

Working Notes 8/29/1994

## THE FELLOWSHIP OF CARBONEK

### Overview

The Fellowship of Carbonek is intended as an affiliate Order working within the jurisdiction of the Companions of the Stone. Membership in the Fellowship will be open to any Initiate Companion of the Stone in good standing who has been advanced to the Second Degree.

The purpose of the Fellowship -- like that of any other potential affiliate Orders within the COTS -- is the development of some part of the Western esoteric tradition outside the primary Hermetic and Rosicrucian focus of the COTS proper. In the case of the Fellowship, the focus of the work is the mysteries of the Grail and the traditions of chivalry. It thus serves to draw together two strands of the Western esoteric tradition not well developed within the main work of the COTS:

a) The "green ray" or Earth energy work, of the sort often associated with Celtic survivals and with the macrocosmic and microcosmic healing functions of the Grail.

b) The martial tradition of the Western mysteries, now all but extinct, linked historically with the ideals of chivalry and the more mystical aspects of the Grail.

The fact that these strands of the tradition are not well developed means that the work of the Fellowship will be, perforce, experimental and to some extent tentative. Its formal organization as an affiliate Order will need to follow on a great deal of less formal work. Furthermore, some aspects -- for example, the specifically martial training -- will need to be brought in at a fairly basic level at first. (Of this, more later.)

### Organization

The Fellowship will be organized in the usual way, as a group of local lodges (properly, Chapters) under the jurisdiction of the Grand Assembly of the COTS. Bylaws might want to place an upper limit of seven such Chapters, and a similar limit to the total potential number of Knights. I currently envisage meetings taking place once a month.

Chapters can follow normal lodge procedure, with ritual openings and closings. However, the differences between the Fellowship's work and that of the COTS (as well as the fact that all Fellowship members are to be members in good standing of a COTS lodge) argue against much parallelism between the ordinary business of a COTS lodge and that of a Chapter. Ritualistic work should not be the focus of Chapter meetings; rather, drill and

instruction in the skills of Hermetic knighthood will be the main business at hand. Abilities already gained in the course of COTS training will enable the yearly Grail Working to be carried out without huge amounts of practice.

Officers of a Chapter might include the Keeper of the Grail (who has governance of the Chapter), the Master at Arms (responsible for martial training), the Mage (who must be an Adept Companion, and who serves as the link between the Chapter and the COTS as a whole), the Marshal (equivalent to the COTS Summoner), the Scribe, and the Doorkeeper. Keeper, Master and Scribe are elected to one-year terms, the others appointed, and their installation can be made part of the yearly Grail Working.

### Training

The training process of the Fellowship differs somewhat from that of the COTS proper. The Fellowship does not have grades or degrees in the usual Hermetic sense -- that is to say, a set of well-established stages of work separated by formal initiations, leading up to a specific form of participation in the Higher. Again, that's what the COTS is for; the Fellowship has a different focus.

Its approach (one might say, along with Sir Lancelot, its idiom) is twofold, and oriented to the idea or ideal of the Quest. The first stage is that of preparation for the quest, and represents the training of the squire until he or she is ready for knighthood. The second stage is that of actually embarking on the quest, and here the idea of a formal progression of events breaks down; the events the Round Table knights met on their quests were wholly a matter of who they were and what choices they made as individuals. So, too, in an experimental and open-ended area such as the one the Fellowship is intended to explore, one never knows who is going to be waiting at the next ford.

Therefore postulants to the Fellowship will take an obligation of secrecy, of mutual support, and of right use of the things they are to learn, in a fairly simple ceremony modeled on the feudal ritual of fealty -- but without the sense of personal allegiance. This pledge will be given on a drawn sword, in some suitably romantic setting. (I do think a cave would be marvelous.) Each postulant is vouched for by, and becomes the squire of, a Knight, and this Knight is then responsible for a large part of the postulant's training. (Another large part takes place in Chapter meetings under the watchful eye of the Master at Arms.) The squire, in turn, assists the Knight in his own quest in ways defined by the rules of the Order.

Once the postulant has achieved the level of skill and knowledge required for knighthood, he or she then will be tested in some appropriate manner, and will then be dubbed a knight in the full medieval rite. Once this has been done, the new Knight may set off on his or her own quest -- that is, will take up that area of

research, practice, and involvement in the world to which he or she feels called. The fruits of that quest, be they sweet or bitter, will be reported to the Chapter, again in the best Arthurian mode -- I imagine the banquet after the Grail working, in which each Knight rises and recounts the year's adventures.

Despite the personal nature of the Knight's work, there will be opportunities to provide common elements. The notion of the four seasonal Vigils is one; another is the work of training new squires; still another is the holding of Chapter office. Certainly, too, there ought to be ways to turn a good part of the Fellowship's focus into the world in ways which will not lead to the subsuming of the Fellowship's magical work into some kind of mundane "good works" -- or, less pleasantly, into organized physical or nonphysical violence.

### Curriculum

I envisage the curriculum of study in the Fellowship as including a scholarly, a magical, and a martial component.

The scholarly component will certainly include a reading list, composed of:

- Arthurian romances;
- Magically oriented scholarship on same;
- Works on strategy and martial traditions;
- Works on magical defense and combat;
- Works on Celtic and other "green ray" topics;
- Materials (which we will probably have to write) synthesizing these somewhat heterogeneous elements.

What else might be part of this component I'm not sure at this point. Perhaps a thesis?

The magical component should include, at least:

- A set of meditations on the Quest and the Grail;
- A series of guided visualizations, ditto;
- A set of earth-awareness exercises like the ones given in Richard's feng-shui book -- or, for that matter, like the ones we'll need for the Dreaming Earth project;
- The Work of Earth energy practice, with expansions in the direction of energetic healing;
- A substantial body of training in exorcism and magical combat.

Then there's the martial component, which needs a section to itself.

### The Way Of The Sword

Optimally, it would be nice to have a complete Hermetic martial arts system to hand, comprising unarmed and armed combat, internal and external work, the whole thing nicely systematized and tested out by masters in those days when the casual slaughter of malefactors was considered to be a public service if it was

noticed at all. Here, though, we're a little short of the optimal.

Well, more than a little. In fact, we have only the dimmest and most ambiguous evidence that any Hermetic martial tradition existed at all, ever. Nor is there any reason at all to think that such a tradition corresponded to what we might think of as a "martial art" at all. Not every fighting method qualifies! A smattering of basic moves backed up by unremitting practice -- the stock in trade of the street fighter, the soldier, and the bruiser-on-plowhorse sort of knight -- may be effective, but it a) is hard to teach and b) is even harder to link with a magical tradition in anything but the most allegorical of ways.

In the West, systematic study and understanding of fighting arts came late -- the Renaissance, roughly. To the medieval knight the joust was a test of character and sheer force, not of mastery of technique. Even accepting the dubious claim that the Knights Templar were an esoteric outfit, their fighting arts would have differed from those of any other European knight only by an increased emphasis on personal virtue and -- just possibly -- a certain number of spells and talismans. Not only the medieval conception of combat but the antimaterial biases of Christian and late Pagan thought alike makes anything else unlikely in the extreme.

So any martial tradition we are intending to start will either be stolen or come up with from scratch. Neither of these seems very useful over the short term -- borrowed systems come with their own ideologies, while brand-new ones are rarely effective unless created by the already well-trained -- and there is, as Richard has pointed out, the additional problem that very little of our potential membership is likely to have much in the way of martial training...or the time to devote two evenings a week (the usual minimum in dojos) to being trained in our proposed system.

My proposal here, based on suggestions from Richard, is something of a best-of-a-bad-lot possibility, but it offers some potential over the long run. I suggest that we teach a simple system of sword combat and drill -- something useable in practical terms, but closer to the basic training of the early-modern soldier than to the disciplines of the gentleman fencer or the Arthurian knight. This system could then be linked in to the martial energy applications of the Work of Earth, and to more explicitly magical practices as well. I propose that we concentrate on the sword alone for the sake of sheer simplicity; given a unified focus, it does not seem impossible that a few years of work might permit practitioners to reach a level of skill comparable to, say, a run-of-the-mill sabreur of the Napoleonic wars. (This in itself is no small feat.) At the same time, sword work is easily convertible to walking-stick technique, and the walking stick is unlikely to be outlawed very soon, even under currently proposed weapons legislation...

At the same time, Knights of the Fellowship whose inclinations lie in that direction can be encouraged to take up regular martial arts training, and to work over the middle and long term toward the inclusion of more extensive martial elements into the Fellowship's training program. In time -- assuming a lifespan for the COTS longer than our own, something I at least propose to do my best to provide for -- this process could easily spawn one or more effective and thoroughly Hermetic martial arts.

Thus my suggestion for the martial component of the Fellowship's curriculum would start with:

- A basic system of sword training;

And probably also include:

- Training in the elements of strategy and tactics;
- Application of magical and etheric disciplines to movement and combat;
- Study of the martial implications of environments;
- Practical training in healing and first aid.

Beyond that, it's off into the wilds of Broceliande, "each knight choosing the place where the forest seemed thickest to him..."

### Starting Up

(I almost wrote "implementation." Gah -- what an ugly word!) The setup phase for the Fellowship is going to be a couple of years long at least, barring sudden lottery jackpots enabling the lot of us to quit work and become full-time magi. There's a lot of work to do on the COTS proper, first of all -- the rituals written and mastered, the training scheme refined and detailed, the first trickle of new members brought to a level at which they can start taking over some of the day-to-day burdens of management.

At the same time, we've got a certain amount of work ahead of us on the Fellowship curriculum. A system of sword-work has to be chosen and researched, and at least two members trained in it to the point of being able to teach it comfortably; the curriculum has to be settled and worked out in detail; and the lot of us will have to learn a number of things I don't think any of us knows much about at all just now. The core disciplines aren't the problem -- if they were, I'd have extreme second thoughts about this whole venture -- it's the extensions of those disciplines, the things which will make the Fellowship's system more than a skeleton, which call for work.

I would like to see, if it's possible, one more night a month set aside for a Carbonek Working Group. There we'll practice the Work of Earth and (when it's chosen) the sword drill, do guided visualizations on Arthurian themes, and hash things out in our traditional style. While it's not vital that we get cranking on this right away, I'd like to see it started before Spring Equinox of 1995.

