

THE ALCHEMICAL WEDDING AND THE CROWNING OF THE HERMETIC CHILD

Steve Kalec, FRC



The Alchemical Wedding.

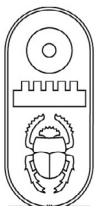
Frater Steve Kalec, a Grand Councilor for the Rosicrucian Order, AMORC, and a member of the Traditional Martinist Order, is a practicing alchemist, artist, poet, playwright, and lecturer. Frater Kalec's Jungian studies led him to understand the alchemical process as being a universal one throughout all aspects of being. This realization led him to the study and practice of operative laboratory alchemy. He has studied practical alchemy with the Philosophers of Nature and has followed Manfred Junius through his many European alchemy courses.

A wonderful way to express and complement one's studies is to exteriorize one's understanding of them. A painting can reveal a lot, especially if it has an uplifting theme full of inspirational and philosophical symbols and allegories. Alchemy, a field of study that can lead one on a passionate quest for knowledge, is a good subject for such paintings. Before we explore this painting and before we take

a stroll through the scenery with its many symbols revealing the alchemical process, let us first look into the meaning of the alchemical Sun and Moon, the alchemical King and Queen.

THE SUN AND THE MOON THE KING AND THE QUEEN

In Hermetic philosophy, the Sun has always been a symbol of a certain aspect of consciousness as it radiates outwards of itself. The Sun can only shine and give outwards its potent rays of light and warmth. It cannot receive or take; it is not its nature, for it is only half and a part of the oneness of being. The other aspect of consciousness is symbolized by the Moon as the feminine receptive nature of the unconscious mind. By herself, she is dark and cold and is a passive polarity compared to the active polarity of the Sun. Alchemically, the Lunar nature is one of



gathering inwards and nurturing, while the nature of the Sun is one of outpouring and expansiveness. The Sun, which is consciousness, sees himself in the Moon's reflection, while her darkness, symbolizing the unconscious, is warmed and made to shine with light. The Sun sees his own reflection in the Moon. As Fulcanelli has said, "the Moon secretly absorbs the rays of the Sun and nurtures them in her bosom."

Metaphysically, the inner process of meditation functions on the very same principles. The conscious mind directing thought and concentration is like the Sun. The unconscious aspect of our being is like the Moon and functions on a lunar level. The unconscious psychic energies within us must be warmed and kindled by the solar essence. This is that metaphysical insemination that philosophers speak of when they say that "consciousness must inseminate the unconscious." It is this act that brings to birth a third aspect of consciousness in our being: the luminous, subjective Self as the inner divine and Hermetic Child.

When one practices meditation, one can enter into the fertile feminine unconscious where the birthing of the inner divine child symbolizes the emerging Inner Self. One must first make the conscious effort of his or her active willpower and concentration and act upon the passive energies of the unconscious. In turn, the receptive and passive energies of the unconscious nurture and mature the divine seed of the Sun, or "our Gold," as the alchemists like to call it. In this way, the feminine aspect becomes the mother of divinity in that she brings forth the Son of the Sun. This is that mystical love affair, that passion and divine union of the male and female seed that the philosophers speak of which begets the Philosopher's

Stone. The Sun and the Moon, as the Father and the Mother, now see themselves in the divine Son. This is the true union of the bride and groom, the unification of Adam and Eve, and the mystical wedding of the alchemists

It is a most beautiful event to behold the Sun through the feminine reflection of the Lunar Astral Light, especially when she is pregnant and full. She is our most beautiful Diana. The alchemists have always spoken highly of her and expressed her beauty in most beautiful allegorical ways, such as the Lily of the Valley and the White Rose of the whitening stage of the alchemical process. To them it is symbolic of the beautiful body of their Diana, stripped of all her terrestriality. That means that it is a purely spiritual inner event. Thus the wife of the Sun becomes the very mother of our own rebirth. Consciousness becomes conscious of consciousness and we realize the source of a greater light coming from the Sun, the Father, within us. But we never forget our Mother, the Moon, and her fertility and gentle nurturing. In this symbolism and allegory we see the Osirian myth, and Isis, the Virgin Mother, who gave birth to Horus. We can also see the Christian mystery of the Holy Virgin Mother conceived of the Father. She also gave birth to the divine child who becomes our inner master and savior, as our regenerated soul and exalted consciousness.

THE ALCHEMICAL WEDDING

In my painting *The Alchemical Wedding*, attention is brought initially to the center, where two opposite but complementary forces of nature are represented. The feminine and masculine energies in nature are being brought into the union of the Alchemical Marriage. This is the *Heiros Gamos*, or the holy marriage of our inner archetypal, divine couple as the alchemical

King and Queen. Their offspring becomes the alchemical Hermetic Child, a symbol of our rebirth into a new and higher spirituality. We see this marriage being blessed and sanctified by the Holy Spirit, represented by the descending dove that is the mediator between heaven and earth. We also see that the entire scene is divided into two equal parts, or aspects of consciousness. Two luminaries share this scene: the Sun to rule the day as the radiant conscious aspect of our beings, and the Moon to rule the night as the reflective and nurturing unconscious.

Beginning from the left side, in the depths of darkness, in a little far-off town, one alchemist is keeping his vigil. Even in his sleep he tends to his fire and keeps the light, for alchemists are always awake. This suggests to us that the Alchemical Wedding is to be experienced inwardly through spiritual practice, meditation, aspiration, and love for that which is divine in us.

As we explore the scenery, we pass by Diana's temple and realize that it is she who is our beautiful Queen and goddess. Her purity and chastity are symbolized by the unicorn as the single-horned white horse, tireless when under threat of capture by the impure of heart, but meek when approached by a virgin. According to Juan Eduardo Cirlot's *A Dictionary of Symbols*, the unicorn has been an emblem of the sword or the Word of the Divine. This also suggests to us that it is the secret fire of the alchemists, for the Word of the Divine is the same as fire.

Next we see a white swan that gently swims over darkened water. Alchemists

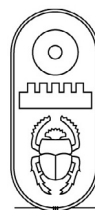
often watch for the appearance of the white swan, for when it appears over matter, the whitening stage of the alchemical process has begun. The white stage is the purification of the work. In the lake, we also see the water lily having spread its petals seeking to absorb the light of dawn. The lily is a beautiful symbol for representing that the highest in us is found in that which is the lowest in us, as the roots of this beautiful flower are anchored in the murky mud below the surface of the waters.

An important symbol not to overlook is the lilies of the valley at the feet of our Queen. The lily of the valley is a fragile flower that likes to live in the indirect light of the sun, hence in the valley. This is symbolic of the emerging Self also being fragile as it unfolds its petals to the light of consciousness. It cannot immediately look directly at the sun. Thus we must mature and get accustomed to the lunar reflective stage

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of the emerging light as we begin to endure the higher intensities of the alchemical fire of the soul.

We are after all the athanor of our work, which is revealed by the athanor in the very center of the painting. There we see the vessel also containing our alchemical King and Queen, suggesting that this is a Hermetic Work, and that it is an inner event. We see the outer fire below the athanor heating the vessel and raising the vibrations within it, allowing for the alchemical process to be initiated. The outer fire also symbolizes the fire of passion, and of spiritual aspiration, deep breathing techniques, and spiritual



practice. All these will set the inner fire of the soul within the vessel.

As we continue to explore the scenery, we arrive at the right side of the painting. We see here the brightness of the light of day. We see the King's castle and a chapel on the hill. The ground is rich and fruitful with vines and grapes, suggesting the action of the solar force. Even the tree is in full bloom, as we have entered into the revival of nature in spring. This is an apt symbol of our own revival into a glorious awakening. The right side of the painting could be seen as being in sharp contrast to the left, however it could also be seen as being part of a harmonious union of opposing forces. This union is also symbolized by the pavement upon which stands our beloved couple exchanging wedding vows. The Queen, being the lunar white alchemical rose, offers herself to the King. The King offers himself as the solar red alchemical rose. The colors are suggestive of the white and red stages of the alchemical process. The flooring is checkered, representing the forces of light and darkness in harmonious balance. This is the marriage of the alchemical fire and water as our alchemical Sulfur and Mercury. It is said that if it was not for water, fire would burn up the world, and if it was not for fire, water would drown the world.

Behind the King follows the alchemical Red Lion, representing the ferociousness of the ego. There is nothing wrong with the ego as long as it is purified, subservient, and obedient to the King. In its positive aspects, the ego is will, fortitude, and the mighty power of the soul. It is the "I Am" principle, without which, as Carl Jung posited, we cannot be conscious. He said, "It seems as if the ego has not been produced by nature to follow its own arbitrary impulses to an unlimited extent,

but to help to make real the totality – the whole psyche. It is the ego that serves to light up the entire system, allowing it to become conscious and thus to be realized." The Red Lion in us must first be conquered and allowed to die, and later alchemically resurrected. Anyone who has experienced the "dark night of the soul" will understand this.

This painting was intended to allow the meditative and contemplative mind to realize the beauty of the alchemical process, which is a regeneration of the soul and consciousness, and the uplifting of one's ordinary human condition. Alchemy need not be a dark and mysterious journey. Though darkness will be encountered, it is to be accepted as the blessed darkness of the soul, within which is found the regenerative secret fire of the alchemists.

In the breaking through of unconscious content into consciousness, which is like the dawning of light, we first always enter into a darkness of consciousness. Just as a candle flame loses its brightness when brought from a dark room into the sunlight, the Greater Light diminishes the light of the ego. Until the assimilation of this most adorable solar fire is achieved, we enter into a lower level of consciousness, into a moment of obscurity. A certain part of us, as our lesser selves, must pass through the psychological "dark night of the soul" and its corresponding "philosophical mortification." Saint John of the Cross said, "The endurance of darkness is the preparation for light." We always keep our sacred vigil, for dawn occurs just after the darkest hour, revealing a "golden dawn," and a resurrection into a higher order of the Self. A Self, having passed through its alchemical marriage as an entity, becomes one with that which is the universal within him or her.

THE CROWNING OF THE HERMETIC CHILD



The Crowning of the Hermetic Child is an extension of *The Alchemical Wedding* painting. When the painting above is placed adjacent to the Wedding painting, the scenery continues and the branches of the tree connect the two.

In a clear sky, breaking through a white cloud, we see the “All Seeing Eye,” as the Eye of Conscience and as the consciousness of the Divine within us all, being present and witnessing this miraculous and sacred event. Two castles stand in the distance, one just left of the King, and one just right of the Queen. One is the Palace of the Soul and the other the Palace of the Holy Spirit. There is peace within the world as the two aspects of consciousness have united their realms.

The two doves, as messengers and mediators between heaven and earth, symbolize spirituality and the powers of sublimation and fixation. They are perched on a tree branch whose roots extend into the earth. They seem content that their work has been done and that heaven has been brought down to earth.

The peacock to the right of the Queen is a symbol of totality, whose tail blends all colors into unity. The two peacocks side by side in harmony suggest the union of opposite forces within the original duality; spiritual energy and life force are now being received from such a unity. In meditation, just before the crystalline, pure, white light of a new and enhanced consciousness appears, all colors of the dispersed light of consciousness are seen

coming together and merging before the clear light of the Self appears.

In the center of the painting, we see the Hermetic Child being crowned by the Sun, who is its father, and the Moon, who is its mother. It is the Hermetic Child as our regenerated soul and consciousness.

This inner child often represents the inner developing “Light” of consciousness. Once developed and manifested into inner birth, the child represents the stage of life when the old person is transformed and reborn through the alchemical process. The child represents the inner guiding light of the new spirituality and consciousness that will unfold and become the revealed Master Within. In Hermetic philosophy, this Child is called Mercurius and is androgynous; it is both male and female. It is as a flower, with both stamens and pistils. It is capable of self-generation. The Hermetic Child is a representation of the Philosopher’s Stone. Here the child is being crowned as a spiritual achievement of the highest degree, where the alchemist’s soul has been regenerated through the youthful regenerative force of the alchemical process and elevated into a new and reawakened spirituality and expanded consciousness. The Hermetic Child is the offspring of the conjunction of the conscious and unconscious aspects of our being. It is a mystical and metaphysical realization of that which is the eternal and the Divine within us. As Baudelaire said: “Alchemy is the distillation of the eternal from the transient.”

