

The Magickal Thesis of Grady Louis McMurtry

by

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Do what thou wilt shall be the whole of the Law. – AL I:40

NOTE: The following is an excerpt from In the Name of the Beast: A Biography of Grady Louis McMurtry, Vol. One, 1918-1962, "CHAPTER 15: The Universe," p. 199.

During these eight years that Grady lived and worked in and around the Washington area he simply, as he put it, "disappeared". Grady decided to have little to do with the O.T.O. He let Karl Germer and the rest of the Order slip into the background of his life. He believed that, in the beginning of 1960, he was "throwing himself into the realm of Malkuth, the mundane world" but instead it proved for him to be the opposite. The Gods were truly testing him. He would later claim that he found himself immersed in the Dark Night of his Soul. It was a period that laid the foundation for his spiritual rebirth.

The catalyst began shortly before Grady L. McMurtry moved to Washington in early March of 1961. That was when he had one of the single most important visions of his entire life. He was sitting behind his desk in the Office of Management Analysis at the Department of Labor, which was the top floor of an eight-story building in Sacramento. He admitted that he was sort of spacing out, lost in a narcoleptic thought, when he noticed on the North wall to his left was a great White Star. He said it was kind of "Christmasy, if you know what I mean". He then envisioned below this Star a Great Black City, the City of Dreadful Night that is attributed to one of the ten Qabalistic Spheres known as Binah. He believed it was a "Vision of the Star Card" of Aleister Crowley's Thoth Deck. He felt inspired and, instead of doing his required governmental work, he turned his typewriter toward the south and wrote a poem, which he titled "The Star of the Magi". It flowed out of him unhampered and began;

Beyond the Fortress of the Night

*That rules the Gulfs of Avatar:
My own transfigured soul burns bright,
And glorious: A Deathless Star!*

It was like Magick. He would later say that the poem [card] began as “a sort of compulsion to write” about the “Star and the Black Tower of the Abyss”. This was the first of many poems relating to Crowley’s Thoth cards.

Years later, he elaborated in a letter written on January 3rd, 1969 to Phyllis Seckler how the poems manifested in relationship to Crowley’s Thoth cards. He claimed,

My method was a form of scrying. I would look around and, as randomly or ‘intuitively’ as possible, pick a card. In no special order. One that ‘appealed’ to me at the time. One I could work with. I would look at it. Think about it. Study it. Read about it. Turn it over in my mind. And, sooner or later, words would start to come. Sometimes the poem shaped itself and that was perfection. Sometimes I had to strain and botched it pretty badly. But I had projected a cycle, so I took what I could get and kept going.

Three more poems soon flowed forth after writing “The Star of the Magi.” The next was titled “Alchemy,” which he attributed the Thoth card of Art, followed by “The Sign of the Sphinx” representing Adjustment and “The Redeemer that is in the Waters,” which he attributed to The Hanged Man. Shortly after writing the third poem, Grady quit his job on March 23rd and moved to Washington D.C. where he would finish the other poems relating to Crowley’s Thoth cards.

The last of the 22 poems manifested on December 5th, 1961, titled “The Ark of the Covenant.” The full list of these poems, the Thoth Cards that they refer to, and the date when Grady wrote them is as follows:

Title	Tarot Card	Date written
“The Star of the Magi”	The Star	March 1961
“Alchemy”	Art	March 1961
“The Sign of the Sphinx”	Adjustment	March 1961

Title	Tarot Card	Date written
"The Redeemer that is in the Waters"	The Hanged Man	March 1961
"The Magus"	The Hermit	April 1961
"The Unicorn"	Lust	June 1961
"The Black Osiris"	Death	June 1961
"The Child"	The Fool	June / July 1961
"The Dweller on the Threshold"	The Devil	July 1961
"The Virgin"	The High Priestess	July / August 1961
"Alien Star"	The Moon	August 1961
"Remembering Eden"	The Tower	August 1961
"The Lamp of the Spirit"	The Aeon	August 1961
"The Heavens of Urania"	Fortune	August 1961
"Noah's Arc"	The Universe	August 1961
"Ezekial's Bestiary"	The Lovers	August 1961
"Jericho"	The Sun	October 1961
"October Bridge"	The Empress	Oct. / Nov. 1961
"The Abyss"	The Magus	November 1961
"The Archetype"	The Emperor	November 1961
"The Dragon's Head"	The Hierophant	November 1961
"The Ark of the Covenant"	The Chariot	December 1961

Grady admitted that he considered some of these poems really "good, some of them bad...", followed humorously by, "I know!" In the same letter to Phyllis, as mentioned above, Grady added, "Each poem is dated, and the gaps between dates show times of great hang-up, but they also show bursts of great inspiration. Then, indefinably, intuitively, somewhere along the line, I made that

‘break-through’ we have all heard of. I was ‘across.’ I was ‘somewhere else,’ wherever that was.” In his later life, he would come to regard these twenty-two poems as being very sacred—at least to him. To explain himself he would write that Crowley’s dictum was

[T]hat the Adept only has 2 real steps to take: (1) to achieve $5^{\circ}=6^*$ which means bringing your Energy up to your Heart Chakra Tiphereth where you meet your HGA [i.e. Holy Guardian Angel] & then ‘under that divine guidance’ to (2) essay the ‘adventure of the Abyss,’ I named it (the Twenty Two Poems) The Angel and the Abyss, A Cycle of 22 Poems in honor of Our Maid of the Star Drifts.

This cycle of poetry signified an important stage in Grady’s magical life. With time he seriously began considering these poems to be his $7^{\circ}=4^{\square}$ Magickal Thesis about his personal Universe. To Grady these poems portray his attempt at bringing his energy upward into his Solar Center and then immersing himself in Crossing the Abyss to reside in the City of the Pyramids as a Magister Templi $8^{\circ}=3^{\square}$.

There are those who think this idea is ludicrous, namely, that Grady’s Thesis is a cycle of poetry. However, others are quick to point out that if Aleister Crowley could claim that his previous incarnation was Eliphas Levi and then assert that one of Levi’s books was his Thesis, then Grady could likewise be “creative”. In retrospect, who is anyone to judge? All this will be discussed far more in-depth at a later point. For now, I just want to give a brief over-view.

Grady would later admit that one of the poems, “The Dweller on the Threshold,” represented the Atu of The Devil and “is one of the worst in that series.” He wonders if the “bad” symbolism found in the poem had anything to do with his Christian upbringing, although he speculates it might also be due to “the bad trip re Tommie”, or rather due to his first wife, Claire. In other words, unconsciously, when he came “to Atu XV (The Devil) I just hit a sticking point, took what I could get & went on.” The poem is a mere six lines long, but I’ll spare the reader and not reproduce it.

Shortly after completing this cycle of poems Grady claimed, “I decided to come down thru the Sepheroth from Kether to Malkuth, including Daath.... The entire cycle I called *Dark Space And Bright Stars: A Cycle of 11 poems Celebrating the Mysteries of the Virgin Goddess*”. The first of these poems, which manifested on January 1st, 1962 is titled “Her Lovely Hair” and is attributed

to the sphere of Kether. The last appeared on May 31st, which he called “A Fall of Angels”, representing Malkuth. The full list of these poems and the spheres on the Qabalistic Tree of Life, which Grady attributed to them, is as follows:

Title	Sphere on the Tree of life
“Her Lovely Hair”	1-Kether
“Angel Far”	2-Chockmah
“Dea”	3-Binah
“Noah”	4-Chesed
“Goddess”	5-Geburah
“Abra-Magian”	6-Tiphereth
“The Sea Fight with Ghouls”	7-Netzach
“Renewal”	8-Hod
“The Other End of Oblivion”	9-Yesod
“A Fall of Angels”	10-Malkuth

These poems deal with the front side of the Tree. Years later, in 1969, when Grady was contemplating reactivating the Ordo Templi Orientis, he wrote that “[t]he symbol of the butterfly...is going to be very big in [the] new Order, publicity, publications, etc.” and he then referred to his poem, “Her Lovely Hair”—to two lines in particular:

*Lepidoptera unfolding,
Metamorphosis, Angel fire.*

Of course, *Lepidoptera* is the scientific name for all butterflies and moths. The metamorphosis in his poem refers to the alchemical transformation of an earth-bound caterpillar into a beautiful flying insect, or rather the Soul learning to fly. It suggests what the Chinese philosopher Chuang Tse is reported to have said: “I do not know whether I was a man dreaming I was a butterfly, or whether I am now a butterfly dreaming I was a man”. In some ways, this remark could epitomize Grady himself. An earth-bound Soul one moment, wallowing in mud, and then soaring to the

heights in the next. He often walked a razor's edge between the two but, then again, what Thelemite doesn't? Although Grady thought the symbolism of a butterfly important, he would never use the imagery.

With the completion of *The Angel and the Abyss* and the *Dark Space And Bright Stars* cycles of poetry, Grady believed that he had gone through a great initiatory experience. Together, these cycles formed his complete Magickal Thesis. He would tell Jean Shvonen in a letter dated May 15th, 1969 that, after completing the first two cycles of poems, he was still "taking on all universes and projected a third cycle going around the Major Arcana cycle again". However, he admits, "But about then my 'head' of steam ran out & I only completed one poem".

The poem of the third cycle to which he refers was written on June 28th, 1962. It is a unique poem that epitomized his over-all experiences with the Tree. It is titled "The Mystical Marriage of the Soldier and the Queen". He believed the poem illustrated how he had reconciled or "balanced" both male and female elements in his psyche. It also reflected the first part of his motto "Hymenaeus", literally "Marriage", where the goal to unite that which is above with that which is below. In some ways the poem intimates Grady's realization that he was the soldier, uniting with the Queen of Heaven alluding to The Greater Marriage mentioned in Crowley's *Deorum cum Hominibus* or the "Secret Instructions of an Eighth Degree of the Ordo Templi Orientis". It is probably one of Grady's most personal poems.

Years later, Phyllis Seckler indicated that the poetry from this period in Grady's life demonstrated the possibility that he might have actually crossed the Abyss, but, as for himself, he was not quite sure that the experience implied such at that given moment in his incarnation. He would come to believe that the initiatory experience was the realization of his past, his present, and the direction of his Soul's orbit in this incarnation. In brief, he was facing all his phantoms, especially regarding the O.T.O. Moreover, he was slowly coming to terms that these cycles of poems represented his Adeptus Exemptus Thesis (7°=4th).

Love is the law, love under will. – AL I:57