

Seven Shades of Solitude

A brief disquisition concerning the Subtil Degrees of the Lonely Road,
set forth in accordance with the Gnosis of the Sabbatick Craft Tradition,
by Andrew D. Chumbley

Solitude is a Muse to Those whom it loves. It is a masked wanderer that meets the Mage as the oldest of friends, as the most worthy of enemies, as the most constant yet elusive lover, as the wisest and most cunning teacher, as angelic solace or as hellish torment, as a prayerful eirenicon finally answer'd, as a battle-field from which there is no escape. Its mask is all that we make it, for Solitude elects its friends by a divination of mirrors: it determines the nature of its mortal relations according to its own Mystery's reflection in each and every soul. The one who dares surrender unto the sky-spacious abyss of the Isolate shall find his self more in his own self-losing, for the vast profundities of the soul shall be surrender'd unto him. Yet he who fears the merely quiet and dark byways of the soul's unaccompanied wandering, does he not make himself the evoker of his own demons? If we are too plagued by the ghosts of our own making, how may we seek the good counsel of the spirits and gods which partake, in equal measure to ourselves, in the All-Oneliness of Existence?

Like a child, first gazing into a looking-glass, perplexed at the mimicking twin who dances and gestures - and 'lives' - on the other side, we often mistake the reflections of our own spiritual condition for a truthful understanding of an external world around us, misunderstanding the lessons which the masquerade of Solitude brings before us. How often we make masks and costumes for our gods in our own likenesses; how often we paint the hosts of heaven with our own shadow-play, joining star unto star, belief unto belief, in configurations born wholly of our own affinities. Indeed, there are veils upon veils which reveal to us our own arcana, but which - if falsely taken as a final comprehension of 'truth' conceal from us that which we aspire to seek. Wisely we must make our way through the maze of mirror'd altars.

Transgressing all well-kept borders of history and culture, the Way of the Sorcerer, the so-called 'Faith of Cain', is that which heeds the spirits beneath the heels of the Wanderer; it is the Way of Knowledge which comprehends the living zodiac of Desire, the 'how' of Believing, and the tools by which such Knowledge can be wilfully applied: the Sigil and Stave, the Will and the Word of Magical Power. For those of this Faith, the so-called Wytcha and Curren, it is the Circle of the Arte Magical which forms the Perfect Mirror in which the Mysteries of Solitude may be sought.

Drawing from a diversity of personal experience - as a perpetual apprentice, a constant journeyman, and as a Presiding Magister of Covine, Lodge and Lineage - the Circle of Arte has yielded up its Own-Being of Solitude according to many subtil degrees of understanding. Although I often practise in assembly and convocation, if a man be defined by his greatest

predilection and most frequent manner of ritual observance, then I am in truth a solitary magician in the time-honoured custom of English cunning-craft. If I may say this of myself, then it is indeed true of all whom I have known and held dear as True Brethren of the Faith. It is from such experiences as my meagre years have garnered that Seven Shades of Solitude have become known to me, and it is these gradations of the Lonely Road which are set forth below. Each of the 'shades' represents a particular predilection of practice - a disposition of the Will and an orientation of the Soul upon mystical pilgrimage toward the summit of attainment. It is certain that each of the seven degrees possesses its own wisdom, but this is solely true for each at their own specific level of operation and understanding. From another perspective each mode becomes folly, being limited to a dualistic view that obscures the Gnosis of Solitude in its Own-being.

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I) The First Solitude is the Hermitage of Convocation. It is the solitude of the practitioner who engages intimately with no others except for his own brethren, his magical blood-relatives. It is the solitude of one who enjoys the pleasures and inspirations of self-company, yet is content to share in the communion of discourse and practice with Fellow Companions of the Way, whether in unnamed sodality or in formal convocation. Though such a man or woman may engage in worldly activities and interactions to such an extent as circumstance dictates, all such affairs are kept in their own place, without contact or intrusion into the sphere of practice and magical discourse.

The Hermit of Convocation resides under the patronage of the so-called 'Faithful Gods', the Assembly of the Sixteen Witch-fathers and Witch-mothers. To such a practitioner the gifts of spiritual communion, commonality of purpose, diversity of perspective, mutual support in travail, wise counsel and guidance are bestowed.

II) The Second Solitude is the Hermitage of Sacred Marriage. This is the solitude of the practitioner who engages magically with no other than his or her own sole magical partner or chosen ritual consort. This is the solitude of the Mage who enters the harem of the Sole Other, the adytum of the Muse's devotions. When the inspiration of one's perfect loneliness is not other than the manifest presence of one's beloved the door unto this hermitage has truly opened.

The Hermit of Sacred Marriage resides under the patronage of Liliya and Mahazrael, the Witch-queen and King of the Faithful Gods. The blessings of this spiritual station are the elixirs of the Love-feast, the Eucharist of flesh and blood, the well-spring of Love as inspiration, the mirror of gazes from whence dreams take flesh, the secret of union, and many more, exceeding great virtues of the heart.

III) The Third Solitude is the Hermitage of the Journeyman. This is the solitude of one who abandons all outward physical company, eschewing association with all others, men and women, friends and foes alike. This is the solitude of one who draws inward to the circle of his own self-brotherhood - the arena of his own mental and sensory faculties, and who engages with none but the spirits, genii and deities of the Path.

The Hermitage of the Journeyman resides under the patronage of Abel or Habil, He who is perpetually overcome in the Ordeals of Initiation. It may also be seen to reside under the auspices of the Witch-father called Qinyaya Habil-Zhiva, He who is known as 'The Resurrector of Abel', who watches over all such deeds that succeed in the transmutation of Will through self-sacrifice. The gifts bestowed at this station of the soul are numerous and it is within this hermitage that any true aspirant must secure himself in introspective contemplation if he is truly to comprehend the orientations and dispositions of his own nature. By abiding long hours in the company of this solitude one may find the wellspring of the magical power within oneself. By actively sojourning there, in the very ebb and flow of the current within, the voice of oracles may be heard from the depths, the visions of the night shall arise in clarity, and to the Most Blessed the Faithful Gods shall come forth, unmasked and in patronage to the Will.

IV) The Fourth Solitude is the Hermitage of the Magister. This is the solitude of one who realises Self-vision as its own autonomy, who has attained to the Knowledge of the Path according to both Tradition and Revelation, who may participate in ritual praxes with or without others, without compromise or deficiency to the realisation of Intent. This is the Hermitage of One who indwells the so-called "Place of Power". It is the Station of the Soul that presides in magisterial equanimity over the Convocation of the Visible and Invisible, both Inwardly and Outwardly.

The Hermitage of the Magister resides under the patronage of Cain, the so-called 'First-born of Witchblood', the first magician, and the Master of all true-born unto the Crooked Path of Sorcery and Witchdom. The attainment of this station is its own reward, for its understanding yields up its own merit: Mastery.

V) The Fifth Solitude is the Hermitage of the Transgressor. This is the solitude of one who wilfully steps outside the world of mortal man as an act of magical power, whose path transgresses the "boundaries of the city" and crosses over the many borders of convention, daring to go forth into such domains and regions as remain uncharted or forbidden. This is the Way of the One who perpetually acknowledges the search for Cain, the Initiated Man of Witch-fire, and who constantly engages through self-overcoming in the mystical sacrifice of Abel, the Profane Man of Clay.

The Fifth Solitude is the hermitage of one who passes beyond the pale of any kingdom, government or rulership, save that of his chosen deity or intent. It is the condition of one who actively engages in magical praxis 'outside' the parameters and gravities of custom, convention, or rules of mankind, whether such boundaries be the outer physical limitations of spatiality, appearance or behaviour, or the inward limitations of spirituality, mentality, moral awareness, emotional sensibility, sexuality, and so forth. It is the hermitage of the laughing saint who prays with equal mirth in graveyard or brothel, chapel or thicket. This is the path of one who seeks for the Gnosis of Liberty, who walks without attachment to fear or hope into the Tameless Wilderness of his own Self-vision.

The Hermitage of the Transgressor resides under the patronage of Qayin Azhaka: the Heresiarch, the Initiate attained in the Deific Assumption of the Cainite Wisdom, the Illumined One of the Draconick Stars of Heaven.

Liberty is the principal virtue of this station, together with the myriad and nameless arcana which the Hermit may find in his silent and secret path.

VI) The Sixth Solitude is the Unbounded Hermitage of the Self-Beholder. It is the solitude of one who looks into the Polish'd Surface of the Existant and beholds the self-same face of ipseity. Unto the Hermit of the Sixth Solitude, All-that-Is is Self-as-Otherness: Self-realisation is enfleshed in the Mirror of the World. Unto him Belief is made All-Possible. The Gnosis of this Arcanum reveals the Adept's Own-Being in union with all that exists. This inner hermitage is attained when the Circle of the Arte Magical is realised as the constant and stainless mirror of all possible magical acts, in which all rituals are temporal facets of the One True Sabbat.

All actions of the Arte Magical participate in the nature of the Circle's pristine condition and are, in fact, the 'grand array' or projection of its innate and self-illuminated state as Gnosis Absolute. All magical acts dance as seeming reflections in the mirror of the circle, but, when the mirror is recognised as being untouched and unmarked by any action, the circle is finally realised as one's own luminous and quintessential Being.

The Hermitage of the Self-Beholder resides under the patronage of the Draconick God named "Azhdeha", the Ancient Serpent of Light, whose scales are the skin of the World, forever shimmering with the seasons of Life and Death. The gift of this station of the soul is Knowledge, the Vision of the Design of Power.

VII) The Seventh Solitude is the Hermitage of Seth, the Arch-magisterial Office of One-against-All. This is the Great All-Oneliness: the Sacred Marriage that divorces all Other. All outward circumstance, every mode and relation of magical operation - whether congregational, connubial, solitary, autonomian, transgressive, or panentheistic, is of no difference: the Millstone of the Circle has ground All-that-Is unto a single spark, the Self-shining Lumina. This seed of luminous awareness is the resurrecting shard of the Smaragdina, the crown-stone of Lumial, the Angelic Soul of Witchblood. It is the luciferian bone-charm of wisdom that moves upstream against the Current of All-that-Is: the Power of the Void in constant becoming as the Flesh of the Initiate.

The Hermitage of Seth resides under the patronage of the Elder Gods, the Gods that were before the mortal gods of mortal men. The gift of Seth is secret.

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We may conclude by summarising three main views of Solitude: External, Internal, and Secret.

The External View of Solitude is that arising from physical isolation, that is, from the seclusion of the self from all others. In this view one is deemed alone in terms of external referents. By virtue of external solitude the practitioner dwells apart from the company of man and woman, and is thus able to focus all intent in such deeds as are needful of quiescence, introspection, and outer tranquillity. In Nomine Abilo.

The Internal View of Solitude is that arising from initiatic isolation, that is, from the realisation of the unique autonomy of the self, independent of external factors. In this view one is deemed alone in terms of internal referents, in that one has attained to an inner solitude which functions irrespective of the presence or absence of others. By virtue of internal solitude the practitioner may dwell alone or in the presence of man and woman, he may partake in praxes of an individual or collective nature without bias or compromise; all may serve to empower the position of his spiritual equipoise. Having attained to a realisation of magical autonomy the Mage may serve as Initiator unto all Aspirants, for all Other is the mirror of his own Selfhood. In Nomine Kabilo.

The Secret View of Solitude is the natural state of existence:- the primordial condition of I as Void -: the autonomian vessel of the Elder Faith. In Nomine Satilo.

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*Wisely we must make our way through the maze of mirror'd altars...
slowly, slowly, toward and beyond the crack called "Midnight".*

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