

ESOTERIC AUTHOR. OCCULT & FOLKLORE RESEARCHER.

DAVID RANKINE

≡ MENU




AUTHOR: STARSORCEROR

David Rankine is an author, magician and esoteric researcher who lives and works in Glastonbury with his partner, Rosa Laguna.

Murder and Magic in France – Negative Uses of the Grimoire of Pope Honorius

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MURDER AND MAGIC IN FRANCE

Negative Uses of the Grimoire of Pope Honorius

By David Rankine

The *Grimoire of Pope Honorius* is a significant seventeenth century French grimoire with a selection of Book of Secrets charms attached to it. In combining these two strands of practice, it continued the tradition found in earlier manuscripts where this practice is seen regularly. The word grimoire is derived from the root grammar, and is normally used to represent a ‘grammar’ of magic, or workbook of information and techniques. By contrast, Books of Secrets were collections of simple charms using common herbs or household objects, often combined with biblical quotes.

The books or manuscripts commonly known as grimoires were a European phenomena, usually written in the period from the thirteenth to the late eighteenth century. The countries which dominated the Grimoire tradition were England, France, Italy and Germany, with the so-called ‘black magic’ grimoires from the end of this period being almost entirely French and Italian. C.J.S. Thompson (1927:256) noted this saying, “During the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, several small handbooks were printed and circulated in France and Italy professing to record the true magical ritual.”

The *Grimoire of Pope Honorius* has never really received the recognition it deserves as arguably the first of the French ‘black magic’ grimoires, which are characterised by all being published as *Bibliothèque Bleue de Troyes* (Blue Library of Troyes) works.

These widely distributed extremely cheap paperback editions were prevalent across France from the seventeenth to the mid-nineteenth century, and were so called due to the blue sugar paper they were wrapped in.

Despite the tendency to misdate books to attribute greater age to them, we know that there was at least one edition of the *Grimoire of Pope Honorius* published in 1670, as reference was made to it being in the possession of the infamous French sorceress and poisoner La Voisin in 1679. The first occurrences of other works in this genre are significantly later, thus we see e.g. the *Grimorium Verum* (1817, not the spurious 1517 date on the cover), *Le Grand Grimoire/Le Dragon Rouge* (1750, and mentioned in the 1760 edition of the *Grimoire of Pope Honorius*) and *Le Dragon Noir* (date uncertain, published 1887). It is interesting to note that if the 1629 publication date for the *Grimoire of Pope Honorius* given by Davis (1998:xv), and quoted by Gardner (1959:98) referencing the American anthropologist Charles Godfrey Leland (1824-1903) is correct, it also predates the first known *Lemegeton* (1641).

We can speculate that the *Grimoire of Pope Honorius* does have earlier roots, considering other works named after Honorius exist which predate it by centuries. The Dominican inquisitor Nicholas Eymericus (1320-99) listed a work called Honorius the Necromancer's *Treasury of Necromancy* in his *Directory for Inquisitors* (1376) as one of those he publicly burned (Kieckhefer, 2001:157). Mesler (2012:134) suggests that this refers to the *Sworn Book of Honorius*, rather than being a different work, but the evidence is lacking for a conclusion either way. The tendency to burn such works as became public has removed many possible sources, as zealous judges and church officials were keen to burn any such necromantic or demonic work "so that it becomes dust, and so that from it another copy can never be made" (Brucker, 1963:19). Waite (1911:89) also lists a work entitled *Honorii Papae adversus tenebrarum principem et ejus angelos conjurationes ex originale romae servato* ([The grimoire] of Pope Honorius against the Prince of Darkness and his angels, conjurations preserved [?] from the Roman original), which he states was published in Rome in 1529, that he had seen referenced but never actually been able to get hold of.

The *Enchiridion of Pope Leo III* is probably older than the *Grimoire of Pope Honorius*, although the early date of 1523 is questionable and I have been unable to find any supporting evidence for its existence before 1584. The Book of Secrets section of the *Grimoire of Pope Honorius* refers to the *Enchiridion of Pope Leo III* in several places,

indicating it was certainly available before 1670, and not the later 1749 date sometimes quoted. The *Enchiridion* is not a 'black magic' text, focusing as it does entirely on the Psalms, prayers and charms. Several of the charms in the *Enchiridion of Pope Leo III* are shared with the Secrets text which comprises the second half of the *Grimoire of Pope Honorius*, and the charms in this work also refer to the *Enchiridion* several times. Another *Bibliothèque Bleue* book often classed with these works is *Le Petit Albert* (1702), which is however more accurately a Book of Secrets style text.

Eliphas Levi's (1810-1875) comments in his writings clearly added to the notoriety of this work, which he also called the *Constitution of Honorius* after the title of one of its sub-sections, stating that "A man capable of evoking the devil, according to the rites of the *Grimoire of Honorius*, is so far on the road to evil that he is inclined to all kinds of hallucinations and falsehoods." (Waite, 1897:479) However, the religious Levi's negative views of the *Grimoire of Pope Honorius* clearly seem to have been coloured by his own experiences, not so much of the content, but rather of its perceived effect on an unbalanced mind.

In his work *The Key of the Mysteries*, Levi devoted eleven pages to recounting his experiences regarding the murder of the archbishop of Paris, Marie-Dominique-Auguste Sibour (1792-1857), and the role that the *Grimoire of Pope Honorius* played in the murder. Levi recounts that he met a young ecclesiastic at the house of a friend and had serious forebodings about the stranger. The young Priest, Jean-Louis Verger (1826-1857), was described by Levi as, "a young and slim man; he had an arched and pointed nose, with dull blue eyes ... His mouth was sensual and quarrelsome; his manners were affable, his voice soft, and his speech sometimes a little embarrassed". (Levi 1959:121)

Verger had been sent to Levi by a book-dealer, and was desperate to obtain a copy of the *Grimoire of Pope Honorius*. Levi disparaged the book as worthless, and his cheiromancer friend Desbarrolles, who was also present, offered to read Verger's palm. The cheiromantic act was revealing, as it suggested that Verger was a dangerous individual who could easily become a religious fanatic, if he lived much longer, for "the line of life was short and broken, there were crosses in the centre of the hand, and stars upon the mount of the moon". (Levi 1959:122)

As he departed, the young Priest ominously declared that they would hear him spoken of before long. The lady who had been their host subsequently revealed that

prior to their arrival Verger had revealed his attempted evocation of the devil using a popular grimoire, and his desire to see the devil, who did not appear despite a number of phenomena, including “a whirlwind seemed to shake the vicarage; the rafts groaned, the wainscoting cracked, the doors shook, the windows opened with a crash, and whistlings were heard in every corner of the house” .(Levi 1959:123) It is perhaps surprising that Verger did not go to an outdoor site such as a forest or ruin as is often advised in the grimoires, rather than trying to call the devil to manifest inside a church, but this may reflect on the state of mind of the Priest!

January 1857 started badly for Eliphas Levi, with nightmares on the nights of the 1st and 2nd about being called to see his dying father (who had died some years previously). On the 3rd January, Levi went to attend the mass for the feast of St Geneviève, patron saint of Paris (and interestingly, one of the few saints mentioned in the charms in the *Grimoire of Pope Honorius*). As the procession arrived, Jean-Louis Verger stabbed archbishop Sibour in the heart with a large Catalan knife crying “No more goddesses! Away with goddesses!” This bizarre statement again seems to reflect his unbalanced mental state. Verger was seized and imprisoned, and after being very disruptive during his trial, was executed by guillotine on 30th January 1857.

The information which came to light after his death shed some light on the disturbed mindset of Jean-Louis Verger. He had been banned from the priesthood after a series of failed parish positions. His hostility to archbishop Sibour seems to have stemmed from the archbishop’s dismissal of Verger’s accusations of homosexual advances from his superior Abbé Legrand. He also attacked the dogma of the Immaculate Conception, ecclesiastical discipline and clerical celibacy. (Nash 1990:2751)

Some weeks later Levi again met the book-dealer who had sent the young Priest to him, and the book-dealer informed him that he had sold his last copy of the *Grimoire of Pope Honorius* to Verger. The notoriety and popularity of the *Grimoire of Pope Honorius* had endured for at least one hundred and fifty years at this point, Davies (2009:96) notes that,

“From the records the *Clavicule of Solomon* emerges as the most influential grimoire amongst the Parisian mages ... The *Grimoire du Pape Honorius* was the next most popular magic book.

In 1701 we find a diabolist doctor named Aubert de Saint-Etienne boasting that he possessed copies of both grimoires.”

Another significant owner of the *Grimoire of Pope Honorius* was Catherine La Voisin, the infamous sorceress and poisoner who was involved in the Affair of the Poisons which scandalised the French royal court in 1679. La Voisin, along with her employer, one of King Louis XIV's mistresses, Madame de Montespan, played the part of altar for black masses performed by Abbé Guiborg, a renegade Catholic Priest. Guiborg had a large collection of grimoires, and additionally “*several grimoires were found amongst the papers of... La Voisin, amongst them The Book of the Conjurations of Pope Honorius, which contained a series of spells for gambling.*” (Davies, 2009:92)

Levi's experiences clearly coloured his opinion of the *Grimoire of Pope Honorius*, as he also vilified it in *Transcendental Magic*, and recounted a disparaging tale of a workman and his experiences with it in *The Key of the Mysteries*. Both Levi's and Waite's negative comments about the *Grimoire of Pope Honorius* are indicative of the attitude found in the writings of occultists of the nineteenth and early twentieth century's, as seen by Thompson's comments (1927:256) about the ‘*black magic*’ grimoires that, “*all these little treatises are badly printed on poor paper and evidently written by men who had but little knowledge of the subject.*”

Through its different editions, its influence on other grimoires and on magical traditions in the last three centuries, it is clear that the *Grimoire of Pope Honorius* is actually one of the more significant grimoires. My work on the *Grimoire of Pope Honorius* seeks to redress the balance and demonstrate the versatility and significance of this grimoire, cutting past outdated misperceptions of a negative viewpoint coloured by some bad press to a viewpoint which reflects more accurately the position of the *Grimoire of Pope Honorius* in the development of magic since the seventeenth century.

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Following in a Cunning- Man's Footsteps – Arthur Gauntlet Radio Interview & Article

march 8, 2012, posted in grimoire

In anticipation of my radio interview with Karagan Griffith on **Witchtalk** this sunday 11th March, I thought I would post an abbreviated version of a recent article in my blog to provide some background material on my work for the book **The Grimoire of Arthur Gauntlet** and its contents.

Over the last ten or eleven years I have looked at

 dozens of manuscripts from the Middle Ages and Renaissance in my research into the grimoires. The results of this have been published in numerous books making these source texts available to the wider public (e.g. *The Book of Gold*, *The Book of Treasure Spirits*, *A Collection of Magical Secrets*, *The Veritable Key of Solomon* and *The Goetia of Dr Rudd*). Amongst all these

manuscripts, one occasionally jumped out and grabbed my attention as being particularly significant. A particularly noteworthy example of this is the manuscript of a 17th century London Cunning-man's book of practice, which I have edited and discussed in my new book *The Grimoire of Arthur Gauntlet*.

This text exemplifies the cunning art, drawing together material from numerous earlier sources into an eclectic mix which includes conjurations of angels, demons, fairies and the dead, as well as a diverse range of charms. The charms include earlier medical charms written by famous surgeons from the fourteenth and fifteenth century, herbal remedies, wax images, and charms using the Psalms, many of which are also seen in *The Book of Gold*. There is a significant emphasis on the wand as the primary tool of the cunning-man in this work, including a wand consecration and several conjurations and charms.

The *Book of the 7 Images of the Days*, which forms part of *The Grimoire of Arthur Gauntlet*, has an interesting use of the wand as part of a love charm, where the names of the man and woman are written in the heart of the image used, with the instruction to "hang the Image before the Stars And smite it with a twig or wand of Olive Tree And Conjure the Image".[1] The use of an olive twig or wand is interesting, as it is not a native British plant and would have required some effort to gain. However Gauntlet includes material from numerous sources, including the *Arbatel*, the *Heptameron*, the *Key of Solomon*, the *Book of Gold*, Folger Vb.26, Scot's *Discoverie of Witchcraft*, and the writings of Cornelius Agrippa, William Bacon and John Dee, as well as much material which seems to be unique, so this is not surprising.

As we know, cunning-folk, both men and women, provided a wide range of magical services to anyone who paid them. Such services included a wide range of possibilities including healing people and farm animals, recovering lost or stolen goods, protection from witches, curses and evil spirits; gaining love, luck when gambling, and locating hidden treasure.

The incredible spectrum of material in this work, drawing on whatever worked from incense recipes to magic circles, amulets to complex conjurations, demonstrates the pragmatic and eclectic work of the cunning-man and woman, who may perhaps be regarded as the true forefathers and mothers of the modern western esoteric revival.

[1] The Grimoire of Arthur Gauntlet, Rankine, 2011:282.

tagged arthur gauntlet, book of gold, charms, cunning-man, grimoire of arthut gauntlet, heptameron, psalms leave a comment

The Goddess Isis & the Cosmic Shekinah

january 15, 2012, posted in goddesses, qabalah

by David Rankine & Sorita d'Este

The influence of the Greco-Egyptian goddess Isis spread throughout much of the ancient world. From her roots in pre-dynastic Egypt as a minor deity, her cult quickly grew in importance in the Old Kingdom (2686-2181 BCE) to a position as one of the major goddesses, as can be seen by the fact that, "*Isis above all is simply 'the divine one,' or 'great of divine-ness'.*" (Hornung, 1996:63-4) The Ptolemaic Greeks who ruled Egypt from 305-30 BCE adopted Isis as a major deity and her worship spread into Greek and Roman religions.

Isis was known as the goddess of ten thousand names; she was the mistress of magic, wife of the fertility/underworld god Osiris, mother of the hawk-headed god Horus, and one of the deities who offered wise counsel. As such we would expect there to be possible connections between her and the Wisdom Goddess tradition. In fact, there is a definite connection both to other goddesses and also to wisdom literature. We discussed this in **The Cosmic Shekinah**, noting that:

“The influence of Isis on Wisdom Goddess literature is primarily from the Greco-Egyptian or Hellenic Isis. The Hellenic

Isis' mythology, roles and functions assimilated not only that of Aset or Isa (the Egyptian names for Isis), but also that of other Egyptian goddesses such as Hathor, Ma'at and Sekhmet."

The Egyptian goddess of truth, justice and cosmic harmony, Ma'at, was syncretised with Isis to form Isis-Ma'at. This may have been a stage in the development of the view of Isis as the wisdom saviour goddess (Mack, 1970:54):

"By identification with Maat, Isis takes over this function and adds soteirological motifs taken from her role in the myths of Horus and Osiris. The wisdom hymn in Proverbs 8:22, like the similar hymn in Sirach 24, reflects this general cosmic pattern of myth."

Indeed the aretalogical (first person deity list of attributions in poem or hymn form) pattern seen in the *Wisdom of Solomon* 6:22-10:21 mirrors earlier Isis aretalogies, as does the later Gnostic text *The Thunder, Perfect Mind* (Kloppenborg, 1982:59-61). In addition to such aretalogical literature a number of significant writers in the ancient world promoted the view of Isis as multi-powered saviour. These include the Greek geographer Artemidorus of Ephesus (*Geography*) and the Greek historian Diodorus Siculus (*Library of History*) in the first century BCE, the Greek historian and philosopher Plutarch (*On the Worship of Isis and Osiris*), the Berber writer and philosopher Apuleius (*Metamorphoses*, better known as *The Golden*

Ass) and the Egyptian priest Isidorus (*Hymns to Isis*) in the second century CE. Of these texts the best known is probably Apuleius' *Metamorphoses*, with its inclusive Isis speech where she equates herself to numerous other goddesses including Ceres, Diana, Hekate, Juno, Minerva, Proserpina and Venus. What is particularly interesting about this speech is the list of powers and roles Isis ascribes to herself, which are very similar to those describing the Shekinah in subsequent Jewish writings, viz:

“I am she that is the natural mother of all things, mistress and governess of all the Elements, the initial progeny of worlds, chief of powers divine, Queen of heaven! the principal of the Gods celestial, the light of the goddesses: at my will the planets of the air, the wholesome winds of the Seas, and the silences of hell be disposed; my name, my divinity is adored throughout all the world in divers manners, in variable customs and in many names”

The role of saviour is something also attributed to Sophia in Gnostic writings and Hekate (as *Soteira*, meaning ‘saviour’) in the *Chaldean Oracles*. With all these goddesses, this emphasis on a female saviour which occurred in the ancient world is something which has been largely lost until recent times.

When we explore some of the motifs associated with Isis we find clear parallels to the Shekinah in later centuries. A prime example is the tree of life, which in the case of Isis was her sacred sycamore. The sycamore was also associated with the god Osiris (husband of Isis) as the resting place of his body after his death and

dismemberment at the hands of his brother, the chaos god Seth. A later variation of this symbolism can be seen in the human body being mapped onto the Kabbalistic Tree of Life. Osiris was also symbolised by the stylised djed pillar, which can be viewed as a prototype for the glyph of the Kabbalistic Tree of Life. Another motif which connects Isis, wisdom and the Shekinah is that of the serpent:

“The connection between Isis and the serpent occurs in a number of ways. Isis used a serpent made from his own saliva to poison and trick the creator god Ra into revealing his true name to her and so giving her his power, effectively elevating her to the status of the creator god. Isis was often portrayed with the Uraeus serpent crown at her brow, which represented rulership and power, and also merged with the serpent goddess Renenutet, as well as the serpent goddess Hermouthis to form the serpentine Isis-Hermouthis, who probably influenced the Gnostic goddess Edem.”

The name Isis (or Aset or Isa) means *‘throne’*, and this was shown by her distinctive throne headdress, emphasising another possible derivative quality of the Shekinah, who is particularly associated with the throne of God in pseudoepigraphical and

Merkavah literature.

One other example of shared motifs is that of the pearl, which was sacred to Isis. Kabbalistic writings equated the Shekinah to the pearl in parables, e.g. in the classic text the Bahir we see,

“A king had a beautiful pearl, and it was the treasure of his kingdom. When he is happy, he embraces it, kisses it, places it on his head, and loves it.”

It is interesting to note the reference to placing the pearl on the head, particularly when we consider the iconography of crown motifs, particularly in Egypt where they were often a prime method of distinguishing different deities.

From the evidence it is clear that Isis was an influence on the Wisdom Goddess tradition and hence the Shekinah, reminding us that the level of cross-fertilization, fusion and syncretisation in the ancient world was a significant factor in the transmission of wisdom.

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Leiden, Brill

Article based on the material presented in **The Cosmic Shekinah**, by Sorita d'Este & David Rankine. For more information see www.cosmicshekinah.co.uk

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Following in a Cunning-Man's Footsteps

december 14, 2011, posted in [angels](#), [grimoire](#)

Over the last ten or eleven years I have been privileged to look at dozens of manuscripts from the Middle Ages and Renaissance in my research into the grimoires. The results of this have been published in numerous books making these source texts available to the wider public (e.g. ***The Book of Gold***, ***The Book of Treasure Spirits***, ***A Collection of Magical Secrets***, *The Veritable Key of Solomon* and *The Goetia of Dr Rudd*). Amongst all these manuscripts, one occasionally jumped out and grabbed my attention as being particularly significant. A particularly noteworthy example of this is the manuscript of a 17th century London Cunning-man's book of practice, which I have edited and discussed in my latest book ***The Grimoire of Arthur Gauntlet***.

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the wand as the primary tool of the cunning-man in this work, including a wand consecration and several conjurations and charms.

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The book has a whole section on conjuring three angels to perform healing, for protection against witchcraft and other diverse tasks, as well as conjurations to gain a familiar spirit. There are also numerous simple charms using herbs and apples for particular results like love and control, such as:

To make peace betwixt Enemies Go between men that are at debate having vervain about thee and say Ratifaxat and thou shalt make peace betwixt them.

The incredible spectrum of material in this work, drawing on whatever worked from incense recipes to magic circles, amulets to complex conjurations, demonstrates the pragmatic and eclectic work of the cunning-man and woman, who may perhaps be regarded as the true forefathers and mothers of the modern western esoteric revival.

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tagged angels, arthur gauntlet, book of gold, cunning-man, grimoire of arthur gauntlet, hepatmeron 1 comment

The Shekinah & The Qabalah

november 28, 2011, posted in goddesses, qabalah

An Introduction to the Shekinah in the Kabbalah

By Sorita d'Este & David Rankine

Whilst the exact origins of the Kabbalah are unknown, it is clear that cultural influences from ancient Greece, Egypt and Sumer/Babylonia played a key part in the development of its philosophies. According to legend, the Kabbalah was taught to Adam in the Garden of Eden by the archangel Raziel, who is predominantly associated with wisdom.

The term Kabbalah was first recorded in the teachings of the Jewish Rabbi Isaac the Blind (1160-1236 CE), in Provence, France, who was known as the '*Father of Kabbalah*'. The main Kabbalistic texts and teachings stem from the tenth-twelfth century CE onwards, however one of the most important source texts used by Kabbalists, the *Sepher Yetzirah* ('*Book of Formation*'), dates back to the second century CE thereby suggesting earlier origins. Moreover many of the other philosophies and cosmologies which influenced the Kabbalah and its development, such as Gnosticism and Neo-Platonism, also date back to this earlier period.

The Kabbalah is essentially a philosophy and cosmology which explains human life and the universe through the ordering of chaos expressed as manifestations of the creative divine impulse at different levels. The process of manifestation subsequently produces matter and the creation of life. The central glyph of the Kabbalah is the Tree of Life, an ordered collection of ten circles (called *Sephiroth*, meaning '*emanations*') connected by twenty-two paths, which symbolise man, the universe, and the process of creation.

The Shekinah can be found throughout Kabbalistic philosophies and the glyph of the Kabbalistic Tree of Life. Not only is the Shekinah specifically represented by two of the ten Sephiroth and connected with the process of creation through the Four Worlds which comprise the Kabbalistic Tree of Life, but she is also viewed as being the *Neshamah* or higher soul, which is a significant part of Kabbalistic philosophy. Additionally, the Shekinah is the feminine divine who is in a dynamic polarity with the masculine divine, resulting in creation and change. As such, she is both the Greater Shekinah who unites with God, and the Lesser or Exiled Shekinah who is the soul of the earth itself.

This relationship between the Shekinah and the Earth as *anima mundi* (world soul) has found a modern scientific outlet in the Gaia Hypothesis of the scientist James Lovelock, which argues that the Earth is a single self-regulating system which responds to changing circumstances. From here it is one small step towards the perception that the *anima mundi* should exist, and should be feminine as she engenders creation. This is a perception presaged in the medieval Kabbalistic work, the *Bahir*, “*it is impossible for the lower world to endure without the female.*”[1]

In Jewish tales the Shekinah ascends to heaven and descends to earth on different occasions. Originally there was no clear distinction between the Heavenly Shekinah and Earthly Shekinah, until Adam and Eve left Eden. Here then we may see the Heavenly Shekinah as representing the purity and innocence of Eden, the idealised Golden Age. She remained behind on earth but ascended through the seven heavens as a result of man’s sins until she was reunited with God. The holiness of various prophets brought her back to dwell in the Temple of Solomon. The destruction of the Temple again saw her leave the Earth to ascend the heavens. The Temple of Solomon has come to represent an ideal, a place of wisdom, knowledge, skill and fellowship.

It was in the Kabbalistic doctrines of the tenth century CE onwards that the Shekinah began to be more openly revealed as the divine feminine power opposite the masculine Yahweh. German Kabbalists in the tenth century expressed the doctrine that the Greater Shekinah encircled God as a circle of flame, and their union created not only the universe and the divine throne (as described in the *Book of Ezekiel*), but also the angels and human souls.[2]

The Heavenly Shekinah was seen as the divine bride, united with the masculine God in an equal relationship. This pattern was also repeated with the Earthly Shekinah being seen as the bride of the Sun/Son. The Heavenly Shekinah was viewed as the Mother and Yahweh as the Father, with the Lesser Shekinah being the Earth and divine Daughter, and the Sun (the Sefhira of Tiphereth on the Qabalistic Tree of Life) being the divine Son. This mother-father relationship repeated the pattern of 'Yahweh and His Asherah' found in the Hebrew tribes prior to the reforms of the seventh-sixth century BCE described in the *Old Testament Book of Deuteronomy*.

The famous Kabbalist Rabbi Eleazer of Worms (1176-1238 CE), who was one of the first great propagators of the Kabbalah, said of the Earthly Shekinah that:

“The Shekinah is called the daughter of the creator ...and she is also called the tenth Sefhira and royalty (Malkuth), because the crown of the kingdom is on his head.” [3]

In the *Zohar*, symbolic reference is made to the whole Tree of Life as the Shekinah, with the words:

“There are ten curtains, which are ten expanses. And who are they? The curtains of the Dwelling, which are ten and are susceptible to knowing by the wise of heart.” [4]

This passage is describing the ten Sephiroth (as curtains or expanses), which comprise the Shekinah as the Tree of Life (Dwelling). The wise of heart hints at both the Shekinah (wisdom) and also the Tree of Life itself, as the numbers attributed to the letters of heart (Lev) adds up to thirty-two, the number of paths and Sephiroth of the Tree of Life.

[1] Bahir, 173, C12th CE.

[2] Kabbalah, Ponce, 1974:64-67.

[3] Sepher ha-Hokhmah, C13th CE.

————— [Article based on the
material presented in **The Cosmic
Shekinah**, by Sorita d'Este & David Rankine
– as well as the book **PRACTICAL
QABALAH MAGICK** by the same authors.
For more information see About the Book]

tagged asherah, kabbalah, sepher yetzirah, shekinah, tree of life, yahweh, zohar leave a
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Nine Layers of Sky (novel) – review

october 26, 2011, posted in reviews

The first novel you read by an author will inevitably colour your relationship with their works. Like a first kiss, you are full of hopes and expectations of pleasures to come. Often that first book is a disappointment, but occasionally you are lifted by the imagination and words of the author and transported to the world they have created.

And so I came to *Nine Layers of Sky* by Liz Williams, and found myself enjoying a tremendously good and engaging story. A modern Science Fiction novel set in the

crumbling Soviet Union, which blends fantasy, myth and plausibility to offer an excellent journey of discovery and redemption.

In true Russian style there is a wonderfully flawed hero, 800 year old Ilya, who cannot die and who copes with existence through heroin and alcohol, as well as a fallen heroine, Elena, who must move beyond the confines of her rational, scientific world, and of course, the Rusalki.

The whole story hinges on the connection between dreams and other dimensions, and at times I felt there were hints of a worthy homage to the Strugatsky brothers in the plot. This is a story which crosses genres, between fantasy, SF, and road trip, without faltering or taking a wrong step. The best novel I have read for some time and well worth the time – read it!

tagged [liz williams](#), [nine layers of sky](#), [rusalki](#) [leave a comment](#)

Angelic Water anyone?

october 2, 2011, posted in [angels](#), [grimoire](#)

The image of the magician performing complex rituals using numerous tools is a popular one, but many people are less familiar with the wide range of ‘high magic’ rites using only the most simple and basic items, such as a glass of water.

The simple glass of water also has a long history of use as a gateway to the realms of other beings like angels and demons. Water – the stuff of life, and in many cultures a liminal space, be it at springs, wells, rivers, lakes, etc. During my research into the grimoires I have found examples for both angels and demons being conjured into a glass of water. The most recent of these I found when I was working on **The Grimoire of Arthur Gauntlet**, and I include it below as an example of these simple ‘high magic’ rites:

How to Call the Angels into A Glass of

Water

You must have a urinal^[1] Or a Crystal Beer or wine Glass very clean washed Then filled iii [3] quarters full of Spring water Then cover it with a paper wherein must be drawn these lines and characters as you see in the figure following. Then having said your prayers devoutly to God for good success in what you undertake. If it be a urinal hold it betwixt your Hands so that your fingers hinder not the light. If it be a Glass you may let it stand on his foot. Then call as followeth. ~

+ Babell + Gabriel + Rochell + Sara + Isaac + Joseph + and + Jacob + I charge you by these holy names of God + Elo + Elo + Goby + Goby + Emanuell + Emanuell + Tetragrammaton + Tetragrammaton + As you shall answer before Jesus Christ at the great and dreadful day of Judgement for to

show me all that I shall ask or demand
faithfully and truly within this Glass
without any delusion or dissimulation I
charge you and command you and bind you
that you come into this Glass & bring all
that do belong unto you for to show me
anything that I shall ask or desire that I
may plainly behold it with my mortal
Eyes. [2]

[1] In this context a bottle.

[2] A similar technique is found in Sloane MS 3824, a contemporary MS. See **The Book of Treasure Spirits**, Rankine, 2009:156.

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