

An Interview with Andrew D. Chumbley
By Michael Howard and Robert Fitzgerald

MH: How do you understand the term ‘magick’ and what does it mean to you in a practical sense?

AC: I would like to give two successive understandings. Firstly, I would propose the following definition: “*Magick is the transmutability of the Quintessence of all Nature.*” This is to say that ‘magick’ is the all-potential power of change characterising the root-nature of all that has existence. Secondly, I would suggest a distinction between ‘magick’ as ‘power’ and ‘sorcery’ as the means of manipulating that power through knowledge: “*Sorcery is the knowledge of the universal points of transmutation. Its Art is to cultivate the ability to manipulate these foci of power in accordance with Will, Desire and Belief.*”

In practical terms, I consider Sorcery to be the knowledge of the fundamental principles or ‘sacred letters’ which govern the control, manipulation and application of magical force. These principles are the Sorcerer’s Alphabet. When focused via ritual, they determine the very arena of one’s unique self-existence. The Principles of the Magical Quintessence are used to coordinate force and form, to inform strategies of sorcerous behaviour and to empower expressions of creative aesthesis. Ritual, the magical ‘art’ *par excellence*, reveals new understandings of sorcerous knowledge and by the path that connects moment to moment – realisation to realisation - it brings consciousness into Gnosis. Magick in this sense leads to the direct realisation of Truth, the mystical apotheosis of the Arte Magical. Yet in the most pragmatic sense, magick is the power to bless, curse, attract, repel, call, banish, heal, hurt, bind or liberate. I consider that the Sabbatic Craft unites both mystical and the pragmatic dimensions to form ‘Transcendental Sorcery’. Thus, whether seemingly high or low in application, magick locates the step and connects the spirit to its location - wheresoever one wanders in thought, word or deed. Finally, I would add this: Magick brings one to meet Death before dying and thus bestows an eternally living Wisdom. The Light Magia reveals Sophia most fair ‘neath the mask of Thanatos most foul.

RF: Define ‘Crooked Path Sorcery’. Where did this term come from?

AC: The term ‘Crooked Path Sorcery’ refers to a specific corpus of Teachings and Rituals transmitted from within an inner circle of the Cultus Sabbati. It is distinguished from other bodies of Sabbatic lore by its specialised mode of ritual praxis, its distinctly ophidian cosmogony and manifold pantheon, as well as by its particular ethos of sorcerous mentality. The major body of Crooked Path Teachings is contained in *The Draconian Grimoire* and in this form will be published in due course of time. In a general sense, ‘Crooked Path’ or *Via Tortuosa* implies the deviating continuum of gnosis, the lightning-path that links one moment of insight to another; it signifies the ability to serve with both hands alike – to both hurt and heal, cure and curse; it denotes the razor-like wisdom that arises from and transcends the conjunction of contraries. More specifically, the *Via Tortuosa* relates to a cycle of Mystery-rites which may be regarded as initiations into the Way of the Draconist – into the Path of the Great Dragon Azhdeha. In essence, the Crooked Path Teachings intend a direct means of autonomous initiation into the Knowledge of the Magical Quintessence.

MH: What exactly does the Cultus Sabbati represent in its outer and public form?

AC: ‘Cultus Sabbati’ very literally ‘re-presents’ the Sabbatic Craft Tradition; as a term in the outer it reorientates the actualities and inner dimensions of the Tradition via public texts and images – books, articles, and artistic forms. In this sense it may best be described as a magical projection – an imaging-forth of the Hidden to the Seen.

RF: Since the Cultus is a closed circle, admitting through formal invitation only, one has to ask the purpose of such an outer ‘mask’. Why publish, why be ‘seen’?

AC: This is a line of questioning we apply to ourselves in order to test our own rationale. In one very significant respect, the magical projection of the Cultus has operated as a pharos for the Curren, that is, a beacon or point of orientation for several manifestations of Traditional Craft. Diverse streams of traditional observance, which otherwise may have passed into spirit, have met, communicated and cross-fertilised, simply because the Cultus has been ‘visible’ in exoteric terms, whilst at the same time being recognisable in terms of esoteric knowledge. Magically composed works can convey many ‘texts’ at once; a singular word can open many unseen paths. When eye meets eye in knowing it does not matter if a mask is worn.

Personally I consider the merit of our ‘outer’ actions lies in the consolidation of the Tradition and the respectful communion between kindred souls of the Arte Magical. Indeed, it is important for one to recognise that magical books and images can – if presented appropriately – work to quicken the vital seeds of initiatic awakening in fellow practitioners, whether solitary or covine in orientation, often opening avenues of direct spirit-contact and self-initiation. I consider that magical books and artefacts operate as entities in their own right, that they are familiar spirits and daimons who may serve, test, bring individuals together, birth new realisations, reveal dreams, function as omens; they can open a path of aspiration or close it forever. Speaking for myself, books like *Azoetia* are mystical love-letters to strangers whom I would not otherwise meet. Communicable inspiration is the guarantor of spiritual validity. The outer representation of the ‘Cultus Sabbati’ permits the Curren to communicate and yet to remain, on the inner, a matter undisclosed.

MH: What exactly is the ‘Sabbatic Craft’? What are the origins of this name?

AC: At an outer level of definition, ‘Sabbatic Craft’ describes a corpus of magical practices which self-consciously utilise the imagery and mythos of the ‘Witches’ Sabbath’ as a cipher of ritual, teaching and gnosis. This is not the same as saying that one practises the self-same rituals in the self-same manner as the purported early modern ‘witches’ or historically attested cunning folk, rather it points toward the fact that the very mythos which had been generated about both ‘witches’ and their ‘ritual gatherings’ has been appropriated and re-orientated by contemporary successors of cunning-craft observance, and then knowingly applied for their own purposes. The term describes the way in which elements of witch-lore, Sabbath mythology and imagery were being employed in the cunning-craft tradition into which I was originally inducted. From what I have learned of previous generations in this and kindred streams of Traditional Craft, the utilisation of Sabbath-imagery had been in process for some time, but during the late 19th century and throughout the 20th century became fully self-conscious. When mythic imagery and direct magical experiences of spirit-flight, faerie convocations, and such like

conjoin, the language of Sabbatic symbology is actually a very natural vehicle to employ.

It is useful at this point to emphasise that 'Traditional Craft' as a whole embraces many diverse streams of initiation, ritual, custom and spirit-allegiance. I know of at least seven lineages in Britain and am quite sure there are many others – each with its own character and spiritual individuality. This being said 'Sabbatic Craft', as a unifying term denoting a 'tradition', relates solely to the specific lineages convergent and operative in the Cultus Sabbati as an initiatic body. However, one can also speak of the 'Sabbatic Current' as an initiatory line of spirit-power that can inform all who are receptive to its impetus, and which – when engaged with beyond names – may be understood as a Key unto the Hidden Design of Arte. Being born of Vision, I would say the origin of 'Sabbatic Craft' lies truly in the Circle itself.

RF: Can you say more about the ritual symbolism of the Sabbatic Craft on an inner level, particularly in relation to consciousness?

AC: At an inner level of understanding one can speak of 'Sabbatic Craft' in more subtle ways. The mythic elements of the Witches' Sabbath can be treated as multivalent symbols, each capable of showing innumerable meanings, some historical-temporal, some pointing toward the a-temporal actualities of the Sabbath as a field of transcendental magical existence. In *Azoetia*, I wrote that the true meeting-place of the Sabbath was at the crossroads of waking, sleeping and mundane dreaming, and that the Sabbatic Rites were to be experienced and participated in a dimension of True Dreaming, in which one goes forth in spirit-flight into the Field of the Sabbat and there communes directly in its mysteries. Whilst one can write about this, the reality is rooted in personal apprehension which can only be gained if the spirits accept you and elect to call you out in dreaming, or if one is fortunate enough to be taught in a Traditional Craft lineage that possesses the requisite lore and spirit-patronage. In the final analysis, Sabbatic Craft is an initiatory tradition and only those who have been so inducted - whether by man or spirit - should speak about it, and even then guardedly.

MH: Can you explain a little about the actual practice of dreaming on a magical level?

AC: Every word, deed and thought can empower, magnetise, and establish points of receptivity for a magical dream, likewise any of these means can do the opposite - fixating perception in a manner that is not receptive – that seals the soul in the body instead of enabling it to go forth at will. Explanations of dreaming practices when given in a ritual context serve their own purpose – they reify the knowledge of the dream and empower the dreams of knowledge. Dreaming, like possession, trance and mediumism of various kinds, establishes direct communication with spirits and gods, and thus provides the vital means for the constant informing of one's magical work. The Sabbatic Craft employs the Arcana of Dream as a vehicle for the reification of spirit-knowledge: the materialisation of the spirit and the spiritualisation of the material.

If any aspire to this kind of spirit-relation and wish to gain knowledge of dreaming, let them go out walking by day – away from the company of men, out into the fields of their locality. Conscious of their step upon the land, let them ask for a sign or token. If the spirits of the place find you acceptable, an object or omen may be revealed. For example, you might see a white stag, a black dog, a magpie, or find a hagstone, a gnarled root, a fallen antler or a snake-slough. Fixate your perception at every

opportunity on this object and ask the spirits to open the way for you. When falling into sleep, hold the object in attention and again entreat the spirits. By letting awareness wander in the onset of dreaming, but at the same time tethering consciousness to the talismanic object, a 'scope' of receptivity is established – a field wherein new 'wanderings' may transpire. If you may walk knowingly in the fields of night, again entreat the spirits and, if they accept you in dreaming, a way shall be revealed. Here I point my hand toward the circle's edge of this matter, but in so doing I trust in the Wards to test all who would approach. A wise gardener once said to me: 'A true secret casts no shadow'. In this matter, even the secret's telling holds its shadow beyond sight.

MH: Do you see that there is any form of historical continuity between the so-called 'witches' of the past and Traditional Craft as it is practised today?

AC: Yes, I do, and in a number of different ways. Primarily I consider there to be continuities of basic ritual method, of spirit-community, and of oneiric locus.

In terms of 'method', the practices of Traditional Craft change and modify from one generation to the next, some things possessing greater continuity than others, but nonetheless certain spirit-borne threads continue to maintain the essential web. Speaking in a general sense, practices employing Words of Power, dual observance, Latin charms, Biblical verses for prayer, healing and divination, toad-bone magic, knotted cords, witch-bottles, are all attested by folklorists as having been used by the so-called 'witches', charmers, and cunning-folk of the past; and so – because of their oral continuity and implementation - they remain a part of some forms of Traditional Craft as practised today.

Speaking from a personal perspective, I consider it vital to realise, particularly in terms of ritual knowledge, that the experience of evoking the shades of one's lineal and local magical ancestors provides a very real sense of living continuity. It bestows the sense of belonging to a magical community in which both living and dead participate. This empowers the perpetuation of remembrance and maintains a direct understanding of one's personal and communal spiritual heredity. This is not just about the present linking to the past, but is about the dead and the living engaging in the present as one.

Using academic analysis as an adjunct to initiatic understanding can provide other perspectives about continuity. Judging from the historical works of Henningsen, Ginzburg, Behringer, Pocs, *et alia* it is evident that motifs and elements of the Witches' Sabbath relate directly to early modern folk beliefs, magical praxis, and attested interactions with dream-conclaves and spirit-hosts. This being so, there is very clear comparison with contemporary Sabbatic Craft praxis. One might ask whether certain types of praxis yield comparable spirit-communion and thus, despite shifts in values, theology, names, and representations, the experiential actualities of magical practice, spirit-congress and oneiric locus maintain a certain constancy of reality.

To comprehend the forms of inner continuity one must not however equate antiquity with authenticity; the source of the Sabbatic Craft is of the Moment, beyond past and future. The linear perspective of 'time' assumed by historical analysis must be recognised as having limited value when considering and representing the manifestations of a-temporal contexts of experience.

RF: Have you any plans for new books?

AC: In many ways I think new books, or rather their spirits, have plans for me! I have never sought to write books ‘about’ magic, but rather to write magical books – to reify texts and images which are the vessels for spirits, powers and specialised kinds of knowledge. Such books are genuine Grammars of the Arte and are possessed of a life beyond the apparent manifestations of author, reader, page and ink. To answer your question specifically, there are a number of works in process. There is, of course, the new edition of *Azoetia*. This is scheduled for publication during the latter part of 2002. *Azoetia* forms the first volume of a three volume set of grimoire texts; the second of which is *The Draconian Grimoire*. These three works deal respectively with the Teachings of the Magical Quintessence, the Crooked Path, and the Immediate Way. As with all magical works, their ‘birth’ must await its proper season and I can only ask readers to be patient; I have to be!

Other works like *Qutub* and *The Grimoire of the Golden Toad* are specialised adjuncts to the main series of works. Kindred to these specialisations is a new project I have begun and which I intend to work on in forthcoming years, namely, the Unique or Monadic Transmission Series. These are small grimoire-texts of which one copy only is made. Each is hand-written and illustrated, and accompanied by specific ritual items. These are then either sold, gifted or passed on according to their ritual orientation, thereby being sent forth as emissaries, messengers to carry specific elements of the work.

‘Plans’ for magical books are vortices of obsessional will that revolve around the gestating ‘seeds’ of gnosis. According to one’s application to the work, visionary impetus is reified and the ‘book’ takes form. Every ‘plan’ is thus rooted in a sudden eruption of creativity - an epiphany of spirit-knowledge that originally takes one by surprise, forcing a deviation of intent and necessitating an attentive response to the new-turning path. If the source of one’s vision is found, one should rejoice – for the sole object worthy of true devotion’s love is revealed.

RF: Books emerging from the Cultus are all published by Xoanon. Could you give a brief description of Xoanon's birth and development. What does the name mean, and why did you choose it? Were other names considered?

AC: ‘Xoanon’ is an ancient Greek word, meaning an effigy or image of deity fallen from the sky to earth. It was chosen as the name for the Cultus Sabbati’s publishing house because it depicts the process of reification of spirit into matter, the translation of unseen ‘texts’ to visible books. I think the name was chosen in a lightning-flash of inspiration and I don’t recall any alternative names being considered.

Xoanon was founded in 1992 for the express purpose of publishing *Azoetia* and future Cultus works, both internal and external texts. In 1995, Xoanon was greatly assisted by Fulgur, who published *Qutub* on our behalf and by example taught us many invaluable lessons about publishing. In the year 2000, Xoanon underwent a potent resurgence with the baptism of fire that accompanied the publication of the Toad-book. In 2001, the year in which we issued *Ars Philtron*, Xoanon was established as a limited company under both myself and Daniel Schulke, the author of that work. This marked a further consolidation of Xoanon as a magical vehicle for reification, augmenting the freedom to move its focus of will betwixt the worlds of men and spirits.

The publication of *Ars Philtron* marked an extremely important shift; it began to move the focus away from myself as the sole ‘authority’ in the Cultus as it is outwardly

perceived. I hope that in forthcoming years, as we publish more and more works by other Sabbatic initiates, our readership will begin to comprehend that the Cultus has several visionary perspectives and that each has an importance in its own right as well as in the context of the tradition as a whole.

MH: Do you recognise the concept of ‘self-initiation’ or ‘self-dedication’ as a legitimate act or process for those who cannot or do not want to work within a coven structure and wish to follow the path of a solitary practitioner?

AC: Yes, I do, but I prefer to use the term ‘solitary initiation’. I think ‘self-initiation’ is something of a misnomer; initiation is always a matter of relation and transformation, whether that be between Prentice and Master or Aspirant and Deity. One initiates the other and the relations between both are transformed to a new status, usually through the transmission of new kinds of knowledge to the initiand. In the Sabbatic Craft, solitary initiation or ‘The Lonely Road’ is recognised as a vital aspect of every practitioner’s path and the understanding of ‘solitude’ is subject to many levels of interpretation. Autonomy is the key virtue, irrespective of whether one practices in human convocation or ‘alone’ – in the ever-present company of spirits. As regards the rituals of solitary initiation, I am aware of seven major forms of induction, the most well-known of which is probably the Toad-bone ritual. Whilst I recognise that anyone who follows the procedure of any of these rites is technically able to receive the full ‘power’ of witchblood thereby and without human mediation, I must stress that just performing the ritual is insufficient; the authority gained via the process must have the assent and acceptance of a rite’s patron spirits. Certain of these rites are unknowingly shared by differing lineages of Old Craft, often being used as an adjunct to teacher-pupil induction. I

RF: You are sometimes referred to as ‘Magister’ of the Cultus Sabbati, can you tell us what this means to you personally and in terms of the hierarchy of the tradition?

AC: The Cultus has several important offices of power which have been a part of the Tradition for as long as oral memory attests. In terms of general interpretation, these are positions of authority held by specific individuals, based upon the possession of specialised knowledge, skills, experience, and the command of respect. However, these offices may also be interpreted as the stations of the soul in its initiatic pilgrimage and thus relate to each and every initiate. You ask what it means to use the term ‘Magister’. This, like many matters relating to hierarchy and power, is a complex issue. One must be aware that responsibility, propriety, and service increase with one’s role and sense of authority. To my mind, the True Magister (or Magistra) should hold fast to all that was taught unto him by his own initiators, be fully able to refine and develop the ways of the past according to his own vision, be able to speak clearly about the diverse bodies of lore within the tradition, and be skillful to discern, teach, and assist fellow brethren. Whilst every initiate focuses upon the unique ingression of the current into their own personal praxis, the task of the Magister is to perceive the design of the current as it ingresses into the Tradition as a whole. Accordingly he directs covine praxis and seeks to cohere the work of all as one. The work of the Magister is to serve in ruling, and thus he is the Living Stang. I hold up this paragon of what ‘magister’ means to me, not because I think all that about myself, but because it is a station of the soul worthy of aspiration. It signifies ‘being’ magick, not practising it!

RF: How did Cain and Lilith come to be associated in British Traditional Witchcraft as the Primogenitors of the Race of Witchblood?

AC: Different streams of British Traditional Craft have different patron deities, ancestors and spirits. If one is able to oversee this diversity certain strands of commonality may be perceived. If one may seek amongst these strands – amidst the many other kinds of shared features, one may speak about a body of lore that exists in the Old Craft which incorporates a gnostic faith in the Divine Serpent of Light, in the Host of the Gregori, in the Children of Earth sired by the Watchers, in the lineage of descent via Lilith, Mahazael, Cain, Tubal-cain, Naamah, and the Clans of the Wanderers... onward to the present-day Initiates of Arte.

Speaking from my knowledge of the Ophite-Sabbatic lore within the Cultus, its historical provenance is primarily rooted in oral transmission. Nonetheless, beyond the passing of word from mouth to ear, there are many diverse linkages which prefigure the complex form seen in the present-day mythos. In previous generations Traditional Craft has shared certain features with the Societies of Horsemanry; reverence for Cain is one such element. In turn, comparable ideas about the role of Tubal-cain and Naamah can be seen in the allied rites of Freemasonry. Traditional Craft has also made good use of many ritual magic texts such as The Key of Solomon and Agrippa's Books of Occult Philosophy. These works also provide avenues for allied figures, such as Lucifer, Asmodeus, Lilith, and the Arch-daemonic Guardians of the Magical Circle led by Mahazael. Although the emphasis of sacrality is reversed, another strand of genealogy is obviously to Biblical texts where various elements of the mythos are present. Biblical sources likewise connect to the Apocrypha, Pseudepigrapha, Jewish folklore and even Manichaeian texts as avenues of influence. However, whilst one could 'explain' the presence of Cain and Lilith with recourse to such sources, contesting some kind of dependence of Sabbatic lore upon Christian, Jewish *et al* demonologies, this fails to appreciate the unique and self-sustaining complex of the Craft mythos in itself. The Teachings of Traditional Craft utilise a cipher of luciferian antinomianism which renders Cain and Lilith, our blessed primogenitors, as the Bearers of Light from the Ancient Serpent. The overcoming of Adam by Lilith and the murder of Abel by Cain signify the transformation of the uninitiated condition or 'Clay' into the 'Fire' of Magical Knowledge. This is however the merest inkling of the breadth and depth of these matters.

As a parting tale, it is worth speaking about another fascinating path of influence into Traditional Craft, namely that of Gypsy beliefs. Indeed, I recall once being told the Tale of the Uncooling Nail by a Romany fellow:- On the night before Christ's crucifixion, soldiers were sent out to have four long nails forged for the deed. They approached Jewish, Greek, and Roman smiths, but each refused once they had heard the nails were for Jesus of Nazareth's crucifixion. Outside the city gates the soldiers found a Romany smith. He didn't ask the need for the long nails so late at night; he just needed the money. The smith obliged and began making the nails, one by one. However, whilst heating the fourth nail in the fire, he asked who they were for. On learning they were for Christ's crucifixion, the gypsy ceased his work abruptly and fled. However, the fiery nail that had been in the forge never cooled down; it remained a glowing spike of blood-red flame. And, so it is said, the Uncooling 'Nowl' will follow the descendants of the Romany smith wherever they go. It is held that the Romany smith was himself a

descendant of Tubal-cain, the first metal-worker, and he had in turn learned his Art from Cain. Personally, I consider that the Old Craft has now taken up this nail; knowingly! We have a saying: 'The way of sacrifice maketh man whole'.

MH: Is there anything you would like to add? Anything specific you wish to say to the Cauldron readers?

AC: Nurture irrepressible vision!

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