

THE CLOAK

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Julie Scott serves as the Grand Master of the Traditional Martinist Order for the English Grand Lodge for the Americas. In this article she presents some of the history and symbolism of the cloak — a powerful tool for personal transformation.



The cloak is a sublime and powerful tool for the Martinist student, providing protection from the mundane, creating a purified environment for our inner transformation, and symbolizing our extraordinary inheritance and duty to the highest good.

Before we discuss these lessons of the cloak, I would first like to share a little of its history.

The cloak has represented various archetypal motifs in different cultures throughout time.

In our earliest history our most ancient ancestors wore animal skins to camouflage themselves during a hunt or battle, and in order to embody the characteristics of the animal itself, for example, the strength or fierceness of a lion or the cleverness of a wolf. It also represented the ability of the person wearing it, for to master a bear (by taking its skin) requires strength, courage, and skill. Eventually the skin represented the wealth and power of the group, especially if it was adorned with ornamental items significant to the local tribe and its enemies, such as bear or lion claws, or feathers.

Eventually cloaks were made of fabric, including the finest linens, wools, and silks—again representing the wealth of the wearer and in some cases the purity or power of the material.

Kings and queens, and emperors and empresses around the world have worn

royal cloaks, in many cases jewel-studded and fur-trimmed, representing their authority and wealth, and thereby the power of their kingdoms.

Popes and cardinals of various traditions wear cloaks signifying their rank in their orders and the particular branch they represent. This practice exists in Catholicism, Buddhism, and Eastern Christianity to name a few.

In the Greek Orthodox Church today, on Easter Sunday in Jerusalem, the high priest dons a special cloak and, at a certain time, with no matches or other lighting tools in his hand, reaches forth to reignite the sacred flame of the church. It is believed that it is the spiritual power of the cloak that allows him to do this, as this is reportedly the same cloak that was worn by the high priest of the Eleusinian mystery school.

In more recent history, the cloak has been used by Hollywood to represent intrigue or magic. An entire genre of film has centered on the cloak and dagger.

Several fictional characters' cloaks or capes empower them with magical abilities such as super strength or the ability to fly. In *Harry Potter*, the cloak allows the characters to travel amidst others invisibly. In the Lord of the Rings film, *The Two Towers*, Frodo hides himself and his faithful friend, Sam, by throwing his cloak over them so they blend in with the environment.



In some of the examples above, the cloak was used to represent deeds, for example, to symbolize what a person may have done, or to signify their position or what they possess.

In the Martinist tradition, the symbolism of the cloak is quite different.

In our work as Martinists, we are introduced to two teachers for whom the symbolism of the cloak was important—Elijah, who reportedly bequeathed his cloak to Elisha, and Apollonius of Tyana.

In the second Book of Kings in the *Bible*, the story of Elijah and Elisha is told.

Elijah was already a great prophet when he came upon Elisha plowing his fields. Elijah placed his cloak upon Elisha and Elisha instantly comprehended the significance of this act—he was to carry on Elijah’s work when he was gone. Elisha immediately put down his plow, prepared a great feast for his community, and left with Elijah, to follow the great prophet.

Elisha remained loyal to Elijah, and to the Divine, following Elijah through the desert as he traveled to eventually be carried up to heaven by fiery chariots and horses in a whirlwind.

Elisha, humble and quiet of spirit, asked Elijah for a double portion of the spirit that was upon Elijah, and the Divine granted it to him. Elisha went on to perform exactly twice as many miracles as Elijah. Following Elijah’s ascension to heaven, Elisha picked up Elijah’s cloak and used it shortly thereafter to perform the miracle of dividing the River Jordan. Later, the Divine performed many miracles through Elisha, who became the successor to Elijah’s ministry.

In *Man, His True Nature and Ministry*, Louis-Claude de Saint-Martin wrote,

... as we ascend (the holy Mount) we put on Elijah’s mantle, which we may inherit during this life, and by means of which we may bring down fire from heaven; divide the waters of the river; cure diseases; raise the dead; for nothing but Elijah’s mantle, or our pure and primitive garment, can preserve the *Word* in us, as an earthly garment preserves our bodily warmth. Our animal being cannot contain this living Word; our virginal bodies only can hold it.

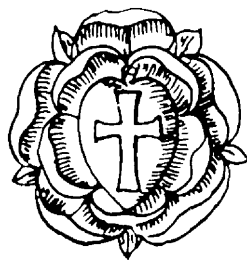
Apollonius of Tyana was another significant teacher of the meaning of the cloak. Apollonius was born in Cappadocia, in what is now Turkey, and lived in the earliest years of this era. He was a Greek of noble birth, well-educated, and wealthy. Apollonius traveled extensively throughout the world, studying various cultures including Jainism, Buddhism, the ancient Egyptian religion, and Indian cultures. In fact, he spent over thirteen years studying in India and brought back much of what he learned there to Greece. His journey in India is said by some to be symbolic of the trials of the neophyte.

He was familiar with the Eleusinian mysteries and studied at Delphi. He was a prolific writer and often referred to the inscription above the door of the temple at Delphi, attributed to the Oracle of that place: “Know thyself, and thou shalt know the Universe and the Gods.”

Apollonius was most dedicated to the school of Pythagoras. He was a strict vegetarian and observed silence for five years. During his lifetime, Apollonius was renowned for performing miracles, which he called “natural laws.”

After raising a young girl from her own funeral procession, Apollonius said,

There is no death of anything save in appearance. That which passes over



from essence to nature seems to be birth, and what passes over from nature to essence seems to be death. Nothing really is originated, and nothing ever perishes; but only now comes into sight and now vanishes. It appears by reason of the density of matter, and disappears by reason of the tenuity of essence. But it is always the same, differing only in motion and condition.

Apollonius, the miracle worker of noble birth, always wore a simple cloak of white linen.

Message of the Cloak

The message of the cloak represents the humble seeker. It also symbolizes a person's intention and preparation for inner transformation.

As we learn in our earliest Martinist initiation, the cloak renders us invulnerable to attacks of ignorance and it symbolizes the hermetic seal, which creates a place for inner transformation to take place.

The cloak renders us invulnerable to attacks of ignorance. I still remember the first time I heard this explanation of the cloak. I felt great comfort and strength in it. But how would the cloak make us invulnerable? Just like the mask, making us undifferentiated, the cloak veils our individuality. It gives us the power of being withdrawn from the world rather than in it, where we are in the midst of reaction and even pro-action.

Through the cloak, we learn that we can choose whether or not to be vulnerable to attack. Think of an example for yourself. If you are a parent, or have been in the presence of a young person going through a difficult time, you may have been verbally attacked by that young person, yet you know, through your maturity and stability, that they are simply misguided, misdirected, or going through "one of their phases."

In the same way, when we are attacked unfairly, through the ignorance of another

person who may not have all the facts, who may be deceived by prejudice or insufficient education, or may be unable to see the bigger picture, we can choose not to react, to instead act in a confident, unwavering manner. The cloak makes us strong—strong enough to withstand attacks without taking it personally.

When donning the cloak, we resemble the knight of old who places a powerful and pure vestment upon his shoulders before going about his most important, and possibly dangerous, duties. It is a protection and the symbol of the ideal, of the impersonal good for which we personally strive.

The cloak also serves as a hermetic seal; it creates a metaphorical womb, for the place of transformation is truly within us. What creates the seal is our intention, and the cloak symbolizes our inner purification, a willingness to let go of the material, and a commitment to focus on our true nature and communion with the Divine.

Enfolded in the hermetic seal of the cloak, we do the work on our individual selves, on our own transformation that cannot be done by or shared with others.

Augustin Chaboseau, former Grand Master of the Traditional Martinist Order and Emperor of the F.U.D.O.S.I., wrote,

The cloak is like the walls of a deserted room where a lamp has been lit. I was alone in this room with a light. I left the room without touching the flame, and on my departure, I carefully locked the door. No one can receive this light but it continues to shine. I just have to re-open the door, enter the room, and I would find what was illuminating me, with all that this Light illuminated for me. Further, as long as I am enfolded in the cloak, and every time I wear the cloak, I am the companion of light, and light is my companion.

The cloak encloses us in a metamorphic field that facilitates transformation. Perhaps this is where the image of a magical cloak comes from. We enfold ourselves in the cloak with the expectation of something different taking place. It is not a magical piece of cloth that causes the transformation to occur; it is our intention to transform and the symbolic hermetically sealed space in which this transformation can take place. When donning the cloak, we anticipate the best of ourselves and are open to communion with the Divine.

Of course, great evolution of the soul takes place through our interaction with others and the lessons we learn in the mundane world as well. In my experience, however, this is significantly different from the transformation that takes place when we touch the inner depths of our soul, when we speak with the mystical voice within, when we enter the divine stillness that the cloak engenders.

When we enter our meditation with this intention, we truly purify our inner selves and create an atmosphere where great transformation can take place.

I have spoken about Elijah bequeathing his cloak to Elisha, the life of Apollonius of Tyana, of being invulnerable to attacks of ignorance, and the hermetic seal. All of these lead to the most important significance of the cloak, which is that of silence.

The Silence

In my final degree of study in the Martinist Heptad, I chose to remain silent during all the classes. This was a very interesting exercise for me as our class, which had journeyed together for several years, frequently engaged in lively discussions. Often there was something I wanted to say, however my commitment to being silent and unknown during these classes was more important to me, being an ideal I wanted to live up to during this period.

I found great strength in my silence. Perhaps I missed the opportunity to make a salient point or two (and perhaps I didn't); however, this was insignificant in comparison to the inner power I felt from keeping silent, from keeping my own counsel, and reflecting on what was happening in the moment rather than blurting out every thought that crossed my mind, irrespective of its significance.

On several occasions I have had the opportunity to participate in silent retreats. In each case not only did I feel greater peace, but I also experienced greater vitality, as if every word withheld was rewarded with an increased life force.

The cloak symbolizes the entrance into silence, and the place of silence is where the Divine and our inner selves meet.

Pythagoras required his students to remain silent for five years before he allowed them into his school of study. Besides the discipline this requires, it slowly opened up the students' other senses and sensibilities.

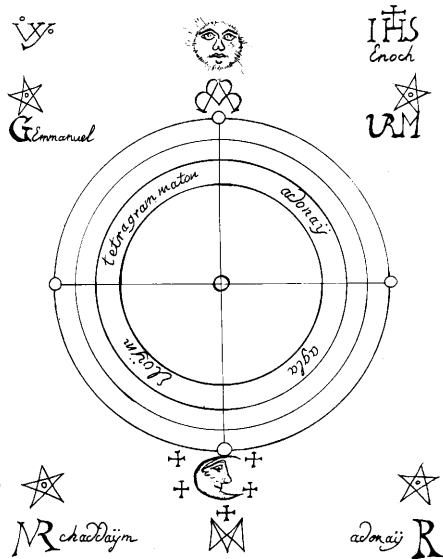
Recently I had the privilege (and challenge) of climbing to the top of Mt. Sinai in Egypt. Typically one leaves with a guide at 2 a.m., completing the ascent in time for the impressive sunrise at the top of the great mountain. I took my time coming down and at several moments I was all by myself. There was no wind blowing through this rough terrain, and there were no animals or even insects buzzing around. I stood in the midst of absolute silence.

Even my own body slowed its breathing until I heard nothing but absolute stillness. It was clear at that moment why so many people, including Moses and Elijah, have been inspired by this place. This calm brought the present moment into focus. Trying to hear something, my senses became keenly aware and then the stillness washed over me a great peace, a calm, and a quietness of the soul.

Perhaps you have had an experience similar to this. Free from the chains of



chatter and a darting mind, silence brings us back within where we find our peaceful core.



Entering the Silence

And now we shall enter the silence, each of us individually, going inward, deeper and deeper until we reach that Place that is no place, where peace profound resides; until we reach the Time, which is no time, that has always and never existed.

Please sit in whatever position is most comfortable for you. Take a deep breath and exhale completely.

Focus on your breathing, gradually bringing it to a pace slower and slower, quieter and quieter.

Choose a place where you can feel your breath—in your chest—or feel it entering and exiting your nostrils.

Now, in your mind's eye, see yourself in a room filled with light. Everywhere around you it is bright and filled with energy. Walk toward a place in this room where there hangs a white cloak, vibrating in its purity.

Take that cloak and begin to slowly place it around your shoulders, every moment keeping in mind the transformation you want to take place when the cloak is in place.

You are now safely enfolded within the cloak, protected from all possible attacks. You stand tall and confident, knowing that you are utterly safe.

Close the clasp of the cloak around your neck. Now the seal has been created that fully envelops you for the transformation that you most deeply desire.

Know that you are worthy of this ideal, of this transformation, that you are worthy of your very best – of right and good and justice. Moreover, in having been allowed to incarnate on Earth you have a responsibility to fulfill your part in the plan of the Grand Architect of the Universe.

Now, safely enfolded in the possibility and duty of the white cloak, enter into silence. You will be in this place for some time.

Listen very carefully for the call from within, the sirens drawing you to the mysteries of the deep, to the ancient stillness that has existed forever and will continue beyond eternity, in its radiant splendor and glory.

