

THE MIRROR
of
ELICONA



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Preface

The *Mirror of Elicona* is a grimoire in the form of magical autobiography: a personal reflection on a series of encounters with a spirit who was, up until the close of the early modern period, perhaps frequently called upon by the magicians and cunning folk of the British Isles. In directing the orientation of my soul toward this spirit I feel that I have touched upon something of the magical unconscious of England.

The purpose of this *Mirror* is not only to make a small contribution to the development and appreciation of what might be called ‘proto-Goetic’ magic, but also to share something of my own magical practice, which in the last decade has moved significantly away from ritualism to a more subtle appreciation and engagement with the spiritual hierarchies around us.^[1] Agrippa’s *Three Books of Occult Philosophy* remains my cornerstone, presenting as it does an interesting crossroads where sorcery and poetic magical philosophy – Johannes Faust and Giordano Bruno – may comfortably co-exist.

Furthermore I would also like to use this prefatory note to caution fellow explorers of the esoteric tradition on what I consider to be the danger of magic. I do not think it is unreasonable to suggest that – as a work of souls (the soul of the world, spirits, stars and the magus themselves) – magic is a profoundly effective tool for causing change in the interior world, more so than in that of the exterior.^[2] As with a religious or psychedelic experience, the processes of magic open up new areas of knowledge and consciousness that, unfortunately, often isolate the magus from their fellows. Such experiences are unexplainable to those who have not themselves shared them. For those that are experienced, adjustment to a new conception of reality and the changes that it may ultimately yield can be harrowing, but are vital to the process of ‘knowing thyself’ – change cannot occur without the death of old things.

CONTRA FELONEM, PRO AMORE

A couple of years ago I was researching a number of English manuscripts of magic, amongst them British Library Additional MS. 36674. I had become fascinated by the brief and eminently practical lists of spirits that often appeared in one of the articles – a compilation of conjuring material in English and Latin. Usually marked *contra felonem* and *pro amore* they catalogued the daemonic agencies behind the stock-in-trade of the practising magician of the 17th century, namely protecting or recovering goods and the procurement of love.

For theft to bring againe
Raguell & Uriel
Pro amore
Almazim & Elicona
Alazel, Rathan, Oberion^[3]

Aosel giver of treasure
Acozas giver of gold and silver
Almazim & Elicona^[4]

My initial attraction to these lists was due to the inclusion of *Oberion*, along with a number of spirits that were well established in the 16 and 17th centuries as aids to the magically inclined treasure-hunter: *Andromalcus*, *Seer*, *Dandragabon* and *Usagon*.^[5] In the famous *Goetia* of Solomon these spirits would later be appended to Reginald Scot's translation of Weyer's *Pseudomonarchia Daemonium* in order to bring that notorious list of demons to the magic number seventy-two.^[6]

I had intended to spend my summer attempting a genealogy of these spirits, who I believe were frequently conjured in these isles long before their assimilation into the *Goetic* hierarchy and their resultant loss of character.^[7] However, things did not work out that way.

The name *Elicona* captured my imagination. Elsewhere in the manuscript the conjuration of the twin spirits *Elicona* and *Almazim* is detailed. Reproduced in full below, the conjuration suggests the role of such a spell in the magical repertoire of the practical magus – one can almost imagine a Simon Forman-type character being consulted by a lovelorn maid, desperate for a magical intervention in her romantic life:

I conjure you *Almazim* and *Elicona* most loving and gentle spirits by the infinite wisdom of God, and his great power, by the meekness, and virginity of Saint Mary the virgin, by her charity and cleanliness, and by all the names of our Lord Jesus Christ, and by that ineffable name of our Lord the living God Tetragrammaton, and by the rending of the veil of the Temple, & by the appearing of them that were dead & buried, & by the resurrection of the dead through the death of Christ, and by the most fearful day of Judgement of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you shall labour to set love and amity between N & M

without any feigned friendship, fraud, discrimination, or crafty colouring of love or amity, and to cause the said N to to burn with the love of M, that the said N may neither eat, drink, sleep or do any thing until N have the company and daily enjoy the company of M as the said N shall at all times desire. The precept and requirement of me if you shall despise or neglect to admonish and perform as I command, God condemn you evilly everlasting torments whose names you despise, condemn and violate his wisdom. Grant this Our Lord, and your Jesus Christ, which in the Trinity doth live and reign world without end. Amen.^[8]

The only other reference to these spirits that I could find occurred in *De Nigromancia* of Roger Bacon, which also comprises part of Add. 36674. Here the pair of spirits are mentioned in the following context:

... the circle for the experiment above ... may also be used for the Circle of Friendship, which with the same conjurations may be used, but you must call out to the South:
Almazon & Elobona, in the hour of Venus, & command [them] to cause friendship betwixt two, & love, & constancy, & without any doubt they will do whatever you command them.^[9]

In the context of grimoire magic ‘love’ almost invariably equates to sex and the one-night stand. Therefore it is unusual to find affairs of the heart and long-term relationships dealt with, unusual too for spirits to be described as ‘loving and gentle’ and friendship to be valued above physical pleasure or material acquisition.

THE CIRCLE OF FRIENDSHIP, REDRAWN FROM ADD.36674, F.162R.



LOCUS SPIRITUS

The name *Elicona* haunted me.

In the summer of 2009 I found myself in a depression. The limitless universe, which had once sung with the voices of infinite spiritual agencies, seemed cold and immobile. The Muse that revealed the world to me, like *Cosmiel* leading *Theodidactus*, appeared to have vanished. Alone and agitated, my mind could no longer find the stillness in which the ‘mysteries’, for which the external world is simply the *signature*, showed themselves.^[10]

This was why the very name *Elicona* held such fascination: the similarity to *Helicon*, the mythical dwelling place of the Muses, suggested a route back into a visionary and creative engagement with the universe. The relation of *Elicona* to the powers of Venus and the designation of *pro amore* suggested to me that perhaps this spirit would help me rediscover and fall in love again with the Muse that I had once had in nature: a burning love of the world, in which creation would sing and transform itself from moment to moment before my eyes. It seemed as though convocation with *Elicona* might provide a way to lure the Muse back into my life.

In my solitary evening circuits around the Yorkshire hamlet of Littlebeck I would search for that special place that felt appropriate to the spirit. My intuition led me to the banks of a tributary to the river Esk. Here the sound of running water reflected off a steep shale cliff creating a subtle, perhaps mind-altering, doppler effect. Yes. This seemed like *the place*.

Loneliness and inner turmoil amidst the presence of nature are potent catalysts for generating magic and meaning. One need only think of Kathleen Raine’s curse upon Gavin Maxwell (“Let Gavin suffer in this place as I am suffering now”) to gain some insight into how even a simple, concentrated ‘ritual action’ may have a profound effect provided that the soul is violently moved.^[11]

Despite having once been preoccupied with the notion of ‘authenticity’ in magic, my approach to spirit work has changed profoundly over the last decade. Like many contemporaries I find myself questioning the value of assuming a stance of divine power and threatening the spirits with “evilly everlasting torments” as though they were metaphysical serfs. Having previously studied the *Arbatel*, the writings of Agrippa on communication with spirits (much influenced by Boethius), and the researches of Emma Wilby I have concluded that communication with the spirits has historically been more varied and subtle than the grimoires – now the cornerstones of ritual magic practice – would have one believe.^[12] Ritual action is one mode of opening up the unconscious mind to hear what Agrippa calls the ‘tongue of Angels’, by which spirits impress “the conception of the speech in [the minds of] those to whom they speak, after a better manner than if they should express it by an audible voice.”^[13] Such a ‘better manner of speech’ is, I believe, not just limited to ‘spoken’ words, but to the transmission of other sensory stimulus and complexes of imagery and ideas, which Agrippa elsewhere confirms: “Also the divining of suitable things works so with mans mind, that good spirits do assist us willingly, and communicate their power and vertue to us, daily helping us with illuminations, inspirations, oracles, prophecyings, dreams, miracles, prodigies, divinations, and auguries.”^[14]

As the sun set and twilight turned to amethyst I began to meditate on what I knew of *Elicona*, calling out that the spirit would guide my hand and aid me in the composition of an appropriate invocation. The resultant poem is in two parts, and suggests the structure of what we would now call a guided meditation or pathworking. The first section evokes the qualities of the stream: the *locus spiritus* in which I elected to meet *Elicona*. Since 2001 my magical practice has often been concerned with the evocation of spirits through music and poetry via a suitable *locus spiritus*.^[15]

After this, the spirit led me beyond the woods, stream and external world into a metaphysical realm. Here is the gestalt of the river: an unmoving, frozen pool whose still surface behaves as a scrying mirror, reflecting images within the soul of the gazer. The mirror may be considered one of the magical tools of Venus, similar as it is to the planetary glyph. In the divinatory folklore of the British Isles, mirrors are often used as a tool of love magic, notably for catching a glimpse of a future spouse:

If you eat an apple at midnight upon All Halloween, and, without looking behind you, gaze into a mirror, you will see the face of your future husband or wife.^[16]

The central image in the poem is of a mirror-pool, akin to the dew-pond (the lore of which has always fascinated me) surrounded by maidens. It was something of a shock that, while writing this article, I discovered Edward Burne-Jones' Pre-Raphaelite masterpiece *The Mirror of Venus* (1898), which stunningly evokes the scene that the spirit guided me to.

The poem ends with the magus gazing into the pool, seeking to discover the Muse in a divinatory glimpse.



INVOCATION

Elicona,

come to this time-worn bank
where Esk's daughter sings the song of flowing.
Her overtones descried by secret cleft
across the water skim,

striking the Mind.

Elicona,

as slate crags unveil
the tonal in the tumult, let me turn
the prism and bring your form to focus.
Come forth! Your shining rays

striking the Mind.

Up then O Mind enrapt: in awe
girdled; fast-held; in loves' grasp exalted!
Lead on, Soul, to Eros' pool.
Where unschooled maidens glimpse their loves
I foolish follow, seeking mine.

Reveal Her to me, Spirit.
Even the fleeting shadow
momentarily, silently,
shepherds the Sun into my heart.
O Anima,

Muse,

Mirror-face!

Elicona, striking the Mind!

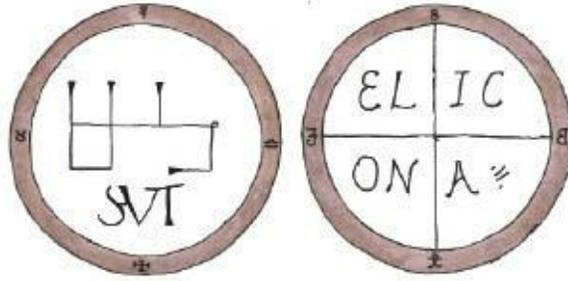
ENCOUNTER

The imagery that arose from invocation provided the structure for a series of guided meditations which took place upon the riverbank. Those with an interest in working with *Elicona* may like to begin with the framework outlined below once they have themselves determined a suitable *locus spiritus*. Each stage corresponds to a verse in the poem:

1. Meditation: An internal confirmation of the intent (“*Elicona*, come to this time-worn bank...”) followed by a developing awareness of body, breath and place, gradually turning to focus solely on the sound of the stream.
2. Invocation: Agrippa often tells us that the disposition of mind and imagination are closely related to the action of the soul: that like attracts like. For example, “he that desires to attract the influence of the Sun, must contemplate upon the Sun, not only by the speculation of the exterior light, but also of the interior.”^[17] During this phase the qualities and associations of Venus are intensely imagined, drawing the magus and intelligences of Venus, of which *Elicona* is one, more closely together.^[18] I’ve often used the poetic image of the prism to describe this form of work. *Elicona* should be visualised toward the end of the invocation, undertaking the role of a psychopomp and assisting in the translation of the magus.
3. Translation: The idea of translating the soul to other places is at least as old as the Gnostic theology that underpins the writings of the *Corpus Hermeticum*: “think from thyself, and bid thy soul go unto any land, and there more quickly than thy bidding will it be. [...] And bid it also mount to heaven; and it will need no wings...”^[19] With the rediscovery of the *Corpus Hermeticum*, Lodovico Lazzarelli, one of Agrippa’s influences, used poetic interventions to initiate and translate the souls of his audience, in much the same way as hymns are used to punctuate some of the Hermetic corpus when intellectual discussion can only take us so far.^[20] In these works the soul is given orders as though it is a separate entity from the magus. Hence, here it is instructed to lead the magus to a setting within the sphere of Venus.
4. Revelation: The culmination of the ritual sees the magus looking into *Elicona*’s pool. While the initial intention was to seek a vision that would aid in my rediscovery of a natural Muse, any vision relating to love, friendship or romantic attraction may be sought therein.

CONCLUSION

I hesitate to analyse the visions of *Elicona*'s mirror too closely, although the ultimate message conveyed through the visions was that as part of rediscovering the natural Muse I had to change certain aspects of my life: to move from a generally solitary existence into the 'Circles of Friendship'. Over the next three moons a number of friendships developed that have since blossomed into deep companionship, the like of which I have never known before. The workings with *Elicona* did lead to a number of unexpected, emotional, often painful changes, as briefly alluded to in the preface, but ultimately I have faith that the spirit acted benevolently "without any feigned friendship, fraud, discrimination, or crafty colouring of love or amity." A "most loving and gentle spirit", indeed.



Talismanic seals of Elicona.

TALISMAN OF AMITY

To be interred at the *locus spiritus*:

Almazim	Elicona
Joyer in the chase,	Crossway Keeper.
Come from your shores to this cool moss bank.	
To worm-rich soil where dusk-flies couple,	
And evening air conveys whitening dew.	
Here silence stirs the Genius' song,	
Who, in treasuring creation,	
Opens up His Earth	
To receive the	
Seed.	

*This work dedicated to Layla, Simon and Seth,
ever in the Circle of Friendship.*

*Thanks to Al Cummins for proofreading and feedback –
a true patron of the esoteric arts!*

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Phil Legard's main interests are the folklore, magic and psychogeography of rural areas. He has been involved in magic in one form or another since the mid-90s and has for the last decade worked extensively with the *tutelary genii* of Yorkshire. As a sonic expression of his esoteric interests he has recorded and performed music as Xenis Emputae Travelling Band, which was recently featured on the *Tesserae* compilation included with *Abraxas Journal* Volume 2. Phil has written a number of esoteric works including a commentary on the *Libellus Veneri Nigro Sacer* attributed to John Dee (Trident Books, 2010) and *Psychogeographia Ruralis* (Larkfall Press, 2007-2011). He is currently working on an edition of the 17th century German magical text *Theosophia Pneumatica* for Trident Books, as well as collaborating with Joseph Peterson and Dan Harms on an edition of the 16th century Folger magical manuscript.

FOOTNOTES

[1]. See, for example, David Rankine's *Book of Treasure Spirits* (Avalonia Publishing, 2010). I use the term 'Goetic' throughout to refer to the 17th century compilation commonly known as the *Lemegeton*.

[2]. Although I would like to stress that I am in no way a psychological reductionist and have myself been amazed, and often unnerved, by the influence of a violently moved spirit on physical artefacts.

[3]. From Add. 36674, f.64r. The final list of names are not given a purpose, but it is elsewhere indicated that they are for finding treasure and procuring gold and silver.

[4]. Ibid, f.71r. *Aosel* appears in Forman's *Excellent book of the Arte of Magicke* (1567) which is also bound with the MS (ff.47r-56v). The sections quoted above and comprising the fifth article of the MS are, however, a 17th century hand.

[5]. Ibid., f.82v.

[6]. *Dandragabon* and *Usagon* becoming *Dantalion* and *Vassago* respectively.

[7]. See, for example, the appearance of *Andromalchus* (alias *Andrew Malchus*) in 1528 recorded in *Norfolk Archaeology*, Vol. 1 (1847), pp.59-60.

[8]. Add. 36674, f.71r. English modernised.

[9]. *De Nigromancia* (Ed. MacDonald, Heptangle Books, 1983), pp.70-1.

[10]. Cf. Kathleen Raine, *Defending Ancient Springs* (Golgonooza, 1985 [1967]), p.5

[11]. Cf. Agrippa, *Occult Philosophy*, I.lxxi.

[12]. Agrippa, *Occ. Phil.*, III.xxiii; Wilby, Emma, *Cunning Folk and Familiar Spirits* (Sussex Academic Press, 2005).

[13]. Agrippa, *loc. cit.*

[14]. *Ibid.*, III.xxxii.

[15]. For Agrippa's discussion of music, poetry and the natural world in evocation see *Occ. Phil.* III.xxxii. See also Legard, *Psycheographia Ruralis* (2007/2011, Larkfall Press).

[16]. Addy, Sidney Oldall, *Household Tales with Other Traditional Remains* (David Nutt, 1895), p.83.

[17]. Agrippa, *Occ. Phil.* II.lx.

[18]. For the correspondences to Venus, see *Occ. Phil.*, I.xxviii; I.xlviii; II.xlii.

[19]. *Mind Unto Hermes* in *The Thrice Greatest Hermes*, Vol. 2 (Trans. Mead, Theosophical Publishing Society, 1906), pp.175-189.

[20]. Lazzarelli, *Crater Hermetis* (1505) in Lodovico Lazzarelli: *The Hermetic Writings and Related Documents* (Ed. Hanegraaf & Bouthoorn, Arizona Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies, 2005)

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