

O9A Esoteric Notes On Two Ancient Pagan Texts

Editorial Preface

The following two esoteric notes, dating from 2017 ev are republished here since they are relevant to and compliment the three recent (2018) O9A texts (i) *An Esoteric Note On The Somnium Scipionis*, (ii) *Some O9A Notes On The Picatrix*, and (iii) *A Hidden O9A?*

The two 2017 ev notes deal with ancient Greco-Roman sources that perhaps many of those who describe themselves as practitioners of a Western Occult tradition will be unfamiliar with.

We have corrected a few typos, updated some of the references, and added an additional reference to the Alastoras article.

§ The Avenging Alastoras

This text concerns the Avenging Alastoras as described in tractate 13 of the Corpus Hermeticum.

As we mentioned at the beginning of the Alastoras article:

"We read an awful lot, these days, in books, articles, and via the internet, about 'sorcery' and invocations, almost all of which books and articles describe or rely on the Magian influenced goetic 'tradition' as exemplified by the misnamed Hermetic Order Of The Golden Dawn. Thus it is refreshing to once again revisit actual Western pagan sources..."

§ On Sorcery In Virgil's Aeneid

The item titled *On Sorcery In Virgil's Aeneid* was a note written by Anton Long around seven years ago which was published in Azoth, an internal ONA bulletin. The note includes Anton Long's translation of a Latin quote from Virgil. This text provides the relevant historical, pagan, context, as well as a scholarly, an initiated, insight into words such as the Latin *magicas* which via the Greek μαγικός was the origin of the English term magic/magick.

To provide some context, what is evoked by Virgil is the immolation of a lady (Dido) who would rather die than dishonour herself by having to live with a barbarian, and who is angry at Aeneas for deserting her and who seeks aid through The Craft (sorcery) by means of a Dragon-friendly priestess. This is a manifestation of the Western ethos and a world away from what is evoked by

the medieval grimoire, Magian influenced, tradition with its profusion of hierarchical 'demons', its alleged 'secrets', and its hollow promises that anyone can control such 'demonic' entities if they have the right accoutrements and the right Magian names.

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The Avenging Alastoras

We read an awful lot, these days, in books, articles, and via the internet, about 'sorcery' and invocations, almost all of which books and articles describe or rely on the Magian influenced goetic 'tradition' as exemplified by the misnamed Hermetic Order Of The Golden Dawn.

Thus it is refreshing to once again revisit actual Western pagan sources {1} dating from centuries before The Magian Distortion; that is, before the 'grimoire' tradition with its summoning forth of Hebrew, and Hebrewesque, 'demons' and entities, as beloved by the likes of Crowley and Howard Levey.

This visit of ours is to Tractate 13 – an evocative name by itself – of the ancient, Greco-Roman, Corpus Hermeticum, as brought to life by the recent translation of Mr David Myatt {2}.

The tractate itself deals with palingenesis and Greco-Roman (Western) mysticism – a Western mysticism perhaps relevant to the 'sinisterly-numinous' way of the Order of Nine Angles – and our extract below deals with both palingenesis and those avenging deities, the Alastoras, mentioned by Klytemnestra after she, in revenge, had honourably killed her husband and his mistress Cassandra and, covered in blood, stands over the body of her husband:

"Do not add to those words that it was me who was the mistress of Agamemnon
Since the wife of this corpse presents herself here
As that most ancient fierce Avenger.
It is Atreus, he is of that cruel feast,
Who, in payment for that, has added to his young victims
This adult one." {3}

It is probably just coincidence that one of the Alastoras is named by Myatt as Vengerisse, given that in his Mythos Of Vindex he named the female Vindex as Vengerisse.

Alastoras and The Vengeress

An extract from sections 7-11 of tractate 13 of the Corpus Hermeticum, as translated by Myatt, {4}

{begin quote}

Go within: and an arriving. Intend: and an engendering. Let physical perceptibility rest, and divinity will be brought-into-being. Refine yourself, away from the brutish Alastoras of Materies.

Alastoras are within me, then, father?

Not just a few, my son, but many and terrifying.

I do not apprehend them, father.

My son, one Vengeress is Unknowing; the second, Grief. The third, Unrestraint; the fourth, Lascivity. The fifth, Unfairness; the sixth, Coveter. The seventh, Deceit; the eighth, Envy. The ninth, Treachery; the tenth, Wroth. The eleventh, Temerity; the twelfth, Putridity.

In number, these are twelve but below them are numerous others who, my son, compel the inner mortal - bodily incarcerated - to suffer because of perceptibility. But they absent themselves - although not all at once - from those to whom theos is generous, which is what the Way and Logos of Palingenesis consists of [...]

To us: arrivance of Knowledge of Theos. On arrival: Unknowing is banished. My son, to us: arrivance of Knowledge of Delightfulness: on arriving, Grief runs away to those who have the room.

The influence invoked following Delightfulness is Self-Restraint: a most pleasant influence. Let us, my son, readily welcome her: arriving, she immediately pushes Unrestraint aside.

The fourth invoked is Perseverance who is influxious against Lascivity. Which Grade, my son, is the foundation of Ancestral Custom: observe how without any deliberation Unfairness was cast out. My son, we are vindicated since Unfairness has departed.

The sixth influence invoked for us - against Coveter - is community. With that departed, the next invokation: Actualis, and thus - with Actualis presenced - does Deceit run away. Observe, my son, how with Actualis presenced and Envy absent, the noble has been returned. For, following Actualis, there is the noble, together with Life and Phaos.

No more does the retribution of Skotos supervene, for, vanquished,
they whirlingly rush away [...]

With a quietude, father, engendered by theos, the seeing is not of the
sight from the eyes but that through the noetic actus of the craft.

I am in the Heavens; on Earth; in Water; in Air. I am in living beings,
in plants; in the womb, before the womb, after the womb. Everywhere.

{end quote}

As a certain English poet wrote in 1873 CE , "the separation between the
Greeks and us is due principally to the Hebraistic culture we receive in
childhood."

T.W.S.
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v.1.04

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{1} Our first visit is described here:

<https://regardingdavidmyatt.wordpress.com/2017/06/30/western-pagan-curses/>

{2} David Myatt, *Corpus Hermeticum: Eight Tractates. Translation and
Commentary*. 2017. ISBN 978-1976452369.

{3} DW Myatt. *The Agamemnon of Aeschylus. A Translation*. Third edition,
2013. ISBN 978-1484128220.

{4} It should be noted that Myatt in his commentary on sections 7-11 of
tractate 13 provides detailed explanations for his translation of certain Greek
names and words, such as τιμωρία as *alastoras*, Vengerisse as a personification
of one of the *alastoras*; ἀκράσια as *Unrestraint*, and δικαιοσύνη as *Ancestral
Custom* rather than the conventional 'righteousness' in respect of which he
writes "righteousness imposes abstract theological meanings (mostly derived
from the Old and New Testaments) on the text."

On Sorcery In Virgil's Aeneid

The following text - along with an awful lot of classical literature - has long been misunderstood.

hinc mihi Massylae gentis monstrata sacerdos,
Hesperidum templi custos, epulasque draconi
quae dabat et sacros servabat in arbore ramos, (485)
spargens umida mella soporiferumque papaver.
haec se carminibus promittit solvere mentes
quas velit, ast aliis duras immittere curas,
sistere aquam fluviis et vertere sidera retro,
nocturnosque movet Manis: mugire videbis (490)
sub pedibus terram et descendere montibus ornos.
testor, cara, deos et te, germana, tuumque
dulce caput, magicas invitam accingier artis.

Here is a misinterpretation of the Latin, published in 1910, which completely distorts the meaning:

"From thence is come a witch, a priestess, a Numidian crone, who guards the shrine of the Hesperides and feeds the dragon; she protects the fruit of that enchanting tree, and scatters there her slumbrous poppies mixed with honey-dew. Her spells and magic promise to set free what hearts she will, or visit cruel woes on men afar. She stops the downward flow of rivers, and turns back the rolling stars; on midnight ghosts she calls: her votaries hear earth bellowing loud below, while from the hills the ash-trees travel down. But, sister mine, thou knowest, and the gods their witness give, how little mind have I to don the garb of sorcery."

Here is my interpretation which seeks to express what Virgil actually wrote:

"From there a priestess of the Massylian clan was made known to me - custodian as she was of the Temple of Hesperidum - who delivers food to the Dragon and protects the sacred branches of the Tree, sprinkling there moist honey and soporific seeds of poppy. She offers - to whomsoever she chooses - to release through song their feelings, and - for others - to let in lasting anxiety: to still the flowing waters and redirect the constellations to where they were; to drive away the Shades of Night. You shall perceive the Earth shake beneath her feet and the Mountain-Ash descend the mountains. And, my sister, upon the gods and by your dear life I bear witness that I reluctantly undertake the practice of The Craft."

a) The word translated by song is *carmen* (as in Orff's Carmina Burana) and might well be a reference to the power of song as evident in the myth of

Orpheus and Eurydice.

The word translated by 'feelings' is *mentes*, although a suitable alternative translation would be 'to free through song the heartache' since the Latin and the context - *abolere nefandi cuncta viri monumenta iuvat monstratque sacerdos*, "that slimy man" - suggests the place in the body where strong emotions and feelings are considered to reside.

b) The phrase *sistere aquam fluviis et vertere sidera retro* is not meant to be taken literally, but rather metaphorically; as in 'still the tears of heartache' and 'return to how things were' before the anxiety. Similarly, *nocturnosque movet Manis* is turn away, move away, banish, the 'ghosts' that might haunt our sleepless nights.

c) The word translated by The Craft is *magicas* and which Latin word is derived from the Greek μαγικός with the etymology of the Greek word being uncertain, although μαγικός is the title of a work attributed, in the Suda, to Antisthenes, and by Diogenes Laertius to Aristotle (qv. V. Rose, *Aristotelis Qui Ferebantur Librorum Fragmenta*, Leipzig 1886). One suggestion was that the word derives from Magi, with the (popular but unproven) assumption being that the Magi were skilled in what is now termed 'magick' (or sorcery, γοητικός, qv. Aristotle Fragment 36), although there is evidence to suggest (qv. Fragments 33 and 35) that the 'lost work' with the title μαγικός - whomsoever the author was - treated the Magi as philosophers and not as sorcerers, with Plutarch in *Adversus Colotem* mentioning a work which dealt with Zoroaster as a philosopher.

In Ovid, Tacitus, and Pliny the Elder, *magicus* can be taken as meaning one or more of the following: (i) a particular type of chanting or singing, of an ancient kind different from what the word 'incantation' now implies; (ii) certain types of divination including what is now known as astrology; (iii) certain rites and practices, including human sacrifice (*homo immolaretur*); and (iv) the use of herbs to cure ailments and sickness. Pliny (Book XXX, iii) also comments that *britannia hodieque eam adtonita celebrat tantis caerimoniis, ut dedisse Persis videri possit*, "even now Britannia practices it so enthusiastically with such large ceremonies it is conceivable they gave it to the Persians."

Hence to translate *magicas* here as 'magic' or 'sorcery' - replete as those words now are with accumulated meanings irrelevant to ancient times - is unhelpful, particularly as Pliny writes (in Book XXX, ii) that Homer's *Odyssey* is based upon the Art (*ars*) in question and relates a legend that Pythagoras, Empedocles, Democritus, and Plato, all journeyed abroad to learn that Art.

Given what Ovid, Tacitus, and especially Pliny the Elder - and Homer in *The Odyssey* if we accept Pliny's suggestion - wrote regarding the art that is *magicas*, then *The Craft* is a most suitable translation, redolent as it is of an ancient and almost forgotten Western esoteric tradition.

cc Anton Long & O9A
2018 ev

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