

Rowe, Benjamin (1951–2002)

Benjamin Rowe (1951–2002) was one of the primary late-twentieth century exponents of Enochian magic. His distinctly postmodern interpretation of John Dee and Edward Kelley's original material is at once characterised by a profound respect for the sixteenth century sources as well as an intensely innovative spirit, which manifested in new angelic visions and creative reinterpretations of historical material. Rowe was born in Cincinnati, Ohio and lived most of his life in the area. Rowe principally worked as a computer programmer, both in the public and private sectors—a fact that would greatly influence his approach to practicing magic, interfacing with other magicians, and disseminating his works. As a self-taught practitioner who generally eschewed participation with occult organisations (his brief involvement with Cincinnati's Bate Cabal and their *Cincinnati Journal of Ceremonial Magic* proving the exception), Rowe's magical education came from books on topics such as Enochian, Spiritualism, Theosophy, the Golden Dawn, New Age, Thelema, and Discordianism.

Rowe's key contributions to contemporary esotericism are his (1) reconstructionist methodology, (2) early utilisation of the internet, (3) technical scrying innovations, and (4) visionary records. One of the key developments in Enochian magic since the late 1970s has been a "purist turn" away from the ahistorical interpretations of the Golden Dawn, and a return to Dee and Kelley's original material (Asprem 2012, 125–42). Rowe was one of the primary drivers behind the purist turn, while making use of the early internet as a material infrastructure. Rowe was one of the most important figures in the earliest web-based communication platforms where the Enochian current took on its modern shape: the Enochian echo of the BaphoNet BBS, and the Enochian-I email listserv. Rowe was also one of the first occultists to publish most of his works online, whether through newsgroups, BBSs, listservs, or on his own website, Norton's Imperium – which dates from the early days of the internet (see Plaisance 2016). In terms of occult practice, Rowe can be credited

with two principal innovations: the utilisation of a computer monitor as a scrying device, and a visualisation method for transforming the two-dimensional Enochian tablets into three-dimensional temples on the "astral plane" (detailed in *Enochian Temples*). Finally, Rowe's voluminous published visionary records make a significant contribution to contemporary magical practice. Exemplified in *The Book of the Seniors* and *The 91 Parts of the Earth*, Rowe recorded his explorations of Enochian in a systematic style that had largely been absent since Crowley's seminal *The Vision and the Voice* (1911). In many of the recorded visions, the angels cast Rowe as the prophet of a new age and the avatar of the god Set—a role which Rowe treated with a degree of ambivalent scepticism throughout his life.

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