

Approaching BABALON: Extract

Chapter 17 of the Biblical Book of Revelation describes a vision of Babylon, the Great Harlot who Rides Upon the Beast:

One of the seven angels who had the seven bowls came and said to me, "Come, I will show you the punishment of the great prostitute, who sits by many waters. With her the kings of the earth committed adultery, and the inhabitants of the earth were intoxicated with the wine of her adulteries." Then the angel carried me away in the Spirit into a wilderness. There I saw a woman sitting on a scarlet beast that was covered with blasphemous names and had seven heads and ten horns. The woman was dressed in purple and scarlet, and was glittering with gold, precious stones and pearls. She held a golden cup in her hand, filled with abominable things and the filth of her adulteries. The name written on her forehead was a mystery:

Babylon the Great, the Mother of Harlots, and of the Abominations of the Earth.¹

In 1587, while visiting Southern Bohemia (now the Czech Republic), the famous scholar and magician John Dee and his assistant Edward Kelly undertook a series of magical workings, with Kelly scrying for visions in a black obsidian mirror. They made contact with a spirit called Madimi, who appeared in the figure of a young girl, and offered Kelley the following vision:

I am the daughter of Fortitude, and ravished every hour from my youth. For behold I am Understanding and science dwelleth in me; and the heavens oppress me. They cover and desire me with infinite appetite; for none that are earthly have embraced me, for I am shadowed with the Circle of the Stars and covered with the morning clouds. My feet are swifter than the winds, and my hands are sweeter than the morning dew. My garments are from the beginning, and my dwelling place is in myself. The Lion knoweth not where I walk, neither do the beast of the fields understand me. I am deflowered, yet a virgin; I sanctify and am not sanctified. Happy is he that embraceth me: for in the night season I am sweet, and in the day full of pleasure. My company is a harmony of many symbols and my lips sweeter than health itself. I am a harlot for such as ravish me, and a virgin with such as know me not. For lo, I

¹ Genesis 17:1-5, *New International Version*.

am loved of many, and I am a lover to many; and as many as come unto me as they should do, have entertainment.

Purge your streets, O ye sons of men, and wash your houses clean; make yourselves holy, and put on righteousness. Cast out your old strumpets, and burn their clothes; abstain from the company of other women that are defiled, that are sluttish, and not so handsome and beautiful as I, and then will I come and dwell amongst you: and behold, I will bring forth children unto you, and they shall be the Sons of Comfort. I will open my garments, and stand naked before you, that your love may be more enflamed toward me.²

This is the first appearance of BABALON, whose name means *wicked* in the angelic language Enochian. The vision granted to Kelly bears a striking similarity with that of the unnamed goddess of the ancient coptic text *Thunder, Perfect Mind*, one of the manuscripts found at the Nag Hammadi library in 1945.

For I am the first and the last.

I am the honoured one and the scorned one.

I am the whore and the holy one.

I am the wife and the virgin.

I am the mother and the daughter.

I am the members of my mother.

I am the barren one.³

The infamous decadent Aleister Crowley attempted to copy Dee's experiment, first in 1900, and then again in 1909, this time with the assistance of his lover Victor Neuburg. During this second invocation, which took place in the Algerian desert the pair made contact with the Great Goddess:

I am the harlot that shaketh Death.
This shaking giveth the Peace of Satiated Lustrous .
Immortality jetteth from my skull,
And music from my vulva.
Immortality jetteth from my vulva also,
For my Whoredom is a sweet scent like a seven-stringed instrument,

² Meric Causabon, ed. *A True and Faithful Relation True and Faithful Relation of What Passed for Many Years Between Dr. John Dee and Some Spirits* (London: 1659).

³ George W. MacRae, trans. *Thunder, Perfect Mind*.

Played unto God the Invisible, the all-ruler,
That goeth along giving the shrill scream of orgasm.⁴

Under Her sign, which is a septagram, many people today of disparate paths and traditions do the Work of Our Lady.



Babalon is a Modern Goddess. She has risen like a tide in response to two thousand years of the repression of the Divine Feminine in the West. Babalon is represented in a series of archetypes: the Divine Feminine, the Great Mother, the Succubus, the Initiatrix, and the Holy Whore. She is often viewed as the female sexual impulse, or else as Lust, but these are limited simplifications. Instead, we should understand that through working with Babalon we can come to experience divinity in all aspects of our physicality. She is Strength—Joy—*Joissance*—Ecstasy. She is the Glory of Life and Love, of passion, desire, instinct, conflict, war, and cruelty. She is the Divine Mother who kills everything She creates, and this is the Glory of the World.

Alongside Her Great Beast She represents the Mysteries of Polarity, which is the basis of Sex, but also of all Difference and Otherness in the world. Therefore, She also indicates spaces beyond the polarities of heterosexual difference, multitudinous spectrums of difference. She symbolises great Strength, and the drawing, calling, evocative depths that can appear as passivity. She tells us that the Mysteries of Sex are not as they first appear, and that they are indistinguishable from the Mysteries of Death.

The Nature of the Work

This is the secret of the Holy Graal, that is the sacred vessel of our Lady the Scarlet Woman, Babalon the Mother of Abominations, the bride of Chaos,

⁴Aleister Crowley, "The Cry of the 2nd Aethyr, which is called ARN" in *The Vision and the Voice* (Sangreal Foundation: Dallas, 1972).

that rideth upon our Lord the Beast. Thou shalt drain out thy blood that is thy life into the golden cup of her fornications. Thou shalt mingle thy life with the universal life. Thou shalt keep not back one drop.⁵

In the outstretched hand of Babalon is the Cup of Abominations. This Cup is the Holy Grail. It represents the potential for the divine infinity that lies within the flesh. The Secret of the Holy Grail is the Mystery of the Divinity that is your physical body, and all that your skin, and hormones, and nerves, and memories, and desires, and all your grotesque effluvium is capable of creating. Babalon is another way of saying: You are Holy and Divine, because of your flesh, not despite it.

Many believe that ecstasy is the starting-point of Work with Our Lady; they are not wrong, so long as they do not think that ecstasy is found in escape. Work with Our Lady begins with silence, and space—inner space. It requires humility and chastity, and patience. Enduring these things until one hears Her voices is what is called “Knowledge and Conversation.”

Once this has been achieved, the seeker is ready to approach the Abyss, which is a symbol of the depths of the structures of one’s own ego and personality, in the deepest sense. To progress through Her Mysteries requires the work of our complexes: the working out and working through of all the cultural conditioning that is carried within the body. The more deep and sacred the line appears, the more thoroughly it must be examined. A quote from Leah Hirsig’s diary may provide some clarity:

To get at people's "conventions" trouble I suggest two main lines:

1 for the simple—ask the question "What troubles you most in life."

2 for the more complex animal—Force him with a list of all the crimes possible and ask him to mention the one that he thinks worst "

wicked" or "disgusting" or some such term.

Remember Her name means “wicked;” the work of Babalon is the work of questioning what you were taught to regard as evil. Thanks to the ministrations of Plato and St Augustine, in western society evil can always ultimately be reduced to qualities inherent in the body and flesh; specifically, that it can be corrupted, and that it dies. Yet these same things, when viewed from the perspective of Babalon, are the source of Joy; flesh is temporary, but through our flesh we can experience divinity, which is infinite. Our Lady reveals the potential for experiencing this divinity in our physical bodies, something that can only come about after peeling off the layers of shame that we have grown over the years.

Mystery of Mysteries

⁵ Aleister Crowley, *Liber Cheth vel Vallum Abiegni*.

There She sits, enthroned and regal, as we stumble through the narrow gate and down the sloping path. The dark light illuminates Her shifting, silken veil, diaphanous and indeterminable. Through its transformative transparency the hint of Form is searched for— there a sagging dug, here a rib-cage like a xylophone. Her very aspect demands that we confront our ideas of beauty and disgust. Her stink is earthy and fetid and mushroomy and sweet, like roses and manure and leather and old fires and green frankincense. There are no crowns or jewels upon Her, only bone and skin supporting the shifting veil, sometimes grey or blue, sometimes flushed as though with blood. At Her feet, with eyes of adoration, sits an all-black goat. (Imagine the gloves one could make from the skin of such a beast!) The Beast wears a collar, and on the collar is inscribed the letters “INRI”.

The Woman, when I see Her thus, clothed all about with these dark suns, does not bear the Cup. It is *She* who consumes the Blood of the Saints. This Earth is a mass of dead things, and She is its Queen. As I bow before Her, my blood flows forth from the cleft between Her legs. The billy-goat at Her feet laps at the growing pool. Behind Her veil, Our Lady smiles.

Her existence is not like that of other ancient goddesses whose worship has been revived. Our Lady has never had a cult, and yet She has always been worshipped: by the Boehmists, the Philadelphians, the alchemists, the Christian cabbalists, the Sophianics, and the Rosicrucians. She is hidden, too, in the Templar myths and in the great cycle of King Arthur and the Holy Grail.

Babalon is the personification of the repression of the divine feminine within western Christian culture. An echo of Her was contained in every wicked witch, every evil step-mother. Every femme fatale, every seductress. Every time a little girl craved the sword as well as the silk was Our Lady found.

Holy, Holy, Holy, Lady of Hosts, All of the Earth is Full of Your Glory!