

Session Eleven

The Tree in Everything

Reading List

For this session's reading, we look at a number of works not necessarily seen as Kabbalistic but nonetheless directly or indirectly steeped in Kabbalistic concepts and symbology.

The Holy Books of Thelema. Crowley, A. Weiser, 1983.

Crowley's writing is suffused with Kabbalah, this collection of his "Class A" writings particularly so. As a clear example, consider verse 44 of Liber Tzaddi, which uses the Sephiroth directly, in the guise of their English translations, i.e. "They shall be clothed with Victory and Splendour." The 22 verses of Liber Arcanorum refer directly to the Tarot in another example. The book Liber vel Magi describes the conditions of the Sephirah Chockmah experienced mystically. It is a useful exercise to be aware of Kabbalah when reading the writings of such authors as Crowley, Fortune, Regardie, et al. There are often subtexts that can only be read in the context of the Tree.

Shakespeare and the Goddess of Complete Being. Hughes, T. Faber & Faber, 1993.

The poet laureate Hughes refers to Neoplatonic themes in his examination of Shakespeare, but specifically to the Kabbalah pgs.20-25 where he discusses Bruno and the use of Kabbalah as a memory map; as Aquinas has it, "man cannot understand without images."

The Unfinished Universe. Young, Louise B. Simon & Schuster, 1986.

A scientific yet thoughtful and almost poetic book, Young's simple premise that "a masterpiece of artistic unity and integrated Form, infused with meaning, is taking shape as time goes by" reflects many Kabbalistic ideas throughout its pages. Referring to the work of Teilhard de Chardin, she also begins to examine the idea of a meta-consciousness, which is examined in more detail in such works as Gregory Stock's "Metaman". In a scientific frame, the concepts of Superstrings and Fractals are also no strangers to anyone who has examined Kabbalah; see "Chaos," by James Gleick, or "The Elegant Universe" by Brian Greene. The idea of Membranes colliding and creating Universes, of which ours is one of four observable dimensions but with six "rolled up" is entirely Kabbalistic!

Foucault's Pendulum. Eco, U. Picador, 1989.

Eco is no stranger to Kabbalah and this particular book uses the Sephiroth as chapter titles as well as littering the text with references; "I should have listened to Lia. She spoke with the wisdom of life and birth. Venturing into the underground passages of Agartha, into the pyramid of Isis Unveiled, we had entered Gevurah, the Sefirah of fear, the moment in which wrath manifests itself in the world..."

For more Kabbalah in fiction, refer to the works - mainly short stories - of Jorge Borges, particularly "The Aleph" and "Death and the Compass" (this latter title was made into a strange film, which I have on tape somewhere and inflict on unsuspecting visitors once every few years ...)

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