* but known as *The Red Book*, was reluctantly released for publication by Jung's heirs. *The Red Book* is a magical diary of the kind often produced by the adepts of the occult revival: a record of active imagination rituals and dialogues with the figures emerging in them, illustrated by paintings strongly influenced by Jung's growing knowledge of myth, alchemy, Kabbalah, astrology, and

¹¹⁴ For Jung's many discussions on 'active imagination', see C. G. Jung, *Psychological Types*, CW6, trans. R. F. C. Hull (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1971), ¶722 and n. 45; C. G. Jung, *The Structure and Dynamics of the Psyche*, CW8, trans. R. F. C. Hull (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1960), ¶166-175; C. G. Jung, *The Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious*, CW9i, trans. R. F. C. Hull (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1959), ¶621; C. G. Jung, *Mysterium Coniunctionis*, CW14, trans. R. F. C. Hull (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1963), ¶752-755. See also Joan Chodorow (ed.), *Jung on Active Imagination* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1997); Marie-Louise von Franz, *Alchemical Active Imagination* (Irving, TX: Spring Publications, 1979; repr. New York, NY: Shambhala, 1997); Jeffrey Raff, *Jung and the Alchemical Imagination* (York Beach, ME: Nicolas-Hays, 2000); Dan Merkur, *Gnosis: An Esoteric Tradition of Mystical Visions and Unions* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1993), 37-54.

¹¹⁵ Merkur, *Gnosis*, 37.

¹¹⁶ Jung, CW6, ¶711-722.

¹¹⁷ Jung, CW6, ¶722.

¹¹⁸ Dion Fortune, 'Types of Mind Working', in Dion Fortune and Gareth Knight, *An Introduction to Ritual Magic* (Loughborough: Thoth Publications, 1997), 13-23, on p. 22.

¹¹⁹ Fortune, *Mystical Qabalah*, 51.

medieval magic. Plate VIII in the second part of the *Red Book* portrays a giant called Izdubar, who, according to Jung's commentary, seems to amalgamate the Babylonian hero Gilgamesh and the creator-god Marduk. Jung's imaginal dialogue with Izdubar concerns the giant's determined pursuit of the setting Sun to achieve immortality. 'Insofar as you are mortal', Jung attempts to convince the giant, 'you can never reach the sun'.¹²⁰ This dialogue, along with many others in the *Red Book*, concerns the Sun as the central image of divinity, with its setting in the west symbolic of the journey of the immortal soul to its divine home.¹²¹

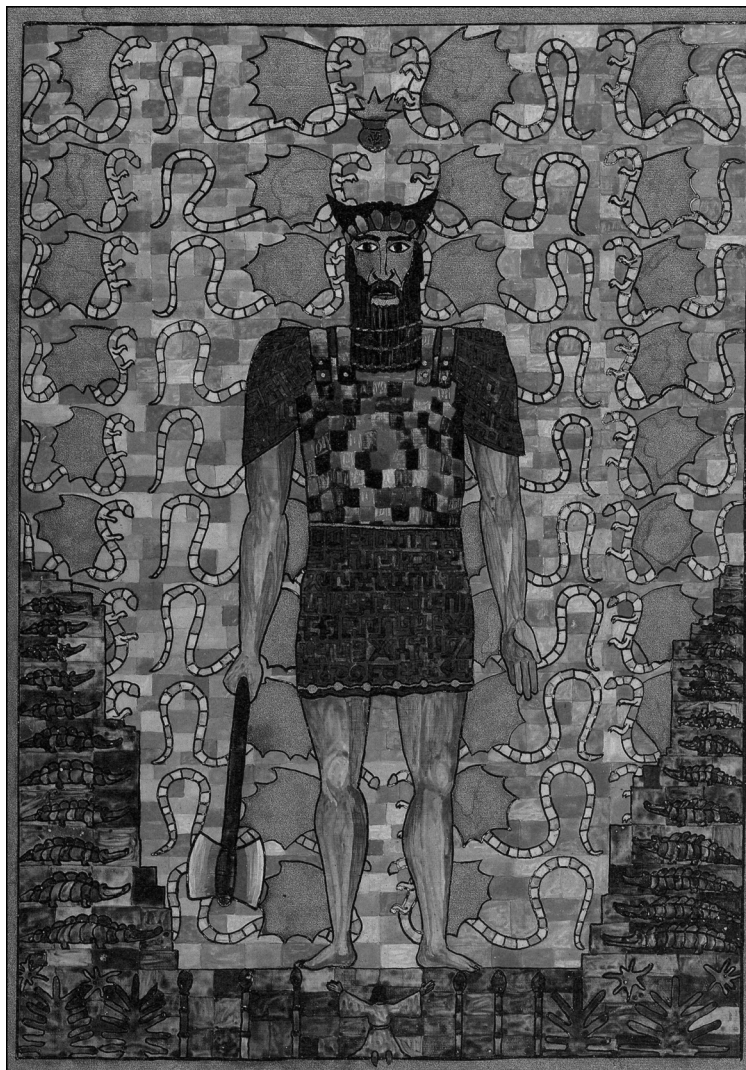


Figure 25: The giant Izdubar, from Jung's *Red Book*¹²²

¹²⁰ Jung, *Red Book*, p. 278.

¹²¹ Jung, *Red Book*, p. 351.

¹²² C. G. Jung, *The Red Book (Liber Novus)*, ed. Sonu Shamdasani, trans. Sonu Shamdasani, John Peck, and Mark Kyburz (London: Norton, 2009), 36.

Jung also produced a cosmological map with the Sun, designated 'Deus Sol', setting in the west on the right side, as it would be positioned in a horoscope.¹²³

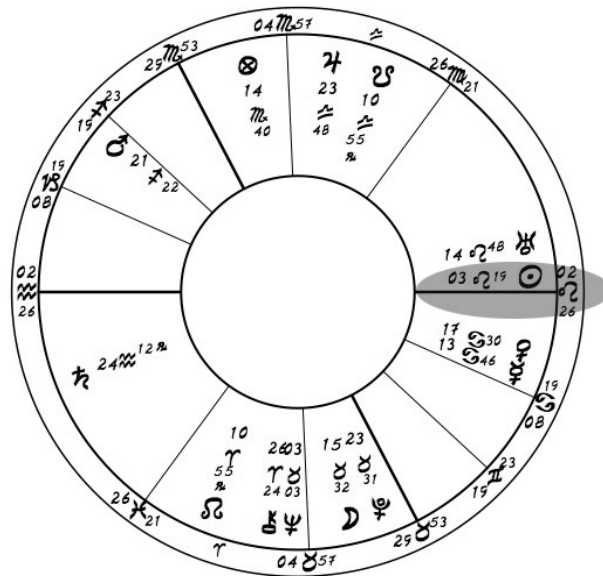
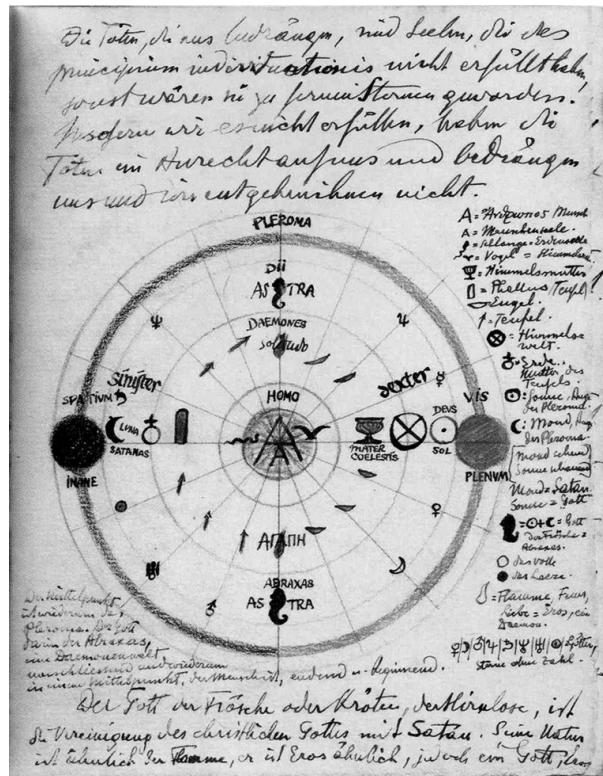


Figure 26: Above, Jung's cosmological map from The Black Book. Below, Jung's horoscope (26 July 1875, 7.27 pm SZOT, Kesswil, CH, 47N36, 9E20) with the setting Sun highlighted in red

¹²³ C. G. Jung, *The Black Book* (unpublished MS), 5:169, reproduced in Jung, *Red Book*, Appendix A, 363. See also the later cosmological map reproduced in 1955 in the volume of the Swiss journal *Du* dedicated to the Eranos conferences.

In this painting he reproduced what was, to him, the most important feature of his own horoscope, as he was born under the sign of Leo, ruled by the Sun, at the moment when the Sun was setting on the western horizon. A more careful look at the image of the giant reveals a multitude of golden-winged salamanders surrounding Izdubar in the form of repeating images of the astrological glyph for Leo. I have highlighted a few of these in black.



Figure 27: Izdubar with Leo glyphs highlighted in black

As Jung had been studying astrology intensively for three years before he produced this painting,¹²⁴ it is unlikely that this meaningful use of a specifically relevant astrological symbol is accidental. Izdubar is thus a Leo, like Jung himself, and also a solar potency, drawn not from Jewish angelology but from its antecedents in Babylonian and Egyptian cosmologies; and the giant seems to embody Jung's own yearning for a direct experience of celestial immortality. Another of Jung's anthropomorphised images, a magician whom he calls Philemon, reflects even more succinctly the magical nature of the intermediaries that Jung encountered in his 'active imagination'.

¹²⁴ The image of Izdubar is dated 1915. See Jung's letters to Freud about his initial interest in and, only a month later, his intense involvement in the study of astrology, 8 May 1911 and 12 June 1911, in *The Freud-Jung Letters*, ed. William McGuire, trans. Ralph Mannheim and R.F. C. Hull (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1974), 421 and 427. By 1931 Jung had incorporated astrological insights into his theory of psychological types; see Jung, CW6, ¶933. By 1934 he was utilising horoscopes in his analytic work and displaying full knowledge of the technical components of the birth chart: see Jung, CW9i, ¶604-6 and n. 166.

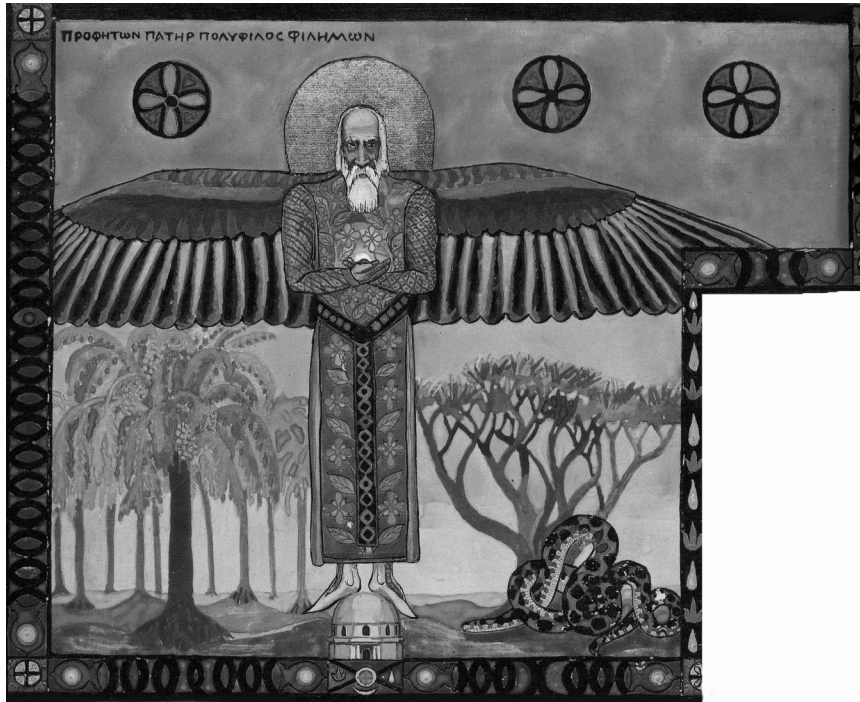


Figure 28: The magician Philemon¹²⁵

Although he bears a Greek name, Philemon, as Jung himself points out, is neither a Greek nor a Christian. His wings connote his angelic status, and the domed building on which he stands represents Solomon's Temple. Perhaps he should have been called Raziel. Philemon keeps his magic wand in a cupboard, along with the *Sixth and Seventh Books of Moses* – an actual pseudepigraphic magical text published in German in 1849 and claiming to be based on ancient Hebrew sources. The dialogue with Philemon concerns the nature of magic, at the end of which Jung declares: 'We need magic to be able to receive or invoke the messenger and the communication of the incomprehensible'.¹²⁶

In a late volume of his *Collected Works*, Jung compared the ancient idea of the soul's ascent through the planetary spheres with the individual's psychological journey toward integration;¹²⁷ the expressions of this astral journey in late antique, medieval, and early modern texts, viewed structurally, bear close family resemblances to the processes through which Jung's patients moved as they accessed the various levels of their inner worlds. The bypassing of hostile astral intermediaries symbolises 'the overcoming of a psychic obstacle...suitably

¹²⁵ Jung, *Red Book*, 154.

¹²⁶ Jung, *Red Book*, 142-43.

¹²⁷ Jung, *CW14*, ¶309.

represented by a planetary god or demon', and anyone who has passed through all seven astral domains is 'free from compulsion'.¹²⁸ In the *Red Book*, Jung created a series of magical talismans based on his own imaginal experiences and his efforts to transform 'planetary fate' through interacting with the 'messengers'. The validity of Jung's conceptual system as a legitimate psychological model can be judged only by direct experience, and requires assessment independent of the esoteric nature of some of his sources. But in many respects, Jung could be considered not merely as an influence on the magical astrology of the British occult revival, but as an integral part of it.

9. CONCLUSION

Whether or not the religious and philosophical frameworks supporting the magical practices of the British occult revival are ontologically 'true' is an inappropriate question for an historical exploration of a cultural phenomenon. But it is reasonable to ask what the occultists were attempting to achieve. It seems that their magical astrology was not intended to predict the future, but rather, to create it; nor was it an effort to understand and accommodate the divine will, since it involved a high degree of coercion of the powers invoked. It was meant to open a channel between the adept and the astral 'forces' in the hope that a direct encounter, or even a merging – in effect, a mystical union – would transform the adept and heal the imbalances of a fragmented and alienated society. While the language incorporates the sciences and psychologies of the time, this aspiration is hardly modern, and reflects a persistent human belief that the shared nature of human and divine substance can allow mutual participation in the co-creation of the universe. Although the occultists I have discussed differed in their uses of magic according to their individual predispositions as well as the cultural currents of the particular years in which they worked, they were unanimous in attributing the potency of magical astrology to objective astral powers, at the same time that they acknowledged these powers as interiorised psychological dynamisms. This paradoxical view of magical astrology as both subjective and objective, interior and veridical, may be found in early Gnostic, Neoplatonic, Hermetic, and Jewish

¹²⁸ Jung, CW14, ¶308.

literature, and raises serious questions about whether human beings can really be homogenously classified in their thinking, beliefs, imaginings, and experiences solely according to the historical epoch in which they live. The magical astrology of the British occult revival might perhaps be understood as a vigorous complex of ideas that cannot be conveniently inserted into constructed categories such as 'pre-modern', 'modern', or 'post-modern', but instead represents an enduring human perception, fluid in its cultural adaptations but consistent in its central imagery and structure, of a dynamic relationship between earthly life and the heavens, in which human will and the human imagination can alter the determinism of astral fate through building and maintaining a system of bonds and relationships between revealed and concealed worlds.

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