

Phil Hine General Essays on Magic

http://www.philhine.org.uk/writings/index_essays.html

General essays

- [All Hail Chaotopia!: Chaos & the Utopian State](#) - Choronzon 999
- [Analytic Techniques for Sorcery Intervention](#) - Look before you blast!
- [Balance in the ecosphere](#) - a perspective from Paul Maiteny
- [Black magic and the left-hand path](#)
- [Chaos Magic](#) - An overview from Ray Sherwin
- [The Cycles of Chaos](#) - Kalkinath & Vishvanath deconstruct the Initiation process
- [Divinatory Unfoldings](#) - Some musings on the divination process
- [Ekomagick](#) - presentation to the Wildwood Conference, 1994
- [Fade to Gray](#) - a critique of Chaos Magic from Satanist Rex Monday
- [The Holy Guardian Angel](#) - a user guide from Ed Richardson
- [Hoodoo](#) - a talk by Stephen Grasso
- [The Horns of Heresy](#) - some magico-political musings from Ray Sherwin
- [The Ice War as Remembered by Stokastikos](#)
- [Illuminate to Incandescence](#) - Stokastikos replies to Rex Monday
- [Letter from A Luciferean](#) - Satanic ramblings from Rex Monday
- [The magician as Rebel Physicist](#) - Pete Carroll throws down the gauntlet!
- [Magic for Healing: A Shamanic Perspective](#)
- [Magic in the Great Outdoors](#) - a few musings on working magic outdoors
- [The Magic of Chaos](#) - an early overview from Peter J. Carroll
- [Magick is not science](#) - Alistair Livingston replies to Pete Carroll's "Magician as Rebel Physicist"
- [Magick and Physics](#) - Dave Lee explores quantum-based magical models
- [Moon Music - In memory of Jhonn Balance](#)
- [The Nature of Magic - lecture by Dr. Susan Greenwood, May 2005](#)
- [Olivia Durdin-Robertson Interview](#)
- [On Cursing](#) - lecture presented at UKAOS 1992
- [On the Magical Egregore](#)
- [Occultism: a postmodern perspective](#)
- [Operation Overload](#) - Phil Hine & Dave Lee take a look at William S. Burroughs' work
- [Paroxysms of Magic](#) - Lionel Snell
- [Peter J. Carroll Interview](#) - from Abrasax Magazine
- [Political ritual reconsidered](#) - an old essay from *Moonshine* magazine
- [Possession](#)
- [Post-Structuralism and Modern Magic Part 1](#) - Ed Richardson
- [Post-Structuralism and Modern Magic Part 2](#) - Ed Richardson
- [The Psychedelic Wizard](#) - text of a presentation by Dave Lee at the 1999 Ananke Con.
- [Psychoplasmics](#) - Gyrus explores body-consciousness themes in the work of David Cronenberg
- [Questing & Chaos](#) - A personal perspective on Psychic Questing from Jack Gale
- [A Question of Honour?](#) - Gordon the Toad on personal & magical integrity
- [Ramsey Dukes Interview](#)
- [Results Mysticism](#) - Steve Wilson
- [Rips to the edge](#) - Essay originally published in *Towards 2012* magazine
- [Rites that Go Wrong](#) - When the spells go awry, the 'magus' starts to lie...
- [Seidr Magic](#) - Ed Richardson
- [Touching Earth](#) - Gordon MacLellan explores Shamanism in Modern Britain

All Hail Chaotopia!

A paper by Choronzon 999

Contents

- [Issues of personal freedom](#)
 - [Entrenched Neophobic Attitudes](#)
 - [The Hegemony of Finance](#)
 - [A Socio-Economic Testbed](#)
 - [Sovereignty](#)
 - [How To Get An Island](#)
 - [Visions of Chaotopia](#)
-

For the title of the paper I have used one straight quotation - from Chapter III of Aleister Crowley's "Book of the Law" (Liber AL); and one paraphrased quotation from the Marx Brothers' film "Duck Soup" - specifically a modification of the chaotically repeated refrain from what purported to be the national anthem of the fictional State of Freedonia.

Throughout history various schools of philosophical thought and religious belief have proposed idealised conceptions of the way in which human society might optimally be structured, each in a fashion consistent with the central paradigm being expounded. The philosophers of Chaos, thus far, have either drawn back from doing so, or, perhaps more likely, have had other more immediate matters to concern themselves with.

In one sense this is a little puzzling, since a philosophy which embraces the libertarian extremes implicit in the Illuminist cliché "Everything is Permitted" must inevitably find itself on a collision course with the authoritarian social structures which dominate virtually every recognised Sovereign State on the surface of the planet.

Crowley's development of the Rabelaisian concept of 'Thelema', with its almost synonymous dictum "Do What Thou Wilt", did at least put forward a few suggestions, albeit that in the 87 years since the New Aeon was proclaimed, that doctrine's adherents have done precious little to follow them through. One of the contradictions which may have contributed to this lack of progress lies, in my view, in the superimposition of a rigid hierarchical quasi-masonic structure upon an essentially libertarian philosophy. The result, to all intents and purposes, is a contradictory, but unspoken, codicil to the Rabelaisian original which should now be interpreted by Thelemites as "Do What Thou Wilt - so long as it's approved in writing from Grand Lodge". The schismatic traumas which have afflicted the Thelemite corpus in recent decades can, in most cases, be traced back to difficulties arising in one way or another out of this fundamental philosophical contradiction.

The genius which inspired the "Book of the Law" certainly understood the antipathy between "Do What Thou Wilt"/"Everything is Permitted" and mainstream attitudes within society. That is why the injunction "Choose ye an Island!" is immediately followed with advice to "Fortify it!" and "Dung it about with enginery of war!". This guards against two possible consequences attendant upon a Thelemic Utopia being seen to be established and viable: firstly the threat to the orthodox authoritarian paradigm of government posed by the existence of such a State would be so fundamental that there would be little alternative but to attack it physically on some pretext or other; secondly, there would be tendency for runaway migration to occur, which would place disproportional burdens on the Utopian infrastructure.

It might of course be asked "What's so wrong with the present structures of society?" Surely the capability exists to make whatever modifications may be necessary through the Ballot Box, or, failing that, by some

magical operation such as the one conducted exactly six months ago to get rid of the Poll Tax. The problem is partly that the major objections are so intermeshed that it is difficult to propose surgical solutions which do not impact in a chaotic fashion in other areas leading to a lot of grief and aggravation.

The following major categories encompass many of the impediments in the present set-up which encourage me to consideration of utopian notions - each might comprise another lecture, or even a book, in its own right, so I do not propose to explore any depth of detail at this time:

Issues of personal freedom

a. Religious

I find it quite ridiculous that the State can continue to endorse the basic tenets of Christianity, when the central pillars of that belief system are continually being shown to be based on contrived hearsay enshrined as Holy Writ, and supported by forged "evidence". People are quite entitled to adopt whatever religious paradigm they wish, but freedom of religion should carry with it the corollary idea that people are freed from having other peoples irrational beliefs imposed on them at an impressionable age with the blessing and encouragement of the State. Christianity as a technique of social control was introduced quite cynically by Constantine in 325 AD, and it has survived more because of fraud, terror and state support than because of any rational basis.

The ascendancy of evangelism heralded by the enthronement of Dr Carey, the new Archbishop of Canterbury, may herald an era of persecution and witch-hunting along the lines seen recently in Rochdale and Orkney. The only way that the professional objectivity of those co-ordinating these obscene spectacles can be questioned, on the basis of slavish adherence to an irrational belief system, is through Disestablishment of the Christian Church. If this were done a lot of the hypocrisy in society would melt away, in my view.

b. Social/Behavioural

People should be free to amuse or conduct themselves in private in whatever way they see fit, provided they do no harm to anyone but themselves. Such an attitude would render domestic violence (physical and mental) socially unacceptable, but would allow people otherwise to do as they please without concern about harassment. If people do stupid things and injure or even kill themselves, so be it. That happens all the time today. The key to making the notion work lies in training each individual's ability to defend his/her own personal space - this is one of the most basic magical exercises.

In the present situation, for example, I would be happy enough to accept a ban on the smoking of tobacco in public places on the basis that there may be some risk to other people's health, provided that I was free to smoke anything I liked in private.

The most obvious solution to the "How to replace the Poll Tax?" question is for marijuana to be legalised and distributed by the local councils, perhaps through the refuse collection and/or street-cleaning functions which many of them already support. It may seem crazy but it is possible that in about nine months time they may be forced to it - as the only way out of the jam!

Entrenched Neophobic Attitudes

There is a theory of human personality which divides people into 'Neophobes' and 'Neophiles'. Neophobes shun the idea of anything new, almost on principle; Neophiles welcome new things, albeit with scepticism and caution. The Neophobe position is ultimately futile, because new things happen whether they like it or not.

There is often an association of Neophobia with increasing age, but I do not find that to be borne out. Where the Neophobe attitude dominates is through its pervasive presence in most, if not all, hierarchical structures.

The "Not Invented Here" Syndrome, which is used so effectively to stifle the flow of creative ideas, is an example of Neophobic attitudes being manifest even in the sort of technological environment where that very flow of ideas is vital to survival.

Most Chaos Magicians are Neophiles, and it is little coincidence, I submit, that many of them are also anti-hierarchs.

The Hegemony of Finance

Financial mechanisms provide the most effective means today for stifling creative endeavour. Since ideas themselves in present day society have no actual worth, the originator of any idea is forced, in order to bring it to any sort of fruition, to effectively relinquish control of it to some larger body, to a bank or indeed to a potential commercial competitor.

A Socio-Economic Testbed

One of the main problems in the fields of Sociology, Politics and Economics is that the conventional procedures for testing hypotheses are usually not available. If someone devises a new theory in Physics, experiments can be set up, with properly monitored 'control' studies established to ascertain that the effects generated are actually caused by the phenomenon being tested, rather than some spurious influence.

Where theories in economics or social science are postulated, test environments can rarely be established in the same way. Computer simulations may be available, but these can only be approximations. As things are at present, economic theories are tested out on real economies, while the populace are duped into acquiescence with bromide slogans dreamed up by the political image makers - "There is no alternative" - "You've never had it so good" - "All our problems are the problems of success".

Political/Social theories rarely have the luxury of being tested in any sort of objective way. Frequently they are presented in a manner more appropriate to the marketing of a religion. We are expected to accept that belief in what is being put forward will make it happen - "Workers unite, you have nothing to lose but your chains" - "This glorious Reich will last for a thousand years" - "Nuclear power will bless us with electricity which is too cheap to meter".

The sensible way forward is to facilitate the establishment of some sort of experimental social environment where new or radical ideas can be operated on a test-bed basis. To enable such an environment to exist would require suspension of the normal constraints of sovereignty - this, in my view, is the first prerequisite for any Utopian experiment.

In days gone by all that the enthusiastic Utopian had to do was to collect together a band of like minded head-cases, and set off to found a colony somewhere. Pythagoras did this when he got fed up with the prevailing attitudes in his native island of Samos, so also did one of my more illustrious namesakes when he sailed the Mayflower out of Southampton in 1620. Today things are not as simple as that.

Sovereignty

Practically every square inch of the land surface of the globe (with the exception of Antarctica) is acknowledged to be under the Sovereignty of one or other of the 220 odd countries or dependencies in the world. Inevitably disputed areas exist, but these are often the object of some tug-of-war between two larger countries.

The basis on which chunks of real estate become Sovereign States may often be seen to be accidental. The same applies to the processes by which a number of significant ethnic groups now find their traditional lands subsumed into a Sovereign State dominated by another people - and in some notorious cases (Kurdistan, Tibet) one dominated by their worst enemies.

The original conception was that Sovereignty derived from some divine entity assuring a group of people that the land they lived on (or proposed to inhabit) was theirs, reinforced by a monarchical succession which ideally monopolised the right to exercise violence upon anyone in the vicinity who thought differently - that assumed or de facto right was then codified into some often arbitrary set of Laws, and anyone who disagreed was topped, banged up, sold into slavery, or was best advised to keep quiet.

Sovereignty by right of conquest was then popular for many centuries. This particularly appealed to military types like Alexander of Macedon, the Romans, Napoleon, Cecil Rhodes, Hitler and other would-be builders of Empire. Nowadays some distinction is made between Suzerainty and Sovereignty, where the former means simply that a particular state has rights over a territory by right of conquest or monopoly of violence, and where the latter implies some loftier claim.

Many countries established in this century owe their existence to the grace and favour of a former colonial power, who, having previously claimed sovereignty by divine right or conquest, eventually finds the claim more of a burden than an asset, and decides to return control to the original inhabitants.

Some of the strangest countries are ones which have come into being and continued to survive independently as a result of historical accident. Included among these might be Liechtenstein, San Marino, Andorra and Monaco. Although small countries like these are dependent for their existence on the goodwill of (or their usefulness to) their neighbours, they are nonetheless some of the best test-beds for experiments in international financial manipulation, and some are effectively designer tax-havens. That characterisation might also apply to some obscure British dependencies like the Virgin Islands, the Cayman Islands, Guernsey, and the Isle of Man.

An attempt was made unilaterally to add Lundy Island in the Bristol Channel to the above list, and the incumbent resident, a retired military officer, loosed off a few rounds from a cannon (dating from the Napoleonic War, as I recall) at a launch carrying inspectors from the Inland Revenue some years ago. Lundy does apparently have the right to issue its own postage stamps, though it is now owned by the National Trust. Sovereignty, though, is about more than stamps.

There are numerous small islands around the coast of Britain and Ireland which are habitable (just) but uninhabited. Occasional attempts are made to establish utopian communities on one or other. A particularly spectacular flop in the glare of the media spotlight was that by Sid Rawle the celebrated "King of the Hippies" and Convoy notable. Sid's band of pilgrims, either the Hyde Park Diggers or some later derivative, were granted residence by one of The Beatles (John Lennon?) who owned a small skerry off Ireland's west coast. The venture (in 1969 or 1970 as I recall) was a sincere attempt to do the whole thing for real, but it foundered: partly because of dependence on locals (who were hostile towards the venture) for boat passage to their territory; partly from lack of an adequate water supply (or the infrastructure to provide such); and perhaps from an overdose of idealism which provide the basis for their being mocked and pilloried in the press. There were silly-season "Hippy Isle" stories in the tabloids for weeks.

The one lesson from Sid Rawle's adventure is that trying to mount such a project as some sort of idealistic subsistence operation is probably doomed to failure, not much fun, and a lot of hard unpleasant work. Whether or not the ultimate intention is to experiment with different economic paradigms, the only way that a such project can get to that point is by interfacing in a highly efficient fashion with the conventional economic system. Any other approach and you are doing little more than a voluntary Robinson Crusoe performance; Alexander Selkirk, on whom the Defoe story was based, was indeed castaway on one of the Juan Fernandez Islands (of which more later) off the Pacific coast of Chile.

How To Get An Island

Ignoring the sovereignty issue for a while, if you have a relatively unlimited budget the number of islands available to you is substantial. There is an Estate Agent (Realtor) in Hamburg who specialises in nothing else. The price range is very broad running from \$7 million for a Bahama with an airstrip, to around 10000 sterling for a rocky few acres with no facilities off Scotland or Nova Scotia. The most idyllic island that anyone has ever attempted to sell to me was one in the San Blas Archipelago, off the Caribbean coast of Panama; the guy wanted \$60000 back in 1984, but didn't tell me whether or not this included the tribe of Cuna Indians who were in residence there. It may be that he makes some sort of living from selling their island.

There are few precedents for purchase of sovereignty however; two cases which spring to mind are the acquisition of Alaska from Russia in 1867 by the USA, and that same nation's acquisition of Manhattan Island from the Indian Tribe of the same name in 1626. Duping Amer-Indians into selling their land is nothing new, but it seems unlikely that the Manhattan realised they were also effectively selling Sovereignty on the adjacent continental landmass.

Leases of Sovereignty are not unknown - the best known example is the deal by which parts of Hong Kong were leased to the British by China. Issues raised by the termination of the 100 year lease are now exercising diplomatic minds, and the regrettable feature, in my view, is that those issues are clouding any clear focus on some of the abominations taking place today (and every other day) in Chinese occupied territory - like Tibet. Those sad events however are quite unlinked to the matter of leasing sovereignty, and appear to have more to do with some ideological will to annihilate the rich and ancient culture of a neighbouring people.

The point becomes increasingly clear however that if a territory does not have what is defined by the corpus of nations as Sovereignty, then anyone can occupy it, in an apparent extension of the Right of Conquest forward from Roman times, and then brutalise anyone living there with impunity. That is what makes sovereignty a vital ingredient which anyone considering a Utopian undertaking should ignore at their peril.

Let's make a few assumptions now. Just suppose that some bargaining counter exists which could conceivably induce an existing sovereign state (any one at all) to negotiate a Hong Kong style lease on a chunk of territory; what sort of territory would fit the criteria to give some Utopia of Chaos - or Chaotopia - a fighting chance of success.

An obvious notion is a habitable but uninhabited island. The only one around the British Isles which has previously supported a population, but which now lies deserted is Hirta, the largest of three mid-Atlantic rocks known as St Kilda. It is now a Nature Reserve under protection of the National Trust for Scotland, and is notable for the world's largest population of gannets. The island was evacuated in 1930 when the population was 35; this ended continuous inhabitation since prehistoric times. The island's cliffs rise to 1300 ft so there is no risk of flooding even under the most catastrophic scenarios of global warming, also St Kilda escaped glaciation in the Pleistocene epoch, so there seems little chance of it freezing up even if the Gulf Stream changes direction. Nothing is known to me about landing facilities, or any other infrastructure which may be there. St Kilda may have some strategic importance, and certainly some significance in

regard to any mineral wealth and fishing resources in the surrounding ocean, but if such issues were addressed and an agreeable outcome reached, Hirta could be a candidate for Chaotopia.

A shore base would also be necessary, somewhere in Ireland or Western Scotland - even, at a pinch, somewhere on the Caledonian Canal. Issues of sovereignty would not have to apply there beyond those normally pertaining to a foreign embassy premises. Already it becomes clear that this is rather more than a shoe-string subsistence operation if it were ever seriously proposed as a real project.

Looking further afield, the task is to identify islands which are habitable but uninhabited, though there do exist a few bizarre opportunities with habited ones which would not necessarily compromise the position of the present inhabitants.

For example, some of the islands of Vanuatu, previously the New Hebrides (north of New Zealand), are inhabited by tribes adhering to various 'Cargo Cults'. One such, in the Sulphur Bay area of Tanna, worship a God called Jon Frum. The religion dates from as recently as the 1940s.

One theory has it that an American seaplane pilot once off-loaded supplies there, and for some reason unknown these were left there, presumably forgotten about or not needed for the war effort. Ever since, the Cargo Cult have been waiting for the return of Jon Frum, their benefactor from the skies, to take up his rightful role in their society. The problem is that the present adherents have no real idea what Jon Frum looked like. Would-be pretenders beware however - the Tribes of Tanna were never substantially converted to Christianity, possibly because they found the missionaries better to eat than to listen to. The Jon Frum cult is simply a modern accretion to traditional local animist beliefs, which involve the need to propitiate a nearby active volcano. Now it is conceivable that seismology and Chaos Maths could give credible notice of eruptions, so that an application for the vacant post of Incarnate Deity made today would carry a better chance of survival in office than was possible previously.

A further consideration for Cargo Cult deity applicants in that region (there are at least three such vacant posts in Vanuatu) is the social stratification criteria applying to male members in some tribes. On the Islands of Malakula and Espiritu Santo exist several ethnic groups where no self-respecting gentleman wears anything more elaborate than a penis guard, and where the size of that garment is an important social parameter. So if you turn up with a group of companions hoping to convince these canny folk of the reality of the Deity's return, make sure that your spokesman is the guy with the biggest knob or it will be obvious from the start that your perception of what is important in civilised society. Fraud or wishful thinking might carry the day for a while, but it would be unlikely to escape the notice of the alluring temple attendants which any credible animist Deity would expect to be provided with for assistance with divine carnal needs. Deficiencies in size could probably be overcome by prodigious athleticism, but it might make the job hard work (no pun intended!).

There are large numbers of Pacific Islands which, as well as being uninhabited, and potential candidates for a lease of Sovereignty, are also strategically situated in terms of their time -zone location relative to the world's money markets. With a satellite communications link the 'designer tax haven' potential should not be ignored.

Raoul in the Kermadecs between New Zealand and Vanuatu is habitable but uninhabited aside from a small staff at the weather station. It is high enough not to be washed away in next century or so, though it also has an active volcano, so an Atlantis or Krakatoa scenario could not be entirely ruled out; albeit, that might present a better risk than the Big Nambas tribal cooking pot a few degrees to the north.

The Marquesas group includes some beautiful uninhabited islands, though some of them are low coral atolls and might even be vulnerable to tsunami (tidal waves). That island group, together with Tahiti, has a sovereign status as the dependency of French Polynesia, and there is ongoing controversy about nuclear weapons testing in the region which might militate against an acceptable Lease of Sovereignty, as well as reducing the long term desirability of the whole central pacific region.

The world's largest habitable uninhabited island is Mas Afuera in the Juan Fernandez group. Situated between the Chilean coast and Easter Island (on the Critical Path of migration of Megalithic Technology) are two substantial islands, Mas a Tierra is inhabited, and is now sometimes called Robinson Crusoe Island. The locals say Alexander Selkirk was marooned there in 1704 and, like the monster in Loch Ness, he sustains the island's tourist trade. Defoe set his Crusoe story in the Atlantic off Brazil, but it does seem to bear a lot of the particulars of Selkirk's adventure. The second main island in the Juan Fernandez group is some 120 miles further from the South American coast on the same latitude as Valparaiso - its name 'Mas Afuera' means Far Out Island. It is some 33 square miles (3 x 11) and it has only ever briefly been occupied, most recently as a Penal Colony until about 100 years ago.

The problem is access. The island has no anchorage and is surrounded by precipitous cliffs which might demand a landing similar to that portrayed in the film 'Guns of Navarone'.

If Mas Afuera, over which Chile claims Sovereignty, is not designated as a protected natural environment then it certainly ought to be. Reports by a botanical expedition in the 1950s describe a very rich flora, with some 50 percent of the species 'endemic' to the island - i.e. half of all the plants there do not grow anywhere else in the world.

Descriptions are given of rhubarb trees with leaves 20 feet across, for example. I have no information about Fauna, but the island's proximity to the postulated site of ancient Lemuria (Churchward; 'Lost Continents') might spur the International Society for Crypto-zoology to mount an expedition. An excellent potential habitat for dragons, unicorns, or even some survivor like the dodo.

Apart from the 'Far Out Island' tag, there are several features about Mas Afuera which would place it high on any shortlist of potential Chaotopias. The climate is temperate, and, albeit that the mainland coast is chilled by a northward spur of the Antarctic Circumpolar Drift (or Current), Mas Afuera may be far enough out to lie within the warmer circulation of the South Pacific Current which washes the balmy shores of Easter Island and Tahiti. Nonetheless, storms in the area are cited as one of the reasons why the place wasn't even viable as a penal colony - one report says convicts were put into a long boat within sight of the island and left to get on with it. There is some possibility that the Chilean Government might have started using the island for that purpose again in recent decades, but, if so, I am unaware of it; so a Lease of Sovereignty might be negotiable, as the present government appear to have moved somewhat towards being the sort of people one could do business with.

Visions of Chaotopia

An image starts to emerge of a sovereign entity which might qualify for recognition under international law, which would be less based on some permanently fixed area of territory, than established on various Leases of Sovereignty entered into with other governments. The novel concept is that of a distributed "country" operating in different time zones.

The Individual settlements would be free to sort their own affairs out as they see fit, consistent with the notion of "Everything is Permitted"/"Do What Thou Wilt", though compliance with certain philosophical criteria might be binding on any particular territory which wished to affiliate to such a Chaotopian Federation.

The substance of my last Philos-o-Forum Lecture on 'Mathe-Magic and Money' may have indicated that it is not beyond the wit of Chaoticians to devise Mathematical models with the capability of generating sufficient flow of hard currency to finance the initial stages of such an operation; so what about the logistics?

The first stage would be a feasibility study to explore some of the raw ideas, and to put straight any misconceptions or false assumptions. This would not be prohibitively expensive, but would involve professional fees for advice on international law, and some plane tickets to exotic places. That phase of the

exercise was nearly carried out in 1989, but the cash got spunked on a motor cycle. The plan was to do an island hop across the South Pacific taking in an overflight of Mas Afuera, and stop-offs at Easter Island, Tahiti, and Vanuatu (Lan Chile fly that route from Santiago, though you have to make an excursion to take in the Cargo Cults).

A trip to St Kilda could probably be organised, but there would be little point in it unless HM government gave some indication that they might be prepared to countenance a limited transfer of sovereignty to a social/political/economic experiment of this type. There seems little chance, and in all probability some recourse to Chaos Magic would be called for to raise the odds of such an acquiescence above the zero mark; an application to build a permanent rock festival site at Stonehenge would probably bear more chance of success - unless of course the Raving Loony Party holds a balance of power after the next election.

If that eventuality occurred, a supported settlement on St Kilda would provide useful experience for a greater challenge, such as colonisation of Raoul Island or even Mas Afuera.

In the meantime I daresay that a prominent body of Chaos Magicians would be prepared to put their sound system at the disposal of anyone who fancied themselves as an incarnation of Jon Frum. There is after all the story of Fitzcarraldo, who, as I recall, navigated the Amazon on a small boat or raft, hypnotising hostile primitives along the route with 78s of Caruso on a wind-up gramophone - I have no doubt that 4000 watts of the Ozric Tentacles emanating from a suitably equipped nautical platform would attract the attention both of a cargo cult interview panel and of their chef. Potential applicants should give notification in advance of the next Chao-Masonic Ladies Night, and arrangements will be made for aptitude testing, bearing in mind the onerous responsibilities of a Living God in fertility oriented cultures.

The search for international recognition would be predicated on marketing the 'designer tax haven' concept. It is difficult for those in positions of influence in any country to take advantage of services and facilities available from a country they do not recognise, so if the services and facilities are sufficiently attractive, the answer is to recognise the country - How on Earth else do places like Liechtenstein, Monaco and the Vatican manage to qualify. If Tibet or the Kurds could offer the same sort of financial facilities, those who run other countries would take more notice of their plight - and that is a serious point.

Chaotopia is no more than a collection of raw ideas which have been bounced around for a few years. Tribute is due to one John Blankinship from Seattle who provided much of the original impetus to the search for suitable islands back in 1970. He identified the potentiality of Mas Afuera and Raoul, and also contributed the notion of being able to negotiate or buy sovereignty.

The objective in giving this talk is less to put forward any serious agenda for action than to initiate some consideration of the key factors. If anybody feels interested in trying to kick some part of the project into life by magical means or any other, I would be interested to know about it - not out of any wish to hijack the project, but because investment has already been made into key features of designer tax havens, and compatible money-market and communication systems; not to mention (for those who follow the occult gossip scene) a scheme to persuade the Egyptian Government to swap Crowley's "Stele of Revealing" for the return of the lost Sarcophagus of Mycerinus to its Pyramid at Giza.

Lastly, people who have been following my Philos-o-Forum lectures may perceive herein some convergence of what often appeared to be completely separate concepts. Chaos Maths, Chaos Physics, Chao-Ecology and Chaos Magic, then Megaliths and Crypto-zoology; - and then some frank analysis of specific techniques of Sex Magic, often said to be the most effective of occult disciplines. Most recently there was the placement in the public domain of the key elements of a money market program trading system, which could provide the cash flow to allow serious consideration of ambitious strategic projects like Chaotopia. It's a magical challenge for the 1990s, and available for anyone with the Will and the Wit to see it through, or to see through it!

Analytic Techniques for Sorcery Interventions

by Phil Hine

I sometimes think that attempting to influence a situation by sorcery is something akin to acupuncture - hit the right spot, and you will get the desired-for result. The problem is though, that the 'right spot' isn't always immediately obvious, may shift from moment to moment, and isn't likely to be the same spot the next time you try and attempt to do something similar.

There is a natural tendency for magicians, when faced with a situation which seems to merit some kind of sorcerous intervention from us, to act on our fairly immediate impulses. This can result in a situation where we end up 'rushing in' and attempting to alter the situation without knowing as much as we could about it. Since forewarned is often forearmed, I believe that using a range of analytic techniques in order to build up as complete a picture of a situation as possible, is beneficial to acts of results magic - it can mean the difference between 'firing blindly' and an aimed shot at what you want to bring about.

A few years ago, I was approached by a client and asked to attempt to magically favour an individual who was going to court on a number of charges. I was given a basic sketch of the person's situation, and asked to aim for the 'ideal' of all charges being dismissed. Feeling that somehow, I wasn't being told the full story, I asked a friend who was a shit-hot diviner, to do some tarot readings about the situation, in the hope that we might discover some 'hidden variables' in the situation. Out of my friend's readings came a good deal of information, all of which was later verified by my client, and, in my view, made the probability of all charges being 'dismissed' highly unlikely. Subsequently, I aimed for an outcome which I felt to be more reasonable, given the circumstances of the case.

What I am trying to get at here is that situations are often much more complex and less clear-cut than we often give them credit to be, particularly when we start reaching for our wands. I feel that a key to effective sorcery is not so much applying 'magic' into a situation, but at what point you apply leverage, and *how* you apply it.

A mutual friend of myself and Fra. GosaA went into a depression after the break-up of her relationship of some years standing. She stopped going out and seemed to us to have lost much of her self-confidence. We thought it would be beneficial for her to have some new, interesting people in her life, and decided to enchant for this outcome. If someone isn't going out socialising, the likelihood of them meeting 'interesting people' is going to be very slim. Also, if they are feeling emotionally vulnerable and lacking self-confidence, they are unlikely to make the best of any opportunities to make a good impression. So we made our first priority a progressive spell which 'tickled' our target's self-esteem and once a particular level of self-esteem had been developed, the spell began to work in other directions, unfolding into several different variables of the situation at once.

1. USING DIVINATION TECHNIQUES

Divination systems can be extremely useful when preparing to intervene/influence a situation by means on an act of sorcery. The areas where their use is particularly worth considering are:

a) One's own Self-Motivation

It can be very useful to examine one's own motivations to intervene, particularly if other people are involved in the situation - if you're working on behalf of someone, for example. I've occasionally found out, by questioning my own perspective of a situation, through a series of divinations, that my desired-for-outcome has in actuality, blinded me to alternative possibilities - both in terms of what particular approach I was taking to the situation, and over the question of whether it was appropriate for me to get involved in the first place. I remember once receiving an anquished call from an ex-partner who claimed to have received a 'runic curse' through the post from another ex-partner. Being fully immersed in using the Goetia of Solomon at the time, I fired off a batch of demons in the direction of the supposed source of the runic-curse, without stopping to consider the situation in more depth. Of course it turned out that the facts of the situation were not exactly in accord with what I'd been told and the conclusions which I'd leapt to!

b) The Situation/Event

There are numerous ways which divination can expand your information concerning a situation. You can, for instance, use the tarot to scan for 'hidden aspects' and then do subsequent readings on what is turned up.

You can discover how different aspects of a situation sometimes relate in non-obvious ways, and also what the probable outcomes of the situation are likely to be in different scenarios. If you're feeling particularly brave you could always ask if your magical intervention is likely to influence the outcome favourably.

c) Personality Profiling

If you have only minimal details about key individuals involved in a situation, you can build up a 'personality profile' using divination systems (natal astrology may well be useful here), which can be used to make projections about an individual's behaviour, attitudes, etc. This kind of profiling may come in very useful if you are probing for psychological weak spots.

2. OTHER DIRECTLY 'MAGICAL' APPROACHES

Apart from Divination systems such as Tarot, Runes or I Ching, there are other magical techniques which can become sources of analytic discrimination.

Intuition

I have found, over the years, that my sense of Intuition is fairly highly developed, and that I discount it at my peril. However, over-reliance upon one's intuition can be perilous in itself. Having an intuitive feeling about a situation shouldn't become a barrier to considering other perspectives and possibilities. Also, (and like much else of magical practice, this is a personal thing), I like to be able to work out (sometimes with a little bit of hindsight) the 'reason' for the explanation. Your intuition can be trained to work more effectively for you and stepping back from a situation and examining it dispassionately (rather than remaining entangled in it) can be a good start here.

Oracles

You can seek oracles in many forms - from metaprogramming your dreams using sigils or servitors, to speaking with Spirits in vision, or questioning an entity astrally or through a human agent. For example, Wade Davis gives the example of a Haitian sorceress obtaining guidance in using the appropriate herbs for a healing working via possession by the appropriate loa. I have (admittedly, only rarely) been given 'clues' on how I might conduct a particular working from a spirit familiar, but I wouldn't like to rely solely on such a source.

3. S.W.O.T ANALYSIS

The SWOT acronym stands for:

STRENGTHS, WEAKNESSES, OPPORTUNITIES, THREATS

It can be useful to analyse a situation in terms of these 4 points.

Strengths

Here, you look at the Strengths of your position *viz* the outcome - anything present in the situation which will help in manifesting your 'Mission Statement.'

Information you can particularly focus on here includes anything you know/can infer etc about the emotions/behaviours/attitudes of any individuals involved, how timescales may play a role in the situation (i.e. will leaving the situation alone for a month be more effective than working immediately?), how tangential events on the fringe of the situation might be helpful.

Another point to consider is that, given your Mission Statement, what pathways are available for the outcome to manifest along? If you are about to bring about the collapse of a multi-national corporation which is very interested in turning your local sacred site into a car-park, have you pin-pointed possible weak areas in its structures which, if slightly 'tipped', could escalate into its' downfall? Or, on another scale, if you're enchanting to meet the boy/girl/penguin of your dreams, are you doing anything to enable such a paragon to walk out of your dreams and into your life?

Weaknesses

Under Weaknesses, you should consider anything which 'weakens' the likelihood of the outcome you are working for, coming about. This is a good point to maybe examine your desired-for result and consider

whether you may be setting your sights too high, if only initially. Is for example, the *scale* of what you're attempting too large? Is it unfeasible to expect an instant outcome, when the constraints of the situation tend to point in the direction of a slowly progressive outcome? Is it perhaps unreasonable to try and influence another person in a way that is widely at variance with what you know about their personality? It may well be the case that the way you have defined your Mission Statement is in itself a weakness.

Opportunities

Under Opportunities, consider any strategies which can help you fine-tune the enchantment or open an 'opportunity window' for you. Is the target of your displeasure about to go into hospital for a 'minor operation'; is the person you're magically assisting to detox from heroin about to go into a clinic?; Do you have a material link to the person you're trying to heal or a photograph which might help other people help you in your attempt?

Threats

Here, you consider what possible consequences there might be if your spell goes awry. Also, what might happen if there is a sudden change in the situation which you haven't previously bargained for. You may well find that only very occasionally can you conceive of any possible 'Threat' scenarios, but it does have some bearing for example, on malefic magics. I knew of one magician who seriously considered a death-curse on a relative, but who backed out when he was told that "a quick car-crash" wasn't very likely, but that terminal cancer, given the targets' medical history, was much more likely to yield a successful outcome. The 'Threat' here, was that the sorcerer realised that he could not live with the consequences of giving a relative terminal cancer!

CONCLUSIONS

Whatever techniques you use to 'flesh out' your knowledge of a situation - in order to 'zero in' on a particular point of influence (or several, for that matter) - you may well find that your Mission Statement changes considerably in the light of what you find out. I do find generally, that intelligence-gathering is always useful and that there are comparatively few situations which can't wait a day or so whilst I look into them from different angles. Asking people their advice is sometimes useful, as is playing 'devil's advocate' to yourself, if there is no one else who can do it for you. I have noticed that there is a tendency amongst occultists (as much as anyone else) to fall into a very black/white viewpoint of a situation in which they 'know best' (because they are a magician, of course). It's a common human tendency to simplify everyone else's situation other than our own, so I feel it is particularly important to approach every potential sorcery intervention as a complex, unique situation. After all, if someone out there was poised to start magically re-arranging *your* lifestyle for you, you'd want them to get it right, wouldn't you?

SUMMARY POINTS

- Think Before You Enchant!
- Ask Questions
- Gather Intelligence
- Analyse the situation from different angles/perspectives
- Reformulate your Mission Statement if necessary
- Seek Clarity
- Then Act.

Notes

It is also worth bearing in mind how a situation can dictate or indicate the particular nature of a sorcery intervention (i.e. does one use a simple sigil or involve a god in the proceedings) - but I feel this is a discussion for another time.

Balance in the ecosphere - a perspective

by Paul Maiteny

This essay began as a keynote presentation to the *Spirit of Learning* Forum and was then developed for a millennium seminar on the theme of Integration between science, religion and the arts. This is the third version of it.

I start this essay with the observation that humans beings are living beings and are therefore, part and parcel of the ecosphere. Unlike other organisms, at least so far as we know, we have a greater capacity for choice and a wider range of choices we can make.

Our place and role within the ecosphere is therefore less determined than that of other organisms. We have more freedom. This freedom arises from the experience of separateness, symbolised by the Fall, and our capacity to construct or represent our experience of ourselves, the world and our relations in multivarious ways - even to the extent of imagining ourselves separate from the ecological processes that support us, and immune from its deterioration, for which we are the greatest culprits. For the sake of completeness, human behaviour, its impact on our ecological (and social) 'life-support systems', and the cultural and psychological factors underlying that behaviour should all be included within the scope of human ecology. Human behaviour and our place and role in the ecosphere cannot be reduced to the biological level from which we have emerged, still less predicted by understanding our biology alone. This essay seeks to point out certain aspects of human ecology that are frequently neglected but that have profound effects on ourselves and our world. It also hints at the significance of 'spiritual experience' and religious belief in achieving ecological sustainability - that is, a world that can continue to support human well-being. The word 'ecology' derives from the Greek *oikos* meaning 'household'. So does 'economics'. Ecology is the study of the relationships that interlink all members of this 'Earth Household' (Capra, 1996) - plants, animals, humans and their surroundings - as one integrated system. Accordingly, economics should have something to do with the effective management of this 'global household'.

Everything human, everything we do, has an influence on the ecological (eco-) sphere and is therefore part of it. This includes all human faculties, capacities, knowledge, behaviour and impacts. The internal experiential, psychological and cultural dimensions of human beings are as much a part of the ecosphere - and of human ecology - as the external effects that they generate. To split ourselves off repeats errors that have led to current excesses and imbalances. No, the real challenge is to understand how humans, in all their complexity, fit into the overall scheme of things.

This is emphatically not to say, as do some responses to human-induced ecological damage, that humanity is some sort of aberration on the face of a deified Earth. This is a perspective that side-steps the really tough work involved in human responsibility. It is, instead, to challenge human beings to square the circle - to make the most of their capacity for self-awareness by working out how to become the most conscious part of the ecosphere in a way that integrates with the rest of it rather than damages it to the point where it can no longer sustain us. Questions of human development and meaningfulness are keys to such an approach which implies integration of external and internal aspects of humanity.

External actions, and their effects, are projections of our inner worlds and inner ecology - of our relationships with ourselves and others. Our inner ecology includes everything that goes on inside our psyches and cultures - intellectual and emotional; conscious and unconscious; psychological and spiritual; intentional and instinctive. It includes our experiences, whatever makes them and our lives meaningful, and the effects of expressing and projecting our meanings and priorities onto others. (For an elegant articulation of the necessary inner, outer, individual and collective dimensions of any human system, see Wilber [1996]. It is, in turn based on Koestler's [1978] observation that reality is composed of interrelated 'holons'). No person is an island, sufficient solely unto themselves. We are nothing without relationship of many kinds. We depend on relationships - with other people, environment, the universe and more. We depend on the maps and symbols, myths and interpretative frameworks, languages and paradigms - that people before us, and before them, have painstakingly developed. This is the collective inner world, the world of culture. Without interpretative maps for our inner experience we would not be able to make sense of anything. There would be no meaningful experience. Problems arise, however, when we come to believe that these frameworks are identical to that which they represent. When they become 'second nature' - habits of

thought. It is risky because there is no guarantee that our second nature representations will be inclusive enough to help us sustain ecological 'first nature', on which we also depend, in a healthy state. They might neglect to take account of something crucial and set us on a path to, for example, ecological degradation. The more I have studied ecological and social problems in society, the more convinced I have become of the urgency of learning about the relationship in our lives between outer - ecological and social worlds - and our inner - personal and collective - worlds of motivation, meaning and value in order to move towards human sustainability, well-being and development. We depend on both; the first, physically, and the second, emotionally, psychologically and spiritually.

There is no escaping the fact that humans are biological beings that have evolved, or co-evolved, in a collective ecological and social context. All our capacities - from basic instinct to self-conscious awareness, learning, religious experience and our ability to construct complex symbols to make sense of experience - all these have emerged out of millions of years of ecological and cosmic processes.

Paradoxically, these very same capacities have the potential to undermine the processes and systems from which they have emerged and on which they continue to depend for existence and further development. This may be why differentiated, human consciousness is described mythologically as 'fallen' consciousness. Evolution struck a new octave with the self-conscious human species and its profound experience of separateness. With humans, conscious choice became a medium or instrument of evolution to a greater degree than ever before. And choice is based, above all, on meanings, values, stories and mythologies. These shape how we use and respond to our knowledge and experience.

Many 'stories' that people used to find helpful in making sense of their lives have become taboo in our culture. They have been delegitimised. Many scientific 'stories', for example, have little place for subjective experience - and, therefore, for meaningfulness and belief in human life. Certain religious beliefs and spiritual experience have been forbidden by politico-religious authorities that have insisted on grossly literalist readings of their own mythologies. Alongside science and materialism, religion has to take a share of responsibility for the deterioration of meaning in our society.

This situation, however, says more about prevailing interests and assumptions of science and of political religion than it does about the validity of experience. Facts and scientific findings never speak for themselves. They are made meaningful through framing and interpretation. The stories that science uses for this are often stories of denial - for example, that science does not need mythologies or worldviews; that it is not based on belief at all; or that it is value-free and neutral. This is true only if we limit our definition of science to that of a method for discovering facts and give another name to interpretations and applications of these facts.

The *meaning* of scientific activity comes through beliefs and interests on which the latter frequently depends - economic, commercial and consumerist, for example. But these, once again, are aspects of the inner ecology of humans - motivations that are then expressed outwardly. We cannot get away from the inner. We certainly cannot find satisfaction outside ourselves. It is an inner experience and the motivating force for discovery and science. Ask yourself - what are you driven by?

That society is riven with anxiety as people seek, but often cannot find, satisfactory meaning and value in their lives demonstrates the impoverishment of culturally 'legitimate' forms of meaning-making. Yet questions of meaningfulness and how it arises are not adequately addressed in the human and social sciences. The facts of physical and natural science do not 'speak for themselves'. Understanding requires that we look at how we make sense of them and why?

Bruce Reed (1978 and 1996), founder and co-director of the Grubb Institute of Behavioural Studies in London, describes the incessant yearning for satisfaction in human beings as an experience of 'in-needness'. In-needness is a biologically rooted impulse that humans share with other animals. It impels us all into action. All animals seek the essentials of life - food, water, air, shelter, relations with others of their kind. Squirrels, as far as we know, seek to fulfil squirrel needs. They are driven by their instinctive 'desire' for survival and reproduction. Humans share this same instinct. But we have a far wider range of objects through which we can seek to satisfy our desire. We even create our own. We cannot experience - and therefore cannot know - what the squirrel equivalent of emotional, intellectual or spiritual satisfaction might mean. But we do seem to know that human 'in-needness' cannot be satisfied by biological, social or

economic means alone. Try as we might to find fulfilment - a sense of completeness or wholeness - through consuming goods, services, philosophies outside ourselves, that sense of lack just keeps coming back. Yet the consumerist mythology (way of making sense) keeps encouraging us to seek it there. This presents big problems for balance in the ecosphere, at least so far as its capacity to sustain humans is concerned. (A more in-depth version of this argument is available in Maiteny and Reed, 1998 and Maiteny, 2000).

We humans have the capacity to create ever more elaborate products and services. We believe in their (our) promise that they will eventually satisfy our desire once and for all. Yet, elusively, they never do. As the psychoanalyst, Jacques Lacan, pointed out, no sooner do we possess our fantastical object of desire than the fantasy dissipates and it becomes an ordinary object again. The spell is broken, and desire passes on to a new object.

Those master conjurers - marketers - know that no product will ever satisfy in-needness. They even have a word for it - goods 'satisfice'. They never ultimately satisfy. The conviction that they will, however, drives consumerism and, therefore, resource depletion, pollution, extinction and the general assault on life-support systems. It is incredibly seductive and can take subtle, even pseudo-spiritual or, as Trungpa (1973) once described it, 'spiritually materialistic' forms.

It is our desires, not the objects created to 'satisfice' them, that are inflicting such massive damage on our life-support systems. Such a paradox would be funny if it were not so tragic. In most of the natural world, consumption and competitiveness are necessary to the survival of individuals. The same drive in the human, culturally mediated and technologically sophisticated, world is leading us to collective destruction. This is the drive - arguably, quite natural - that is directing so much of our activity today. We are applying our ingenuity and learning - unique in the universe so far as we know - overwhelmingly to the creation of new 'satisficing' products. What a waste!

The paradox that a biologically rooted drive is undermining its own biological roots is poignantly summarised in the conclusion to a BBC TV documentary, 'Prisoners of the Sun' (BBC/Helton, 1992): The Prison of the Sun created diversity. Every inmate's instinctive impulse to grow created diversity. But, when one creature discovered 'alien energy' (ie. fossil fuels) and overwhelmed all the others, growth, for the first time, began to threaten diversity. And even though we can see what's happening and understand it, our populations and economics keep growing anyway. And we call growth Good. We blindly follow the same path an antelope or hyena follows. Even the most powerful of the other animals have limits. But we don't, and that's why we're a threat to everything else. There is a solution, and it's simple and obvious. We have to impose limits of our own. We have to cut back on energy - choose to slow down., stop growing. Stop growing? This is a shocking suggestion. Ask anyone. The idea's unthinkable. But why? Are our natural instincts just too strong?

It may seem odd to suggest that something biological in us - our impulse for growth - is undermining us ecologically. And that sustainability depends on developing our cultural, psychological and, I maintain, spiritual, capacities (also naturally endowed, remember) to override other damaging aspects of our nature. Nevertheless, this is what I am saying. And this implies finding, making and choosing to take different routes to satisfying the impulse of in-needness. To help us map out such routes, we need to find, or make, and choose to use different guiding mythologies that make sense of our experience in ways that we find satisfying.

The materialist-consumerist mythology is not up to the challenge. Though driven by betterment and improvement, it has brought us imbalance, fragmentation and unsustainability. This worldview is only one possible mythology, or cultural construction, amongst many by which humans can make sense of their world, their place within it, and seek to satisfy their in-needness. They are all generated from within our psyches and cultures. We have shown ourselves, stimulated by the 'material growth mythology', how productive and polluting we can be outwardly. We also know that this does not bring sustainable satisfaction of desire or meaningfulness. Sustainable human development and evolution requires more exploration of those inner worlds that bring the outer world to realisation in their own image. As the alchemists used to say, 'as above, so below, but of a different manner'.

If we reduce the extent to which we seek to answer in-needness through 'material phantoms' and look for it more through inward exploration, the inevitable knock-on effect is to reduce the pressure on ecological

systems. This, of course, is not a popular idea in the worlds of finance and American Dreams as it has difficult implications for the accumulation and circulation of capital and the growth of the global economy. But increasing numbers of people are starting to have an inkling that meaning and purpose come from elsewhere.

The 'inner', mystical teachings of all religious traditions and their practitioners describe, for example, the meaningfulness of something as abstract as experiencing connectedness and unity. Difficult to market as a product, this one, though there are many that try, thereby inescapably repeating the error of externalism. You cannot give a meaningful experience to someone else. But when connectedness is experienced, the understanding tends to follow that individual survival is impossible without collective survival and ecological integrity - and that humans are (have to be?) the conscious aspect of that integrity. Intellectual discrimination and emotional appreciation are necessary but not sufficient to such awareness. For kabbalists - and many other traditions would agree though describing it differently - the purpose of human life is to help the Divine impulse to know itself by becoming the Mirror in which it sees a reflection of, and comes to know, Itself. 'God wished to behold God' (Halevi, 1979) and therefore had to create a being that had the capacity to become conscious of God, and of crafting itself to become the vehicle through which this could be expressed. By working to understand what it might mean to be 'made in the image of God', we come closer to bringing into realisation the Divine impulse on Earth through work at individual and collective levels. The 'Kingdom of God' may well be within you to discover. But only to the extent that it is discovered, then expressed or realised through outward action, can the Kingdom of God on Earth be constructed or, as the kabbalists put it, can human beings 'Return'. Once created with the capacity for choice and responsibility, human beings enter into a sort of partnership with God.

The 'deterioration', the 'degradation' of the Creation has been provoked by humanity, but also its 'reparation', its 'restoration' will be worked by humanity. Conducted by *humanity*, Israel, the Creation will 'return' to the Source, and it will become possible to contemplate it in its transparency. The process of 'reparation', of 'restoration' of the world is - according to the Kabbalah - a process of *Berur*, of 'clarification', carried out by humans and humanity. When this 'clarification' has been realized, 'the glory of God will be revealed and 'His Kingdom will be established'. Then a perfect unity will manifest: between soul and body (between the *Orot*, the 'lights', and the *Kelim*, the 'vehicles'); between the 'hidden' and the 'revealed'; between the 'interior' and the 'exterior'; between the fantastical and the rational; between the poetic and the scientific; between the imaginary and the real. (Safran, 1990, p. 96, translated from Italian, my emphasis).

This is an enormous responsibility. As the teachings of the Hebrew Bible, the Talmud, the Midrashim and the Kabbalistic schools agree:

...*devekut* does not entail the annihilation of human beings in God... It is never seen as a *mystical union*, as a state of perfect union with God, as the union of the soul with the infinite Being... Those who have entered into *Devekut* must not remain in stasis: they must distance themselves from the personal, immanent God, that is also the transcendent God. Then, transcendence calls them to action, action that is, above all, ethical. In this way the experience of *Devekut* impels persons to act...in this world, carrying God inside themselves, in their souls. (Ibid., p. 21, translated from Italian, my emphasis).

Devekut, therefore, does not consist of a 'dissolution' of humans in God, in another world. On the contrary, it reinforces *the human vocation in this world*, 'in front of God and in front of humans'. (Ibid., p. 195 (translated from Italian, my emphasis).

This is the work and opportunity that the human quality of self-awareness offers. For thousands of years, it has been the primary human challenge. Many writers have sought to assist in furthering and describing it in various ways - for example, Meister Eckhart in his paradoxical 'formula' of 'going out yet remaining within' (Smith, 1987), and contemporary '*Oscillation Theory*' (Reed, 1978; 1996; Maiteny and Reed, 1998).

The 'gift' of self-awareness - of separateness - also allows us not to use it in this way, and it is by no means inevitable that we will choose to do so. To have the capacity for self-awareness and choice also means we can choose to create 'false gods' in our own narcissistic images. Self-aware beings necessarily have freedom of choice and there is nothing, other than ourselves, to prevent us from fouling our own house, or undermining nature's 'ability' to sustain us - inwardly and outwardly - in pursuit of our desires.

Ultimately, the choice is this: to be a vessel or channel for the evolutionary working out of Creation; to work out what it might mean to be the conscious 'expressers' of this Impulse. Or, to pursue the same drive for satisfaction by creating for ourselves a world of contradiction where we worship idols that we have

created in our own ego-, and anthropo-, centric images, thus indirectly worshipping ourselves as gods 'outside ourselves' and separate from the rest of reality.

I end with a view of the human context, responsibility and potential from the biologist and humanist, Sir Julian Huxley:

As a result of a thousand years of evolution, the universe is becoming conscious of itself, able to understand something of its past history and its possible future. This cosmic self-awareness is being realized in one tiny fragment of the universe - in a few of us human beings. Perhaps it has been realized elsewhere too, through the evolution of conscious living creatures on the planets of other stars. But on this, our planet, it has never happened before...It is thus part of human destiny to be the necessary agent of the cosmos in understanding more of itself, in bearing witness to its wonder, beauty, and interest... Neither earth nor cosmos will grieve if we cannot rise to this challenge. They would continue to develop where they left off before we humans came along. As a species, however, we would have failed to fulfil our potential - of making the conscious evolutionary transformation of which we are capable, and of establishing ourselves as the conscious aspect of balance in the ecosphere.

References

- British Broadcasting Corporation/D. Helton, *Prisoners of the Sun* (part 3), London, BBC, 1992.
Z. ben Halevi, *Kabbalah: Tradition of Hidden Knowledge*, London, Thames and Hudson, 1979.
F. Capra, *The Web of Life: a New Synthesis of Mind and Matter*, London: Harper Collins, 1996.
J. Huxley, *New Bottles for New Wine*, London: Harper and Row, 1957 (quoted in C. Barlow, *Evolution Extended: Biological Debates on the Meaning of Life*, MIT, 1994).
A. Koestler, *Janus: A Summing Up*, London: Hutchinson, 1978.
P. T. Maiteny, The Psychodynamics of Meaning and Action for a Sustainable Future, *Futures Journal*, Vol. 32 (special issue on Sustainable Futures), 2000, in press.
P. T. Maiteny and B. D. Reed, *Oscillation: a Meaning and Values-centred Approach to the Sustainability of Human Systems*, Paper at the International Sociological Association's XIV World Congress, 'Social Knowledge: Heritage, Challenges, Perspectives', Sociocybernetics section, Montreal, 26 July 1998.
B. D. Reed, *The Dynamics of Religion*, London, Darton, Longman and Todd, 1978.
B. D. Reed, *The Psychodynamics of Life and Worship*, London, Grubb Institute, 1996.
Rabbi A. Safran, *Saggezza della Kabbalah* (original title: *Sagesse de la Kabbale*), Milan, Arnoldo Mondadori, 1990.
C. Smith OSB, *The Way of Paradox: spiritual life as taught by Meister Eckhart*, London, Darton, Longman and Todd, 1987.
C. Trungpa, *Cutting Through Spiritual Materialism*, Boulder, CO., USA, Shambala, 1973.
K. Wilber, *A Brief History of Everything*, Dublin, Gill and Macmillan, 1996.

Biography

Paul Maiteny is a consultant, educator and researcher on human ecology and development emphasising the inter-relatedness of psychological, organisational, societal and ecological sustainability. He likes to explore a particular contradiction: how and why so many individuals and collectives in the world dedicate so much of their energy to behaviour that brings short-term survival, kicks or ego-booster and simultaneously undermines the capacity of systems that they depend on to continuing supporting them. Individual 'development' that weakens collective survival is a contradiction in terms because killing your context is ultimately suicidal. He is interested in the strange, yet apparently natural, convolutions of meaning, value and priority that underlie such behaviour and wonders how people learn their way out of such a predicament. He has worked as research fellow and tutor at universities, and as a countryside ranger.
Paul.Maiteny@clara.co.uk

Black magic and the left-hand path

by Phil Hine

The supposed existence of 'black magic' is one of the more glamorous aspects of modern occultism, as the very idea acts as a psychological dark mirror - a breeding ground for individual's fantasies about the forbidden, mysterious, and the taboo. That which is not understood, is rejected or threatens one's own beliefs can be labelled 'black magic'. Some occultists even appear to need the idea of the existence of black magic and 'black magicians' to bolster their own self-image, in the way that some extreme Christians need to believe in the existence of a world-wide satanic conspiracy - which justifies their own beliefs and actions. The idea of the existence of 'black magicians' supports the reality of those who would call themselves 'white magicians'. Underlying this belief is the dualism of 'goodies' and 'baddies' familiar from cowboy films - the good guys wearing white and the bad guys wearing black - that some people only do good in their lives, whilst some people dedicate themselves entirely to evil. This is a rather narrow view of looking at the world. The idea of 'black magic' also implies that there are some magical methods which are inherently bad, and if one employs them, one is therefore, a 'black magician'.

Like many other aspects of occultism, what is termed to be 'black magic' depends very much on who is doing the defining. For example, a Christian might argue that whatever pagans and magicians might say, all magical practices are 'black'. It is more common however, for those who expound the reality of 'black magic' to define it in terms of that which they disapprove of. For example Gareth Knight, in his book *A Practical Guide to Qabalistic Symbolism* (1976) states unequivocally that:

"Homosexuality, like the use of drugs, is one of the techniques of black magic."

So by implication, anyone who happens to be homosexual is a 'black magician'!

In my own experience, I have found it to be very much the case that those who accuse others of being 'black magicians' are actually expressing their disapproval of something that person has done, or has been rumoured to have done. Accusing someone of being a 'black magician' is, in some sections of the occult subculture, similar to accusing someone of being a 'Communist' in 1950's America. A case in point - a person I knew slightly once approached me to help him with a 'magical battle' against a 'black magician' who had lured his girlfriend away from him using 'dark forces'. I looked into the matter for myself and discovered another angle on the story — that the lady in question had grown sick of this 'white magician's' pompous posturing, and quit him for another, who was more charming, & less concerned with saving the universe and crossing the abyss before breakfast. Naturally though, the white magician's ego couldn't accept anything so 'normal' and commonplace, so the whole thing became, for that person, a magical battle between the forces of good and evil. What is also interesting here is that the 'white magician' approached me with a view to help him win back his girlfriend through magical means - something which one might consider to be ethically questionable. But in this case, he felt justified because of course, he was the 'good guy' in this scenario.

Those who feel themselves to be the 'good guys' in a fight are often more dangerous than their supposed 'enemies' - as any means justifies the noble end of wiping out the bad guys. Pro-life campaigners feel justified in fire-bombing abortion clinics, white supremacists leave nail bombs in busy London streets, and, by extension, occultists who believe in 'black magicians' tend to feel no qualms about using magical methods to 'do battle' with them. Again, in my experience, this 'battle' may be somewhat one-sided. Over the years I have met several occultists who confidently (and rather proudly, it seemed) asserted that they were constantly doing battle with any amount of 'black adepts', 'satanic covens' and the like, but were curiously unable to name their foes or even say where they lived! One memorable example of this one-sided war involves a rather large magical organisation. Two friends of mine were running an occult mail-order business entitled 'SOL'. Apparently, this rather upset some members of the organisation whose grand title could be compressed into the acronym S.O.L., and they began writing letters of complaint to the various magazines in which my friends were advertising their business. Another friend who was a member of this organisation told me that he had been told that the mail-order business was a front for a 'black magic' group calling themselves the "Servants of the Outer Light" and that members should do all they could to defend the parent order against this 'black lodge'. Needless to say, the people running the mail-order company were somewhat bemused by all this, and, to my knowledge, did not suffer any awful calamities as a result of being targeted by the magical order, who were of course, the good guys.

There is for some occultists, an undeniable romanticism about becoming involved in this kind of thing. In part, this is due to popular occult fiction, particularly classics such as Dennis Wheatley's *The Devil Rides Out* and the works of the Edwardian occultist, Dion Fortune. In Fortune's fiction, the "Great White Brotherhood" - a body of adepts, working selflessly for the greater good of humanity, is arrayed against the various "Black Lodges" - fraternities of dubious individuals who dabble in politics, blackmail, cause large sums of money to flow towards them in unusual ways, and doubtless use Gareth Knight's techniques of 'black magic' - homosexuality and drugs. They are portrayed in Fortune's novels as being rather bohemian and decadent, as opposed to the austere, conservative, white adepts. Equally, there is a certain glamour for some occultists around declaring oneself to be a 'black magician' or 'satanic adept'. If a label has a significant taboo or shock value attached to it, then some individuals are going to be attracted to trying it on themselves.

Chaos Magick by Ray Sherwin

Chaos Magic has its roots in every occult tradition and in the work of many individuals. If any one person can be said to have been responsible, albeit unintentionally, for the present climate of opinion that person would be Austin Osman Spare, whose magical system was based entirely on his image of himself and upon an egocentric model of the universe. He did not intend that the system he devised for his own use should be used by others since it was clear to him that no two individuals could benefit from the same system. Nor did he fall into the trap of presuming that the information revealed to or by him was pertinent to all mankind as all the messiahs did. Aleister Crowley came to look upon him as a 'black brother' purely because he refused to accept Crowley's Law of Thelema, preferring instead to work beyond dogmas and rules, relying on intuition and information uprooted from the depths of self.

The most recent public expression of Chaos Magick has been through the work of the Illuminates of Thanateros, an order which Pete Carroll and I initiated in 1978. Our aim at that time was to inspire rather than lead magicians interested in the Chaos concept by publishing ideas of a practical nature. Our approach differed to Spare's only inasmuch as we were interested in group as well as solo magick. The response to our writings was much greater than we anticipated and by 1982 there were groups working in England, Australia, America, Egypt and Germany as well as allied groups such as the 'Circle of Chaos' and many individuals working alone.

The difficulties of running such an order soon became apparent. What seemed simple to us, both in concept and technique, was not simple to people who had not suffered the bizarre and arbitrary intricacies of what is now referred to as 'traditional magick'. This put us in an awkward position because it meant that a magical concept which, by our own definition, could not be taught now needed to be taught. Both Pete and I held guruship and hierarchy as anathema yet now we were being expected not only to teach but also to lead. It has been said that all systems of magick have the same end result. I doubt that this is true because so many systems restrict their practitioners within such narrow parameters of dogma and morality (even if there is no priesthood as such) that instinct and imagination are stifled by rules and doctrines. A path cannot be chosen sensibly until all paths have been examined for comparison and to restrict oneself to one path would, in any case, limit one's experience and modes of thinking.

A solution was eventually found to the problem of how to reach that which could not be taught. No rules or instructions were ever given, only suggestions. No mention was made of notions best left for the individual to decide such as reincarnation and the existence or nature of god. Ideas of that nature have little bearing on the performance of practical magick anyway, and individuals practising the techniques rapidly came to their own conclusions. We knew that we were on the right track when we came to collating the information sent to us by individuals and groups. Without exception everyone who sent results to us considered the techniques they had used to be extremely potent but - and this was the important thing - they had all come to different conclusions on matters of philosophy. That they had come to such varying conclusions and still wanted to remain within the loose organisation structure we had set up was more encouraging than anything else.

To detail the methods of Chaos Magick would be spurious since they are adequately dealt with in available publications. It would be useful however, to point out a popular misconception which has been

unintentionally fostered by people writing in specialist magazines. There has been some confusion about the word 'chaos', some writers believing the word to have been used in this context to express the techniques themselves. Nothing could be further from the truth. Whilst it is correct that some modes of gnosis are effective because they confuse the ratio-cinative functions they ultimately lead to clarity and magicians involved in the Chaos current tend to be meticulous in the way they organise their programme of work. This is a legacy inherited from the '93 system'. We formulated the term 'Chaos Magick' to indicate the randomness of the universe and the individual's relationship with it. The antithesis of chaos, cosmos, is the universe suitably defined by the successful magician for his own purposes and that definition is under constant scrutiny and may be regularly changed. Chaos is expressive of this philosophy and reinforces the idea that there is no permanent model for the individual's relationship with everything that he is not. The word encompasses not only those things we know to be true but also what we suspect may be true as well as the world of impressions, paranoias and possibilities.

If there were anything such as a Chaos Credo it would run on the following lines: I do not believe in anything. I know what I know (gnosis) and I postulate theories which may or may not enter my system of adopted beliefs when those theories have been tested. There are no gods or demons, except for those I have been conditioned into acknowledging and those I have created for myself. I create and destroy beliefs according to their usefulness. In the words of the wise "nothing is true, everything is permitted" - provided it interferes with no-one.

At the group level obviously a consensus of some sort must be reached. I use the word consensus advisedly because other descriptions such as 'shared reality' would be quite misleading since no notion beyond the concrete can be shared. It can, at best, be appreciated. Guidance in technique is always useful but reliance on books, even books on Chaos Magick, is best kept to a minimum in favour of working by instinct. Group workings usually fall into four categories - experimental, initiatory, repeated ritual and celebratory (for which several groups may come together) although by no means all groups include all four categories in their repertoire. More important for a group working any sort of magick is to build and maintain an atmosphere which excites and inspires the imagination. The groups already in existence have, to a large extent, moved away from the idea prevailing in the seventies that theatrical trappings are not necessary. They tend to use any device which will contribute to the magical atmosphere they wish to create. The traditional magical weapons are sometimes used but, more often than not, quite new weapons peculiar to each group are made. Masks and robes are effective and, therefore, widely used although nudity is not frowned upon (See the 'Cardinal Rites of Chaos').

As far as experimental magick is concerned, sigilisation has been the most widely researched subject, but telekinesis, ESP and telepathy as well as many methods of raising power have been looked into in varying degrees of detail.

Chaos Magick is not looking for converts but anyone who is already inclined towards magical adventure and who is prepared to break new ground would be warmly accepted by the existing groups.

THE CYCLES OF CHAOS: DECONSTRUCTING INITIATION

by Kalkinath & Vishvanath

CONTENTS

- [Initiatory sickness](#)
- [Dark Night of the Soul](#)
- [Macro & Micro-Initiations](#)
- [Getting the fear](#)
- [Relax into fear](#)
- [Loosening up](#)
- [The Chaos of complexity](#)

There appears to be some misunderstanding over what exactly the term 'initiation' means. Occasionally one bumps into people on the scene who term themselves as 'initiates' and seem to consider themselves somehow 'above' the rest of humanity. Particularly irritating are the self-styled 'initiates' who let drop teasing bits of obscure information and then refuse to explain any further because their audience are not 'initiates'. The term itself seems to crop up in a wide variety of contexts - people speak of being 'initiated' into groups, onto a particular path, or of initiating themselves. Some hold that 'initiation' is only valid if the person who confers it is part of a genuine tradition, others that it doesn't matter either way.

Dictionary definitions of initiation allude to the act of beginning, or of setting in motion, or entry into something. One way to explain initiation is to say that it is a threshold of change which we may experience at different times in our lives, as we grow and develop. The key to initiation is recognising that we have reached such a turning point, and are aware of being in a period of transition between our past and our future. The conscious awareness of entering a transitional state allows us to perhaps, discard behavioural/emotional patterns which will be no longer valid for the 'new' circumstances, and consciously take up new ones.

What magical books often fail to emphasise is that initiation is a process. It doesn't just happen once, but can occur many times throughout an individual's life, and that it has peaks (initiatory crises), troughs (black depression or the 'dark night of the soul') and plateaus (where nothing much seems to be going on). becoming aware of your own cycles of change, and how to weather them, is a core part of any developmental process or approach to magical practice.

In 'shamanic' societies the first stage of the initiation process is often marked by a period of personal crises and a 'call' towards starting the shamanic journey. Apart from youthful rebellion, most of us are quite happy to remain within the conceptual and philosophical boundaries of 'Consensus Reality' (the everyday world). For an individual beginning on the initiatory journey, the crisis may come as a powerful vision, dreams, or a deep (and often disturbing) feeling to find out what is beyond the limits of normal life. It can often come as a result of a powerful spiritual, religious or political experience, or as a growing existential discontent with life. Our sense of being a stable self is reinforced by the "walls" of the social world in which we participate - yet our sense of uniqueness resides in the cracks of those same walls. Initiation is a process which takes us "over the wall" into the unexplored territories of the possibilities which we have only half-glimpsed.

This first crisis is often an unpleasant experience, as we begin to question and become dissatisfied with all that we have previously held dear - work, relationships, ethical values, family life can all be disrupted as the individual becomes increasingly consumed by the desire to 'journey'. The internal summons may be consciously quashed or resisted, and it is not unknown for individuals in tribal societies to refuse 'the call' to shamanic training - no small thing, as it may lead to further crises and even death.

One very common experience of people who feel the summons in our society is an overpowering sense of urgency to either become 'enlightened' or to change the world in accordance with emerging visions. This can lead to people becoming 'addicted' to spiritual paths, wherein the energy that may have been formerly channeled into work or relationships is directed towards taking up spiritual practices and becoming immersed in 'spiritual' belief systems. The 'newly awakened' individual can be (unintentionally) as boring and tiresome as anyone who has seized on a messianic belief system, whether it be politics, religion, or

spirituality. It is often difficult, at this stage in the cycle, to understand the reaction of family, friends and others who may not be sympathetic to one's new-found direction or changes in lifestyle. Often, some of the more dubious cults such as the Moonies take advantage of this stage by convincing young converts that "true friends" etc, would not hinder them in taking up their new life, and that anyone who does not approve, is therefore not a 'true friend'. There are a wide variety of cults which do well in terms of converts from young people who are in a period of transition (such as when leaving home for the first time) and who are attracted to a belief/value system that assuages their uncertainties about the world.

Another of the problems often experienced by those feeling the summons to journey is a terrible sense of isolation or alienation from one's fellows - the inevitable result of moving to the edge of one's culture. Thus excitement at the adventure is often tinged with regret and loss of stability or unconscious participation with one's former world. Once you have begun the process of disentanglement from the everyday world, it is hard not to feel a certain nostalgia for the lost former life in which everything was (seemingly) clear-cut and stable, with no ambiguities or uncertainties.

A common response to the summons to departure is the journey into the wilderness - of moving away from one's fellows and the stability of consensual reality. A proto-shaman is likely to physically journey into the wilderness, away from the security of tribal reality, and though this is possible for some Westerners, the constraints of modern living usually mean that for us, this wandering in the waste is enacted on the plane of ideas, values and beliefs, wherein we look deeply within and around ourselves and question everything, perhaps drawing away from social relations as well. Deliberate isolation from one's fellows is a powerful way of loosening the sense of having fixed values and beliefs, and social deprivation mechanisms turn up in a wide variety of magical cultures.

INITIATORY SICKNESS

In shamanic cultures, the summons to journey is often heralded by a so-called 'initiatory sickness', which can either come upon an individual suddenly, or creep slowly upon them as a progressive behavioural change. Western observers have labelled this state as a form of 'divine madness', or evidence of psychopathology. In the past, anthropologists & psychologists have labelled shamans as schizophrenic, psychotic, or epileptic. More recently, western enthusiasts of shamanism (and anti-psychiatry) have reversed this process of labelling and asserted that people labelled as schizophrenic, psychotic or epileptic are proto-shamans. Current trends in the study of shamanism now recognise the former position to be ethnocentric - that researchers have judging shamanic behaviour by western standards. The onset of initiatory sickness in tribal culture is recognised as a difficult, but potentially useful developmental process. Part of the problem here is that western philosophy has developed the idea of 'ordinary consciousness', of which anything beyond this range is pathological, be it shamanic, mystical, or drug-induced. Fortunately for us, this narrow view is being rapidly undermined.

Individuals undergoing the initiatory sickness do sometimes appear to suffer from fits and 'strange' behaviour, but there is an increasing recognition that it is a mistake to sweepingly attach western psychiatric labels onto them (so that they can be explained away). Shamans may go through a period of readjustment, but research shows that they tend to become the most healthy people in their tribes, functioning very well as leaders and healers.

Transitional states showing similar features to the initiatory sickness have been identified in other cultures' mystical and magical practices, which western researchers are beginning to study, as practices from other cultures gain popularity in the west. Hopefully someone will get around to looking at the initiatory crises of home-grown contemporary technicians of the sacred.

In westernised societies however, it is becoming less easy to judge who is undergoing an initiatory sickness, since many people are now able to purchase their occult and spiritual views in the burgeoning new age, fin de siecle decadence and designer occult markets. Information and communication systems have worn away the structures that once marked the walls of consensus reality and so our choices about how we present ourselves are broader. For this reason it is becoming important to assess occultists over time to discover whether their presented image is real, or purchased from the new age bazaar.

DARK NIGHT OF THE SOUL

St. John of the Cross, a Christian mystic, wrote of this experience as "(it)...puts the sensory spiritual appetites to sleep, deadens them, and deprives them of the ability to find pleasure in anything. It binds the imagination, and impedes it from doing any good discursive work. It makes the memory cease, the intellect become dark and unable to understand anything, and hence it causes the will to become arid and constrained, and all the faculties empty and useless. And over this hangs a dense and burdensome cloud, which afflicts the soul, and keeps it withdrawn from God".

When entering the 'Dark Night' one is overcome by the sense of spiritual dryness and depression. The idea, expressed in some quarters, that all such experiences are to be avoided in favour of a peaceful life, shows up the superficiality of so much of contemporary living. The Dark Night is a way of bringing the soul to stillness, so that a deep psychic transformation may take place. In the Western Esoteric Tradition, this experience is reflected in the Tarot card 'The Moon' and is the 'hump' in an individual's spiritual development where any early benefits of meditation, pathworking or disciplines appear to cease, and there is an urge to abandon such practices and return to 'everyday' life. This kind of 'hump' which must be passed through can be discerned in different areas of experience, and is often experienced by students on degree courses and anybody who is undergoing a new learning process which involves marked life changes as well. In this respect, it is important to remember Ramsay Duke's observation in Thundersqueak, that much of our future magical work is laid down during periods of depression or the "Dark Night."

MACRO & MICRO-INITIATIONS

For the purposes of this essay we will make a distinction between two kinds of Initiatory Experience - Macroscopic and Microscopic. Macroscopic Initiations are characterised by the type of major life shifts discussed above. The key to understanding these states is the feeling that they 'sweep upon us', rather than being an act of willed intent. Very often, they relate to trauma of various kinds in our life - good examples being the collapse of a long-term relationship, the irretrievable 'crash' of a business, or dealing with the possibility that one has AIDS. These experiences are global, which is to say, they affect us at a very core level of our being, and tend to send shock waves into every aspect of our lives.

Microscopic Initiations are more specific in their action, and we can best illustrate this experience with an example that recently happened to Kalki. "I hate number-crunching. Really - columns of figures are something I try to avoid if possible, to the extent that, during my schooldays, days when I had a double-period of maths were favourites for being 'off sick'. "When I did statistics as part of my Psychology Degree, I was interested in a kind of abstract way, but found the piles of computer printout I was expected to do things with, horrific. Later in life, I had to do some accounting now and again, but only if threatened at point-blank range. My current job however, does require a good deal of number-crunching, and quite a bit of accounting- argh! A few days before writing this essay, I was sitting morosely at the computer, tapping in figures, when the thought suddenly struck me I'd like to go on an Accounting Course! That this thought was at odds with my well-nurtured avoidance pattern to such things didn't strike me until a few hours later - suddenly I'm interested in doing something that I have consistently loathed for over half my life! On reflection, the dynamics of this event are easy to examine - my new job requires a lot of number-crunching & accounting. Since I have a vested interest in doing the job efficiently, this will require overcoming my 'avoidance' boundaries which have kept me back from being 'good at' working with figures. However, the actual practice of getting to grips with book-keeping will be made much easier if I am actually interested in the task, than doing it because I've been told I have to do it.

This new-found interest I would liken to a small flame - symbolised by the Ace of Wands in the Tarot. If (out of inertia or Fear - of which more later) I do not pursue the desire to get to grips with accounting, it will most likely burn out, and an opportunity for self-modification will have been lost (actually, by writing all this I have ensured that my colleagues will apply peer pressure - heat - and unmercifully hassle me so that I have no option but to get into number-crunching). Just as with a Macroscopic Initiation, I have hit a threshold of change - a crossroads."

Recognition that one is suddenly standing at a crossroads is the key to all initiations, be they Macro, or Microscopic. Once you have recognised that you are at such a point in your life, a simple formula can be immensely helpful. It's as easy as A PIE.

ASSESS

Stop. Stay where you are, and assess your situation. Know that you are standing on the crossroads. Examine all possibilities for future action. There will always be at least three paths - possibly more. If you can't see more than one, then look until you do. What possible futures can you jump into? Use any technique that will gather information - options lists, divinatory techniques, dream-oracles, asking your favourite deity or HGA. Often, just doing nothing and being receptive to what's happening is good enough. Be Vulnerable to the forces of Change.

PLAN

Once you have chosen a course of action - Plan what you need to do. What resources do you need? These can be material, magical, financial, and perhaps most importantly - the assistance of other people - in terms of skills, support, and friendship. Often you will find that much of what you need is already at hand. Be prepared to carry things through.

IMPLEMENT

And now the hardest task of all - do it. Often, fear will intervene at this stage. Be prepared to look at your motivations for not taking things forward. Fear in our society is a taboo. Inertia and laziness sometimes become the outward expression of fears that one does not really want to be acknowledged. Be prepared to use the mantra "Follow things Through!" Each step made gives more momentum for the next. Each barrier breached brings a rush of pleasure and freedom.

EVALUATE

This is the stage of assimilation - not merely the fact of writing up your magical record, but being able to look back at your course through the initiation and realise how the process worked for you and how you dealt with it. Are there any important lessons here? The Tantric term for assimilation is Samarasa - making knowledge flesh. Assimilating experience into the appropriate Self, until it becomes embedded and Natural. This again relates to a three-stage learning process: Can't do it; Can do it; It comes naturally.

GETTING THE FEAR

As hinted earlier, another key to understanding initiatory experiences is that they bring with them varying degrees of Fear. This is fairly explicit in accounts of Macroscopic Initiations, especially when individuals do not know what is going on. This is also true when anything that we have invested a good deal of emotional commitment and self-esteem is directly threatened or removed suddenly - ranging from emotional patterns to major aspects of life such as career, partner, or dominant self-image. Especially if circumstances are such that we can do little about what is happening. And the character of Macroscopic initiations does seem to require that our current repertoire of coping strategies are rendered useless. If nothing seems to work, then it might be better to do nothing. But by this we do not mean lapsing into inertia, but assessing the situation and making it an opportunity for change and adaptation.

Fear is very much a bodily gnosis - it tends to reinforce any mental/emotional patterns that serve to keep change at bay. It tends to get channeled into a variety of defence mechanisms, which, while they are not in themselves dysfunctional, can be inappropriate. Fear is basically an excitatory state - the fight/flight reflex of the autonomic nervous system kicking into gear. In psychological studies of disaster victims, adult reactions vary according to the phase of the disaster. These can be broadly divided into five phases:

- a) Pre-Impact Phase: The reaction here is characterised by underactivity and the development of anxiety symptoms.
- b) Warning Phase: The reaction here is one of overactivity.
- c) Impact: The reaction at this point tends to be that of bewilderment, confusion or hysteria.
- d) Turmoil-Recoil Phase: The reaction tends to be that of emotional expression relating to the immediate past.
- e) Post-Trauma Phase: Characterised by reconstructive activity combined with elements of anger and resentment.

If any adepts survived the destruction of the mythical Atlantis, then it was surely that they were active during the Pre-Impact phase and had prudently departed before everyone else became hysterical during the Warning phase. The ability to do so is one of the characteristics of a survivor. Taken perhaps as an

(extreme) example, these phases can offer some useful lessons in facing both macro and micro initiations. Interestingly, studies suggest that children show remarkable resilience to disasters. Where problems do occur, they are usually a reflection of the parents' hysteria or psychopathology. The elderly, in contrast, are said to fare least well. This is due to the fact that they suffer a "high sense of deprivation". This means that they perceive their lives' work to have been damaged and feel that they will be unable to make good their losses. The elderly are also more likely to die within twelve months of disaster and this has been attributed to mental and physical illnesses brought about by the experience of grief, separation and loss. The main lesson, as we can see, is to remain aware of what is going on around you, and don't freeze up. From a practical point of view it is therefore important to gain some understanding of the mechanisms underlying our perception of hazard. These can provide some clues to maintaining awareness. Our senses provide us with the signals from which we determine levels of risk. Unfortunately, these signals are made more complex by the way in which we think, and other pressures. Sensory stimulation occurs against progressively less personal backdrops. These can be classified as our Behavioural environment (the space we occupy at any one point); Perceptual environment (the extent of our senses); Operational environment (the space we move through in a day and night), and the Geographical environment we are moving through. Studies indicate that socio-economic factors such as age, occupation, and education have little effect on the accuracy of people's perception of risk. Experience and accuracy of perception appear to be linked. But research suggests that many people are unwilling to draw logical conclusions from their own experience, and therefore tend to underestimate risk.

If we are familiar with the cycles of the initiatory process, and apply the A PIE formula above, then we can use any fear which arises effectively. By deconstructing Fear, we can reconfigure it (when appropriate) into pleasurable excitement, which can be used to fuel movement over a threshold rather than reinforcing patterns which keep it at bay.

RELAX INTO FEAR

Again, this is a very old concept. There is a Tantric idea that you can reorient yourself to life so that you are sufficiently open to the avenues of possibilities each moment of living offers, experiencing the world from a condition of 'receptive wonder'. Related to this is the idea of 'Meeting the Guru'. Not so much meeting a little old wizened mystic at a bus stop in Hackney, but knowing that any life event can be the 'guru' - teacher, that can spin you sideways into Gnosis and Illumination. Even in the Guru-besotted Indian subcontinent, there is a story concerning the legendary tantric guru Dattatreya, in which a Prince seeking instruction asks Dattatreya who his Guru's were. To the dismay of the royal aspirant, Dattatreya irreverently points at a number of natural objects such as stones, plants and trees.

There is a similar idea encapsulated within the classical image of the great god Pan. An early depiction of Pan shows him hurling himself (with intent to rape) upon a young goatherd. This image calls to mind the relationship between fear and desire, repulsion and eroticism. Aeneas Tacitus's *Polioketika*, contains several accounts of the effects of Panic-terror as a sudden, and unpredictable condition. Philippe Borgeaud, in his book, *The Cult of Pan in Ancient Greece* makes the point that Pan 'typically attacks a model of order and disrupts it'. One of the underlying themes in the classical mythos of Pan is the possibility of creative derangement, of moving from one state to another. Whether this state is one of madness or divine-led inspiration depends on which side of the threshold you view it from. The threat of Pan is ever-present, and he can leap on you anytime, any place - as William Burroughs says: the sudden realisation that everything is alive and significant. (*Dead City Radio*). The Greek word Pan means "all" or "everything", and this suggests that the Panic is the moment when the size of our experience overwhelms us.

Relaxation into Fear allows self-modification. Here, Fear is not a weakness, but a strength. Allowing yourself to be Vulnerable to the forces of Change, particularly the possibility of surprises. Often, the onset of a crossroads experience throws us into mental entropy - the mental confusion which Pan brings, which pushes us back into bodily sensation. This is a good time to still the mind and attend to sensations - loose the bonds of the Past and quiet the mental chaos of 'what ifs' and 'buts' - cease fantasy projections and sink into bodily sensation. Transform fear into wonder and prepare for new possibilities. Transform fear into fuel, and examine those patterns which maintained your thresholds. This can become an ecstatic process - the original meaning of ecstasy is "away from stillness", which indicates some measure of agitation. Again,

a key to this process is the ability to be 'loose' and relaxed. Holding yourself rigid impedes the possibility of entering into new experiences.

LOOSENING UP

So what can we do about rigidity? Here we come back to pragmatic techniques:

Bioenergetics, Vivation, Neuro-Linguistic Programming, Deconstructive exercises; Ritual & any magical technique aimed at shifts in Achievable Reality thresholds. Are these then preparatory exercises in opening up to the possibility of Initiation? Yes, and also - during a Crossroads point we can use selective techniques when in 'Chapel Perilous' as it were - as steps along the path: to hold the doorway open, to project goal-points; to plan our steps and to assimilate them.

We would draw your attention to the word 'selective' - again, much hangs on the appropriate use of distinct techniques. Techniques borrowed from NLP, Vivation or Bioenergetics can be particularly useful during initiatory periods, but it is important to remember that they are not designed from the viewpoint of a magical agenda. Similarly, orthodox magical techniques should be carefully selected. You could get up from reading this article, go into the next room and enact an 'initiation' ritual based on a mythic sequence, but myths are merely signposts - the enactment of mythic events is not necessarily the same as undergoing a trial as an Authentic experience. Mythic Initiations can however, provide a conceptual framework for approaching Experience - an awareness of the dynamics of that process - but they are not the same as living that process. So a symbolic ritual act of dismemberment that is Willed, may not be as powerful as dismemberment that is spontaneously experienced as a Crisis. Again, recognition that one is entering a significant crisis -point is possibly more useful than trying to force it to happen. If you recognise that you are entering a crossroads, then magical work can be done to maximise the change-potential of that crossroads.

So, the Initiatory Crossroads experience occurs, to a certain extent, outside our willed control - but what we do about it when it hits is in our hands - this relates to the Tantric concept of Kundalini, the serpent-power which is the dynamic power of existence. Opening yourself to experience, and then acting appropriately from that perspective is more productive than trying to artificially force it to happen. A useful attitude is that of Sahaja, or spontaneity. This is the ability to relax from following rigid guidelines and act responsively to any situation which arises. A strength of the Chaos approach to magick is that the practitioner is rarely 'locked within' one dominant magical paradigm and so limited in scope for action. As some magical paradigms are better for specific tasks than others, it should be easier for a Chaos magician to find suitable techniques and approaches for emotional engineering and maximising the window of opportunity thrown up by initiatory experiences.

THE CHAOS OF COMPLEXITY

The initiatory crisis serves to bring one point (often very forcefully) into awareness: that the world is fragile, and complex. The consensus reality of western consciousness is a very simplistic projection of linear consciousness. We become addicted to the "sameness" of experience, and as such, often have difficulty coping with novelty or change. We generate models that tend to explain the world in very simple ways and then mistake the map for the territory. Ian Malcolm, in Michael Crichton's Jurassic Park sums this up neatly: ...straight linearity, which we have come to take for granted in everything from physics to fiction, simply does not exist. Linearity is an artificial way of viewing the world. Real life isn't a series of interconnected events occurring one after the other like beads strung on a necklace. Life is actually a series of encounters in which one event may change those which follow in a wholly unpredictable, even devastating way. As a consequence, crises often provoke habituated responses in people. There is a tendency to perform set movements, without actually observing the situation. Such set movements are often coping strategies, but the problem is of course, that strategies for dealing with one problem will not necessarily be appropriate for a new problem. Rather, they tend to aggravate the situation, causing further stress. Individuals who have become locked into habitual responses display a chronic "Adaptation" response to the onset of a crisis. In the first phase, they are apparently calm and inactive ("nothing can happen to me"). When the crisis breaks, they react with a bout of hyperactivity ("I can cope"), usually characterised by inadequate and inappropriate coping strategies. When it finally becomes apparent that they cannot cope, they tend to relapse into a "victim" stance ("why me?") whereon the problem becomes someone else's fault, and the link between the crisis and their own attitude to it is repressed.

Conversely, the key to the initiatory crisis is to say "yes" to what is happening. Rather, one gives the experience attention and discovers what is appropriate, and sheds that which is inappropriate. Magical lore has it that at each initiation, the magician must surrender something of himself, until there is nought remaining. This however, does not imply a renunciation of the world, nor a loss of effectiveness within it. The magician comes to recognise that there may be an abyss around every corner, and that even as one plunges into the depths, there is the possibility of soaring higher than ever afterwards, although this is not usually perceived to be the case during the "Dark Night."

It should be stressed that it is often difficult to judge the beginning and ending of an initiatory crisis. Such experiences may sweep down upon us suddenly (or so it seems), or may occur progressively. It does seem though, that able magicians come to know the peaks, troughs and plateaus of their own initiatory cycles, and may come to recognise (through personal omens etc) that a trial is coming upon them, and take steps to ensure that they can (if appropriate) brace themselves accordingly.

DIVINATORY UNFOLDINGS

by Phil Hine

This short paper relates to the answer I received in a Tactile divinatory working conducted by members of Temple Legion Gmicalza, IOT (Seattle, 15 Jan 1995), and the experiences which have enabled me to begin to understand the implications of the answer, in terms of the question.

THE ANSWER IS "SLIME"

When participating in the Tactile Divination rite I asked the question "What is the key to writing *Pseudonomicon II*?" After placing my hand in the box, I had an immediate sensation of 'slime', and so took this as my answer.

This I found both perplexing and amusing. Slime is something we might imagine as dripping from Cthulhu's tentacles. Also, Kenneth Grant (a big influence on *Pseudonomicon I*) is known, in certain quarters of the UK LHP scene as "the Slime-Lord." However, I was initially puzzled as to how "Slime" could relate to writing a book.

Slime is a peculiar substance - being a moist, viscous fluid secreted by organisms such as slugs, fish or fungi. It's also generally thought of as unpleasant or noxious. This immediately struck another chord with me - that we find many aspects of nature unpleasant. Increasingly, I am beginning to understand the Lovecraftian Mythos as an expression of our relationship with Natural processes. Slime as a substance has interesting properties - it covers or coats other things and changes them subtly, whilst retaining it's own inherent properties. Certain forms of slime appear to behave like elastics & appear to have varying degrees of thermoplastic memory.

Thoughts of slime tend to invoke fears & prejudices about biological processes - menstruation being a prime example. A few weeks ago, the 'messiness' of nature was forcefully brought home to me as we tramped through a muddy forest in the pouring rain, and saw a house which had been literally 'reclaimed' by the forest. Fear of natural processes is a strong subtext within Lovecraft's writing in particular, and Western psychology in general. Again, this also recalls the work of Kenneth Grant.

It was in this forest that I had a conversation with a friend of mine who is both an ecologist and a Buddhist tantric. We discussed the *Pseudonomicon* and my desire to expand it, and my friend again drew my attention to the Cthulhu mythos as an articulation of man's interaction with nature. I have become increasingly dissatisfied with most 'magical' approaches to the Cthulhu mythos as they seem to me, to be rooted in the abstracted, intellectualised Western Magical Tradition (which follows Western philosophical trends). Trudging through this forest, ankle-deep in mud and dripping wet, I had a 'flash' insight that here I was much closer to the Great Old Ones than I would be standing in a room performing a ritual. This was a thought I have had before, but this experience did much to reinforce and broaden my perspective on it. As a result of these 'swirls' of thought & experience, I have begun to plan *Pseudonomicon II* as a much broader text than merely examining the Cthulhu Mythos as a magical paradigm.

NON-LINEAR ORACLES

The above deals with my current ideas on the Divinatory Response at the moment (there is probably more to come). I will now discuss more general issues relating to this kind of approach to divination.

Generally, divinatory techniques can be divided into two approaches Symbolic (i.e. Tarot, Runes) and Free-form (i.e. Scrying). The Tactile divinatory working falls into this latter category, as an example of a divinatory technique where answers arise from the querents immediately arising perceptions, without any structured frame of reference for interpretation.

What I find interesting about the latter type of approach to divination is that interpretations of 'answers' arise organically which is to say gradually, out of one's total experiential field, as the querent approaches the issue from different angles & perspectives. This also reminds me of the use of Gematria in interpreting 'fuzzy' answers. Gematria not only involves the association of concepts into a symbolic -linguistic framework (i.e. Qabalah) but also can be require meditation on tarot images, etc. Kenneth Grant is probably the most well-known exponent of the use of Gematria to form association chains between disparate ideas. The main point about these interpretations is that they take time to unfold and formulate - the divinatory/oracular issue becomes a focus for further experiences which seem to loop back to the original issue.

THE ILLUMINATORY GNOSIS

Divinatory-type experiences can give rise to powerful illuminatory experiences. A good example of this can be found in Robert Anton Wilson's "Masks of The Illuminati" novel, where the protagonist is propelled into an illuminatory Gnosis as a result of attempting to unravel the classical magical formula I.N.R.I. Another related concept is that of Zen Koans. Zen Koans are effective in that they exhaust the students tendency to try and make logical sense of a non-logical proposition, until the 'answer' arises spontaneously or organically. The hallmark of such understandings is that they are accompanied by a physiological response. That is, the sudden 'understanding' of an issue is emotional, rather than merely intellectual. The understanding is therefore "embedded" in the person's psychocosm - a true "Gnosis" process by which previously-held beliefs and perceptions may be significantly altered. Such an experience can tip the individual into an Altered State which may last for several days, during which time elements of their psychocosm may collapse - a fracture of consensus reality if you like, wherein events and experiences which seem related to the 'core' of the process (the divinatory-oracular trigger) take on a heightened significance.

Ekomagick

by Phil Hine - a presentation made at the Wildwood Conference, 1994

When Caroline originally invited me to speak here I thought about doing a pathworking where people start off as trees and end up as a carton of lemon-scented toilet paper. Jokes aside though, I decided that a 'pathworking' was not appropriate for this subject. I sometimes think that part of the whole problem that magical people have is that it's often easier to visualize nature than go tramping about in it, in the same way that it's a lot safer to visualize yourself battling dragons than actually sitting down in front of bulldozers. But I'm getting ahead of myself. Ekomagick is a fairly new phenomenon - something which appears to have been evolving over the last decade or so, at least in the UK. Now we all know the pagan 'histories' about being in touch with the cycles of nature and so forth - drawing a veil over archeological evidence that our distant ancestors used to set fire to forests as a way of driving game - but this new idea, that we can use magical practices & beliefs in the struggle against those who despoil the environment - well it might seem an obvious thing to do now, but that wasn't always the case.

Why? Well, for a start it's *political*. Until fairly recently, using magic to further one's political ideals was thought of as not quite ethical - at least Dion Fortune gives that impression. Let me qualify that though - if it's my politics then it's *spiritual*, but if it's something I don't agree with, then it's *black magic*. This argument is often put forth by the people who will quite willingly beam love through a crystal, but won't give a beggar a quid 'cos it's his karma.

My own view on this kind of argument is that this is what people say when they don't really want magic to have any effect. Last year I was at a gathering of magicians and a hot debate was stirred up during the planning of a ritual to affect the future. One of the projects raised was a proposal to 'magically' assist research into finding a cure for AIDS. This drew quite a lot of resistance - and it seemed to me from the

ensuing discussion that some of those present just couldn't get their heads round the idea of using magic to bring about a result with long-term consequences.

Another problem related to Ekomagic is that magicians have only recently started to take notice of nature. We model reality in our heads - nice little black-white chequerboard models, and then act all surprised when life, which tends to be messy at the edges, doesn't fit into the model. For example, until fairly recently, the dominant approach for working magic outdoors has been fairly simple - just move those quasi-rosicrucian ceremonies outdoors! I've always been a bit puzzled by this. Where do you hang the banners for the four quarters? How can one be expected to invoke the air elementals when the wind is turning the grimoire's pages too fast? And this isn't limited to ceremonial magicians either. A few years ago, a group of us invited some local witches up to Ilkley Moor for a Winter Solstice ritual - whereon it was revealed to me that Wiccan rituals were "*designed to be done indoors*".

Nethertheless, Ekomagic has become increasingly popular since the mid-1980s. A few things have helped it along: The popularity of James Lovelock's "Gaia Hypothesis", which describes the Earth as:

"A self-stabilising system comprising of all living things and the environment as a single dynamic entity." This brought up some sickly romantic notions of big nannie Gaia - and Lovelock has, since the publication of his original book, pointed out that: "she is as pitiless as an ICBM. She may not eat her children but she employs the market forces of natural selection to rid her Earth of the lame, the sick and the losers." Be that as it may, the Gaia Hypothesis has done much to challenge the prevailing Western view that nature is a primitive force to be tamed and subdued.

Another positive element has been the rise of Chaos Theory, which again challenges many of the basic assumptions, including the long-held fantasy that science can predict natural phenomena.

At street-level, the rise of Feminism and the Ecological action movements have slowly permeated the pagan and magical milieu. In the eighties, there was discernable a curious distinction - between the 'real' pagans and magicians who did their rituals and celebrations 'by the book' as it were, and the 'others' - the women who performed their rituals of protest at Greenham Common and outside nuclear power stations. It has happened, that groups of politically-inspired protestors doing their magic have suddenly had, in their midst, an 'authentic' pagan/magician pop up and start telling them how they should be doing things!

A landmark for the development of interest in Ekomagic was the publication of Starhawk's *Dreaming the Dark* - which was a great step forwards in combining paganism, magic, politics and social activism. There have been occasional journals, such as the short-lived "Pagans Against Nukes", but little in the way of debate. My own interest in these matters came to a head in 1987 when I became involved in a Leeds-based project called "Heal the Earth."

Heal the Earth was the title of a mass ritual, the aim of which was to increase public awareness of the global ecological crisis. It was performed in the UK and Europe on the Summer Solstice, between 12 - 2pm. Heal the Earth began as an idea - appearing in the midst of a group of Leeds magicians who were discussing the possibilities afforded by politicized magic. If, as we are told, the witch clans gathered together in the New Forest to work magic against the the threat of Nazi invasion, wasn't it about time, we thought, that we did something along the same lines? The original idea was for a mass-ritual coordinated through a simple symbol or image, to be carried out by groups and individuals at the Summer Solstice.

Having grasped this original idea, we then took it around other local pagans and asked for feedback. Everyone we talked to were very enthusiastic about the project taking off and being a success. This phase became, what we would in retrospect see as networking - as people suggested other individuals and groups that might be interested in helping, and this alone helped the project gather impetus and enthusiasm. The next step was to consider the aim of the ritual - the statement of intent, if you like. We discussed the idea of focusing on very specific political issues, but eventually decided to go for a general raising of awareness - a ripple across the human planetary mind.

We then turned to the design of the leaflet - magical artist Sheila Broun very kindly allowed us to use her tarot design for the Ace of Cups as the central image - the focus for each person participating in the action. The leaflet was worded to try and get the idea across in as succinct a way as possible, since we wanted as many people as possible to join in. A description of the qualities of the Ace of Cups was included, and a quote from the Tao te Ching expressed perfectly what we were trying to do:

Under Heaven nothing is more soft And yielding than water, yet for Attacking the solid and strong, nothing Is better - it has no equal. Lao Tzu

Rather than writing specific instructions for a 'ritual' to perform - we asked people to do what they enjoyed most - anything from quiet contemplation to frenzied dancing.

Once the leaflet had been designed, we then distributed it - leaflets were taken abroad by friends, displayed in shops as A3 posters, and handed out at the Glastonbury festival, and distributed at various gigs up and down the country.

And the results? Well, we enjoyed it. I spent the Solstice period with other project members, drumming for two hours on Ilkley Moor, in a ritual dedicated to Arwen, Goddess of inspiration. It showed us what a small, determined group could do in the way of organisation and generating enthusiasm.

This kind of mass ritual is one approach to Ekomatic. Mass rituals have been organised by PaganLink and the Pagan Federation. What other forms of magical activity can be used? I know I've slagged pathworkings off a bit - I keep thinking of a workshop a couple of years ago where we were asked to visualise ourselves being in a forest, where, if we'd walked a few hundred yards we'd actually have been surrounded by trees, but pathworkings can be effective, when used with a bit of imagination.

Then there's magic of a more - shall we say - aggressive nature. On more than one occasion I have heard the proposal that we visualise the person responsible and stick pins into a doll. Now there are obviously ethical issues raised when it comes to the cursing of individuals. There's also the consideration that targeting individuals won't actually do much to change matters. Sticking pins into a doll of the head of ICI is no more going to bring about long-term change in behaviour than the idea that kicking a few skinheads will do much for changing racist attitudes. A related idea though, is cursing institutions rather than individuals. In the 1983 "Stop the City" actions, Kali, Eris and Hecate were invoked by participating magicians. The Computers tracking Council-tax dodgers have been the target of magical 'gremlins' and there have been attempts to magically lower the share prices of large corporations.

Another form of magic which has become increasingly popular is the use of 'thought-forms' or servitors as site-guardians.

These are but a few ideas. Obviously there's more to be done, and now that increasing numbers of pagans and magicians are discovering that there's more to nature than can be encompassed in the book of shadows or the tree of life - and that magic works - I hope that this trend continues.

Fade to Grey: Chaos and Mediocrity

by Rex Monday

Chaos Magic claims to reflect the present western cultural zeitgeist, which has been given the label of Post-modernism. This in itself sends out some rather telling messages about Chaos Magic. Post-modernism is characterised by an all-pervading 'depthlessness' - beneath the swirl of surface styles and images, there is little of enduring value. There is an increasing cultural obsession with 'instant' fixes, rather than long-term solutions; with a multi-culturalism which ignores or tramples on national identities; with a concern for surface 'image', beneath which everything and everyone fades to gray. Post-modernist theorists have claimed that all sense of 'history' and 'future' have been collapsed, providing material for the imageers and style-gurus to re-invent. Modern society is pervaded with a sense of going nowhere.

Chaos Magic does indeed seem to reflect these trends. The emphasis which some of its exponents have placed on 'belief-shifting', or the misplaced term 'paradigm shift', leads to a situation where practitioners believe that they can adopt a magical system and use it temporarily, with no more than a passing acquaintance to its structures and symbolic forms. This in itself erodes the concept of magical attainment as a result of discipline, study, and will. By treating magical systems as 'paradigms' which can be apparently picked up or dropped at will, Chaos Magic is transferring the very 'depthlessness' of Post-modern culture into the occult milieu. By seemingly offering its adherents access to a wide range of magical systems, it is eroding the power of those systems by encouraging 'magicians' to chop and change with no more regard than they would give to changing TV channels.

The leading exponent of Chaos Magic, Peter J. Carroll, claims that technical competence in magical practice is superior to mysticism. Whilst there is some value in discouraging the excessive mystical speculations to which many occultists are overly prone, the point must be made that technical competence alone is not sufficient. By attempting to reduce magic to what amounts to a set of engineering propositions, Carroll has chosen to ignore the usefulness of Mysticism - that it is primarily an emotional engagement, rooted in the desire to merge oneself with something 'greater', or to write oneself large upon the void. Wilhem Reich recognised the difference between technicalism and emotional appeal when he analysed the appeal of National Socialism over Communism in Weimer Germany. The Communists based their appeal to the populace largely on economic theory, whilst the National Socialists provided a powerful vision, echoing essential values and aspirations. I do think it significant that the exponents of the so-called "Chaos Current" have had little to say about values or aspirations. Surely the whole point of being "on the path" is that one requires something to aim for - a clear vision which, whilst it changes at the edges, serves as a beacon to strive towards.

I draw the reader's attention to the relationship between "mysticism" and "mystery." To be a magician requires a deep relationship with the mysterious - from which all magic springs. It requires a deep drive to "Know" - a knowledge which is formed from one's unique experience and insights, many of which can only be gained through a direct perception of numinosity. It is this knowledge, this inner certainty, grasped like fire from heaven, which spurs the magician forwards. The desire to be a magician must flame from within. Whilst Chaos proponents do claim that responsibility for developing a personal belief system rests with the individual, it is my suspicion that, in the majority of cases, this will not encourage the appearance of vital magicians. It takes a great deal of Will to disentangle the beliefs and attitudes which one has accumulated over one's lifespan, and whilst I recognise the value in what Chaos exponents call "deconditioning", there does seem to be an implicit idea in Chaos Magic theory that all cultural conditioning is suspect, which of course is not necessarily the case. It is even greater an act of Will to stick up for one's beliefs in an age of mediocrity and political correctness, where to show pride in one's heritage, race or culture is to attract the hue and cry of liberals and socialists who, in their obsession with equality, ignore the very real differences which drive societies and in which personal identity is rooted.

Chaos Magic exponents have also done much to expound the idea of a multiplicity of selves which somehow give rise to a sense of individual identity. This again, is very Post-modern concept, reflecting the cultural obsession with schizoid fragmentation. I cannot see how the claim to be 'many selves' can be seen to be superior to the feeling of being a single person, capable of doing many things. As it is, this multiple self concept seems to provide a neat get-out clause for those who wish to avoid responsibility for their own failures and dysfunctions. The Chaos Magic obsession with reductionism, like all such obsessions, leads to absurdity.

Whilst Carroll has demonstrated (in Liber Null) that the practical basis of magic can be distinguished from the philosophies that surround (and in some cases, limit) them, he has ignored the emotional thrust that engagement in a magical philosophy gives. His comment to the effect that beliefs are untrue may well be the case in the general sense, but this is only important for those who seek refuge in religiosity. If a magician is only paying lip service to a belief, and does not regard it as a basic fact of his existence, this amounts to little more than intellectual masturbation. It is the ability to make beliefs into personal truths which distinguishes the magician from the masses. If a would-be magician cannot grasp the concept that beliefs should be worth sacrificing one's life for; worth dying for, even, then one's commitment will always be somewhat limited. The pursuit of magical prowess requires this depth of purpose, else how can it carry you through the challenges that your oath to yourself compels you to face? Thus I declare myself a brother of Satan. This is not a mere surface belief, but a gut-level feeling which belies all intellectual equivocation. Magic, as I pointed out in a recent letter to Chaos International, is about the "Triumph of the Will." By this I mean that by virtue of developing the will, the magician seeks to overcome the petty weakness of the mass of humanity. The magician stands alone in the crowd, taking joy and strength in his assertion of power. He exudes his darkness as he would wear a cloak. To do so requires Will; it requires a strength, and joy of purpose almost unknown in this present era. No matter how much so-called 'paradigm-shifting' one does, it is useless if one does not develop the strength to believe in one's own inherent power. In an age where commitment to any one philosophy or doctrine is devalued, surely it would be more revolutionary to

adhere to an empowering personal philosophy as an act of defiant will, rather than accede to the mediocrity of surface style and transient image?

This is the essential nature of the Left-Hand Path, that it is for individuals whose strength of belief, value and vision enables them to pursue their aims with a single-mindedness of purpose that overcomes any barrier or obstacle. This requires the expression of one's beliefs to the bitter end, without making compromise or acceding to the equivocating of lesser beings. Chaos Magic exponents seem to be advocating a "go with the flow" mentality which has always been a sop to peasants, thralls and slaves. They offer no way out of the Postmodern cultural decay, only total immersion in the mirage. When, as is inevitable, reaction to the current social stasis engenders rapid cultural change, I suspect that Chaos Magic will be left floundering.

Many moderns have made a fundamental mistake concerning the nature of Satanic magic. In no way does it resemble a 'system' in the way that occultists are increasingly encouraged to approach magic. Satanism begins and ends with the primacy of the Self against the world. The task of the Satanist is to become "his very own self". It is not enough, and will never be enough, to simply accrue a 'satanic image' vicariously. It must arise naturally, or not at all. Invariably, it is a decision which is taken at a fairly early stage in life, and which endures beyond all ephemeral changes.

The Holy Guardian Angel: a tricky little devil

by Ed Richardson

CONTENTS

- [Introduction](#)
 - [Why do it?](#)
 - [Preparation](#)
 - [Practical techniques](#)
 - [The Vision](#)
 - [The Voice](#)
 - [What next?](#)
-

Introduction

The Holy Guardian Angel (HGA) remains as something of an enigma to this day despite some occult schools describing it as an essential element at the core of magical practice. Paradoxically, little of any practical use has been written on working with the HGA despite its potentially enormous source of magical inspiration. To many gaining "knowledge and conversation" of one's HGA is a sign of passing through "occult puberty" successfully and I would suggest that this is a useful perspective, the reasons for which are outlined below.

This essay will explain why one should bother working with such entities, will indicate some methods and will then explain some of the pitfalls which make this work tricky. First, however, a little shall be said about what the HGA might be.

What is it?

The HGA is a very difficult concept to define, as most labels serve to impose falsehood and/or limitations on what the HGA may be (I did say there would be pitfalls!). However, unlike many magicians who have effectively left it at that, I will take some risks and say some more, as I feel that I have had some success with this work.

Firstly, the title "Holy Guardian Angel" needs to be addressed. You may be wondering why this pompous/silly sounding title is used and why on earth you should take it seriously. You may think that Pete Carroll's word "Augoides" sounds more cool and "genius" far more sensible. Well, I would suggest that what you call it doesn't matter, but that if you can't handle dealing with a silly title then you face falling into one of the biggest pitfalls (which shall be detailed later) which is that of taking it, and yourself far too seriously. At the end of the day, being able to distance yourself from this work, viewing it as being ridiculous from

time to time helps keep a lid on things to make sure it doesn't all get **Out of hand**. This was one of the most important things I learned when I was initiated into *Temple Two Dogs Fucking*.

There are many speculations as to what the HGA may be, and I shall list them as I believe they all have a sense of truth and falsehood. Theories on what the HGA is generally fall into three categories: psychological processes! concepts; external entities that have an interest in the magician's life; and entities that are somehow part of the magician in the way that shamanic totems might be. I would suggest that it is foolish to fall into one camp; using as many concepts as possible will give a more useful point of reference. If you limit yourself too much here only a certain degree of success will be possible.

First, the external entities shall be considered. The concept of a watchful guardian or angel is not something that only belongs to magic. A Christian friend was once telling me how the organisation he belonged to used a practical belief in angels and guardian angels to protect them from danger, both real, in the form of violence, and imaginary, in the form of nasty old Satan tell them to shag good looking individuals of the opposite (or same) sex. He then went on to describe a truly miraculous (magical?) experience in which a female friend of his managed to avoid being stabbed and robbed in a violent confrontation with a dangerous nutter due to angelic intervention. Some descriptions of HGA visions (including my own) have included fantastic scenes of beings composed of living flame and a certain magical friend and mentor once pointed out to me that the biblical race, the Seraphim, appear in this way. Some sources have described HGA entities as being alien beings, with Aiwass and Lam being examples of them. I quite like some of these theories too as the HGA certainly does seem very detached from most of the ordinary concerns of humanity, but then so do many magicians! Whatever the HGA actually is, it does seem to be ever watchful, knowing our interests and being able to offer insights as an "outsider" might.

The HGA as an "internal entity" includes "inner planes" (what ever they might be) experiences or insights into its nature. Here the HGA may be seen as some sort of "spirit guide". It may also be related to animal totems. However, I would suggest that the HGA is not the same as an actual animal totem, even if it can take animal shape. The totem animal is a separate shamanistic concept, and personal experience tells me that it is possible to have both. The HGA as an internal entity also includes theories of it being in some way connected with the divine manifest within humanity. One magical friend put forward a reasonable theory that connects the HGA with the Goddess Kundalini, as an ever watching, consuming flame that drives and is driven by our experience of the world.

Psychological models are also useful, but over reliance on them can kill any relevant experience with the angel by a sort of "death by reductionism". However, I have seen the HGA described as being (hidden) genius. This can be a little misleading, though, as genius could be accounted for as a subconscious driving force, or as something learned beyond ordinary expertise. Successful work with the HGA is not merely discovering one's own talents and potential talents, but is something more intangible and yet personally relevant. I would suggest that anyone who reduces HGA experiences to the discovery of genius, has not been wholly successful, despite the fact that success in this work should lead to the subsequent exploration and manifestation of genius. Other "states of consciousness theories" suggest that the HGA is bound to your perception of the universe. However, this perception is one that does not involve the distractions of ego, but merely involves you as an observer. This is a difficult concept to understand unless you have practised yoga and have learned to perceive the universe without getting involved with your perceptions. The HGA has been approximated by Rodney Orpheus, in his excellent book "Abrahamadra", as being your perception of the universe minus you! This is one of the most useful concepts I have yet seen on the subject as it hints at practical methods to carry out the work.

Why do it?

Well, why do anything? My usual answer (which did me no good at school) is usually "It seemed like a good idea at the time". Now that, believe it or not, is why I started the Great Work. Since then I have discovered many little reasons as to why doing this work has been of use, and these can be summed up by two general reasons.

Firstly, the occult puberty bit. Yes, conjuring the HGA is excellent training. If you can make a success of this you will make a success of conjuring other entities. You will have learned to critically evaluate your findings and to avoid all sorts of magical pitfalls. You will have also most likely learned either more magical techniques, or more about the ones you already use, finely honing them for future use. In the

process of your quest you will have discovered more about yourself, knowing more about your strengths and weaknesses and thus being able to offset the one with the other. You will also come to understand more about your motives and passions, gain valuable insights and even discover some of your genius. The second major reason connected with this as your HGA will furnish you with insight into a great many things including a great deal of magical inspiration. Linked to this the HGA as an entity can be communicated with to discover occult secrets and may also be called upon to protect you. The question is not really about why should you conjure it, but more why shouldn't you?

Preparation

As I hinted earlier, one of the main reasons for people not working with the idea of the HGA is probably that very little of any use has been said on the subject. Hopefully this essay will go some of the way to remedy the situation. Unfortunately, the two most famous methods for this work both involve a very old fashioned approach to magic, which assumes that the magician can avoid going to work, raising a family and having a social life, yet still have loads of money and comfortable surroundings. Oh, for the good old days again! Another reason is that achieving HGA consciousness does require certain prerequisite qualities that many magicians simply don't have. Whilst some people seem unable to change (which makes me suspicious of any claims of magical authenticity on their part), some of these qualities can be learned and I have found regular martial arts and yoga practice to be extremely useful.

The first quality is attitudinal and can definitely be learned as a skill. Its equivalent in yoga is *Dharana*, or focus. This is the ability to pay close attention to the point of immersion in the subject of study. At the same time the magician must learn to be disinterested, to take in information and sensory experience without attachment to it. Attachment to visions in this work will lead to obsession and self delusion. Diary records of visionary experiences should show variety, otherwise something has gone wrong.

Secondly the magician must be able to discriminate. The most dangerous pitfall of all is that of believing every vision and every piece of channelled information. As I was taught in my sales training: "Assume nothing or you make an ass out of you and me!"

At least half of what you see! receive will be of no use at all. Some will be downright misleading and some will be extremely valuable. If you can't discriminate, you will start to take yourself far too seriously and everything will seem to have cosmic importance. All of a sudden you will go from being a curious seeker to being a tedious fruitcake and all because you "heard voices". This is another reason to discriminate - these sorts of workings do involve engineering a little madness and if you always bear this in mind you should be O.K.

Patience is essential. Success will not happen over night. The techniques that I shall suggest should help speed things up a little, but you will still need the patience and determination to get through the difficulties, blind alleys and delusions which force progress to be slow.

Finally, the magician must have an open mind. This sort of working is likely to take you outside of your usual belief structures and promote both increased self awareness and profound personal change.

Practical techniques

One of Aleister Crowley's wisest concepts in magic is to invoke often and banish often. In this sort of working there will be much that is of little or no use but a little of vital relevance. In order to maximise the useful experiences, the magician should invoke often. In order to minimise the rubbish the magician should banish often.

Crowley suggested that the Angel itself should never be banished. I'm not so sure about that. Firstly, what you think is the HGA is, in the first few months (maybe years), not the HGA. This should be banished as it is probably more trouble than it is worth to have the same false impressions influencing future visions. Secondly, the HGA itself is fallible and when you have built up a good rapport with it you should not only know this, but it should know that you know! Thirdly, the HGA is potentially obsessive - you really don't want to dwell on it whilst driving on the M25! If your invocations are as frequent as your banishments there really should be no problems.

The first step to take in the Great Work is to start practical magic. Regular magical practice will hint at specific magical techniques that will help you. It also seems to work as an attractor, drawing the attention of the HGA.

The most famous methods published are *Liber Samekh* and the Abra Melin system. Both of these involve using already developed magical skills and spending long periods of time in isolation. This sort of approach probably doesn't suit a great many people, but the use of the magical retreat or sabbatical can be extremely valuable. I found that six months away from work with daily magical rituals and yoga most useful, but I found it essential to immerse myself in the world of making money straight afterwards to remain grounded. I have also cut down the amount of time I spend with occultists to avoid HGA (or occult) obsession. The following methods are techniques that I have found to be successful and are only meant to be suggestive. They are divided into two categories that I have labelled "The Vision" and "The Voice", the reasons for which shall become quite obvious.

The vision

Much of the Great Work is not about merely discovering hidden aspects of the personality, but is about personally meaningful experience. As beings who respond to visual stimulus and language, we often seek illumination through visions. Whilst the HGA is not necessarily defined by any shape, pattern or appearance, we find it simpler to comprehend as something which can stimulate our senses. For this reason it is entirely appropriate to seek visions. It is important to bear in mind that the map is a tool for studying the territory.

The quest for the vision starts with yearning. This yearning must be channelled through preferred magical techniques. A personalised sigil is probably appropriate for use in these workings. The key to the vision of the HGA is gnosis. Gnosis fires up the mind, creating images free from thought, steered only by the forgotten intent inside the sigil. Sexual gnosis, *pranayama* yoga, shamanic dance and the sweat lodge all are useful tools to discover and explore the images. As images become familiar, or suggestive, they should be evoked further, compared with existing (or not) belief systems and communication should be initiated.

The voice

The voice may inform the vision, as the vision the voice. Once again, gnosis is the key. During *pranayama* sessions, I would silently intone my mantra and use it to count my breath. This would then time my footsteps whilst the rest of my ego focused on looking where I was going. Something would still be there, observing, ever watching. What could it see? What did it look like? What did it think? Were its thoughts a voice, clearly detached from my own?

The "Game of Higher Intelligences" was mentioned in Robert Anton Wilson's excellent book "Schrodinger's Cat" as an excellent short cut to HGA consciousness. Normally there are two players. One player plays the role of human seeker, the other plays the role of extra terrestrial genius who is watching the world. The seeker asks the genius questions about some of the great problems faced by humanity. The alien intelligence responds, from its detached/disinterested perspective:

"Why is there so much violence and hatred amongst us"?".."

It is always that way on primitive planets... The early stages of evolution are never pretty...

"Do planets grow up?"...

"Some of them"...

"How?"...

"Through suffering enough they learn wisdom"...

"Through suffering... There's no other way."

"Not in the primitive stages... Primitives are too self centred to ask the important questions until suffering forces them to ask"...

(Robert Anton Wilson (1990) *Schrodinger's Cat Trilogy* [Orbit Books]).

The players then switch to dealing with personally relevant issues and have goes at swapping roles. I found an interesting method was to then try playing both roles alone...

WHAT NEXT?

The vision and the voice should eventually come together, complete with a fully fledged, working, state of the art HGA... in theory! This work is never fully complete. Visions inevitably shift, our experience of

different gnosis also shifts. As our perceptions change, so too do our HGA experiences. I used to think a name for the entity was important, but this, like the form it clothes itself in is merely a handle to grasp the otherwise intangible. Of course a fiery serpent is a powerful image to conjure for protection, but a beautiful, sexual being may have its appeals. The important point to remember is that the advantages that the HGA will bestow will only be bestowed to those who continue the relationship, which some call "The Great Work".

This essay was first published in *Chaos International* magazine, issue 23

Hoodoo

A presentation for "The Moot with No Name by Stephen Grasso, 4th August 2004

My talk is about the syncretic folk magic of the American south. Hoodoo, rootwork and conjure sorcery, and their place in contemporary occultism. The magic I practice is about speaking with Spirits, walking between worlds, making fetish items and weird potions, and getting things done practically and physically within the world. The first bit of magic I ever did when I was a kid was to accurately predict three winning horses for my dad at the racetrack. All three horses came in and my old man, quite bemusedly, gave me a ten-pound note for the tip. Inadvertently kick-starting my career in occultism and setting the tone for my subsequent experiments in magic

I didn't get into this stuff to invoke anybody's new aeon, or kick-start a self-indulgent magical current, or pretend to be some sort of ascended and enlightened post-human being, any such high flown endeavours. Bluntly and simply, I got into magic to be able to bring tangible benefit to both myself, and importantly, the people around me that I care about. Hoodoo practice delivers the goods on that front.

Hoodoo is ostensibly the folk magic of the Southern American states, but it can also be considered a melting pot of the world's sorceries. Like a big pot of Creole jambalaya, it's a mixture of all sorts of different unlikely ingredients that work well together. Its main components are African folk magic, European folk tradition, and Native American Herbalism. It shouldn't be confused or conflated with any of the African Diaspora religious traditions such as Haitian Voodoo, Cuban Santeria or Brazilian Candomble or Umbanda. Although there's a degree of cross-fertilisation involved as many hoodoo practitioners also make service to the Gods of these traditions, the Lwa and Orisha, and sometimes involve them in their work.

Hoodoo had its heyday in America during the late 19th and early 20th century. The bulk of its lore is African in origin and it was practiced mostly, although not exclusively, within black communities in the South. If you listen to pre-war blues music of the 20s and 30s it's steeped in hoodoo tradition, from the myth of Robert Johnson cutting a deal at the crossroads, to Memphis Minnie's recording of 'Hoodoo Lady'. The music of the period is a catalogue of references to folk magic. Robert Johnson's output alone yields up tracks such as 'Stones in my passway'. Which is a reference to the hoodoo practice of jinxing someone by laying out a series of stones in the shape of a cross in their path, often with a button belonging to the target placed in the centre as a sympathetic link. In the track 'Come on in my kitchen', Robert Johnson sings about stealing a nickel out of his woman's 'nation sack', which is a kind of mojo bag specifically prepared by female practitioners and carried by women. African folkloric practices such as crossroads magic, foot track magic, crossing and uncrossing, the creation of gris-gris bags, and the use of baths and washes are all at the core of hoodoo practice. I'll talk a bit about each of these:

Foot track magic involves working sorcery using the dirt from someone's footprint placed in a bottle, or else placing a sprinkling powder such as goofer dust or graveyard dirt inside someone's shoes or in a place they're likely to walk through, in order to administer a curse. An uncrossing is a method of removing crossed conditions, which could mean anything from an actual curse someone has put on you, to a run of bad luck, to a destructive behaviour pattern. An uncrossing operation is like a souped-up banishing ritual or psychic detox that purges your system of crossed conditions. Crossroads magic is a remnant of worship of the West African trickster deity known variously as Legba, Ellegua or Eshu. The Lord of the crossroads, opener of doorways and master of paths. Although in hoodoo his worship is often a stage removed from its African religious context. He is sometimes syncretised with the persona of the pagan teutonic devil, or simply referred to as "the black man at the crossroads" as in the Robert Johnson myths. Deals are made at the crossroads, power is gained, and magic is worked.

A gris-gris bag, also known as a mojo bag, lucky hand, toby or wanga bag, is an amulet in the form of a small cloth bag filled with various herbs, minerals or zoological items. It functions like a prayer in a bag, that you carry on your person concealed out of sight. A mojo bag might be constructed to bring luck in gambling, to attract love or sex, to draw in money or for any number of purposes. It might contain objects such as lodestones, a racoon's penis bone, hair from a black cat, a silver dime, dirt from the crossroads, alligator teeth, or whatever items might be appropriate to the working at hand.

The use of baths and floor washes in hoodoo generally involves straining a mixture of herbs into water like a tea, which is then added to a person's bath water for a variety of purposes, such as the removal of bad luck. Often these herbal mixtures might be added to water and used to wash the floor of a house or place of work to bring blessings or improve business.

Harry Middleton Hyatt's exhaustive five volume compendium of oral history *Hoodoo-Conjuration-Witchcraft-Rootwork*, consisting of interviews with rootworkers and hoodoo docs recorded between 1936 and 1940, contains a wealth of variations on these formulas and many more besides.

These African folkloric practices are central to hoodoo sorcery, however it's also a multi-ethnic blend of practical sorcery techniques, with many diverse and sometimes unlikely influences coming into the mix. Much of the botanical lore is Native American in origin, as African magicians taken from their homeland during the slave trade communicated and shared information with the disenfranchised original occupants of the New World, in order to learn the strange new language of roots and herbs indigenous to the Americas. For example, hoodoo makes great use of American botanical items such as high john the conqueror root and devils shoestring.

There's also a fair helping of European and Kabbalistic influences present in hoodoo. This ranges from the kind of magic practiced by "cunning folk" in Europe such as homespun methods for seeing the face of your future husband, to the utilisation of magical formulas such as the Sator Arepo Tenet Opera Rotas square. Hoodoo also soaked up and utilised a lot of material from what might be called the Anglo-Germanic "wonder-book" tradition, and many early 20th century mail order suppliers of hoodoo materials also stocked popular works such as "Albertus Magnus' Egyptian Secrets", "The Black Pullet" and John George Hoffman's "Pow Wows, or the long lost friend". The modus operandi in hoodoo was very much - if it works, use it. Interestingly, there's also a strong element of Christian and Jewish mysticism present in hoodoo. Such as the use of various seals and sigils from western sources such as the 'Key of Solomon', which are often utilised outside the context of the original rites and rituals they came from and incorporated directly into hoodoo workings on their own merits.

The Bible itself was often considered a primary source for magical lore. For instance, the use of the herb Hyssop as a purifying agent in hoodoo uncrossings originates from the passage in Psalm 51 that says: "Purge me with Hyssop, wash me and I shall be whiter than snow".

The psalms became a key component of hoodoo practice mostly due to the popularity of the text *Secrets of the Psalms* by Godfrey Selig. Selig was a member of a late 17th century German millenarian sect called the 'Monks of the Wissahickon'. The general theme of Selig's book is that the words of scripture contain magical power, and that by vibrating the names of God, passages from the Bible, and suchlike, certain magical effects could be accomplished - a theory that's not a million miles away from the principles of western quaballa, as utilised by ceremonial magic groups such as the Golden Dawn. According to Selig's text, the recitation of various psalms combined with certain actions could ensure such results as a release from prison, a successful business, safe childbirth, help in court cases, an end to malicious gossip, and so on.

This penchant for Biblical source materials and pseudo-Jewish mysticism led to the popularity of books such as "The 6th and 7th books of Moses". A collection of Middle Eastern and European magical formulas attributed to the author of the first five books of the Bible, containing various seals and incantations that added some Old Testament fire and brimstone to popular hoodoo practice. The popularity of "The 6th and 7th Books of Moses" amongst hoodoo practitioners in turn led to the publication of the "8th, 9th and 10th Books of Moses" written by Henri Gamache. The bulk of this text is in a similar vein but is of particular interest due to the lengthy foreword, written by Gamache, that links African tribal beliefs with ancient Jewish and Egyptian practices. Gamache asserts that Moses, the leader of the Jews, was a black African sorcerer, "the great Voodoo Man of the Bible" with command over snakes and great sorcery at his disposal.

His theories were possibly influenced by the socio-political writings of Marcus Garvey and the Rastafari notion of the transported black nation as being the lost tribe of Israel. As an aside, there is actually a 60s reggae track by The Maytals that I haven't heard called "Six and Seven Books of Moses".

Henry Gamache was also the author of another influential hoodoo text called the *Master Book of Candle Burning*. During the 19th century candles became a mass produced item, available in general stores in a variety of colours. The use of candles in hoodoo practice probably came out of New Orleans where the Roman Catholic tradition of lighting votive candles to the Saints had begun to merge with the folk magic and traditions of African-Americans living in the City. This new way of working with candles in hoodoo practice spread throughout the southern states and by the late 1940s had become an essential part of the hoodoo workers repertoire. Gamache's work is a textbook of instructions on "how to burn candles for every purpose".

Whilst the core of hoodoo candle burning is similar to the style of candle burning popularised by authors such as Ray Buckland and fairly prevalent in Wiccan and new age practice. There are several distinct differences. Some of the colour correspondences follow the western planetary attributions, but others differ, for instance money drawing magic would require a green candle probably due to the colour of US dollar bills. Other differences in colour usage may be derived from traditional African colour attributions.

One of the most notable differences between hoodoo candle magic and the kind that has become popular in mainstream occultism is the emphasis on the use of condition oils. Sometimes cooked up by the practitioner, sometimes mass-produced and bought through mail order specialists - condition oils are extracted from various roots and herbs and applied to the candles prior to burning. In hoodoo practice, condition oils are named fairly directly after what they do, so we have: Run Devil Run Oil, Follow Me Boy Oil, I Can, You Can't Oil, Fast Luck, Kiss Me Now, Fiery Wall of Protection and Black Arts Oil, amongst many other. These concoctions are also used to dress amulets and mojo bags or to anoint the hoodoo workers forehead to make a link a between the candle burning and the practitioners will.

Hoodoo candles are available in many different shapes and sizes. There are glass encased seven day devotional candles with magical inscriptions or pictures of the Saints on their exterior - the wax sometimes mixed with appropriate herbs. There are candles in the shape of black cats, skulls, the cross, the devil, a married couple, or a male or female effigy. All of which can be dressed with condition oil and readily incorporated into sympathetic magic. Candles are available with notches showing you where to nod out the working at the end of the night, so that it burns evenly over seven or nine days. There are double action candles with the wax divided into two different colours for setting multiple influences in motion, and reversible candles with a different colour wax inside and outside, for instances where you want to remove a jinx and then send it back.

Another influence on hoodoo is spiritism, or espiritismo as its known in Latin America. Spiritism was founded by 19th century French author Allan Kardec and is an offshoot of Spiritualism. It became very popular amongst practitioners of Santeria in Cuba, as a means of re-connecting to ancestor worship. The mysteries of honouring the dead were the provenance of the Egungun Societies in West African Yoruban culture, but this body of knowledge was lost to many Africans following their dispersion throughout the new world. Espiritismo provided a new and accessible technology for speaking with the dead. The medium conducting a Spiritist séance became possessed by the ancestors or spiritual guides, in much the same way that the Orisha ride the celebrants during a Santeria ceremony. Spiritism also provided a more acceptable means of practising the ancestral religions openly, due to the general fashion for all things spiritualist during the late 19th century.

Similarly, Spiritist practices found their way into hoodoo. A hoodoo worker might keep a Spiritist altar consisting of a white sheet draped over a table, with a white candle, a crucifix and glass of fresh water placed on it. Spiritual guides would be called in a mediumistic fashion and asked to intervene in workings or to relay messages from beyond. Ouija boards became available from hoodoo mail order suppliers, and used to speak with the dead. For the practice of magic, hoodoo workers might house their spiritual contacts in Spirit Jars or a Spirit Box - a hoodoo variation on the mysterious Spirit cauldron in the religion of Palo Mayombe. These devices might be used in combination with hoodoo methods of candle burning to accomplish a variety of effects, feeding the spirits with candies or other small offerings to entice or coerce them into lending their power to the operation.

Hoodoo practice is about getting things done. The hoodoo practitioner, trick worker, conjure worker, root doctor, is a professional magician offering a range of services to his or her community, and as such could be considered an early modern permutation of the shamanic role. It has parallels with the services provided by cunning folk in British Society from the medieval period to the early 19th century, but it is very much alive and well within certain communities in the 21st century. Many of the botanica's in London, that primarily supply the Santeria community and practitioners of African Traditional Religions in the capital, also stock a large supply of hoodoo materials. There are several mail order suppliers in existence that sell hoodoo paraphernalia internationally and many of the books mentioned earlier remain very much in print. However, hoodoo practice and many of the methods that it employs tend not to get much exposure in contemporary western occultism, and more often than not seem to get overlooked as tacky huckster-ism or the invention of snake oil salesmen peddling their wares. Much more cultural cache is given to the pseudo-masonic rituals of ceremonial magic, or the various pop-science and pop-psychology endorsed methods of contemporary sorcery.

Don't get me wrong, hoodoo is tacky, with its banishing aerosol cans, "All night long" anointing oils, and reversible double jinx candles. But it's also a fascinating, valid and particularly potent form of magical practice. I think that the more commercial end of hoodoo has its own level of validity and cheesy store bought items can play a part in general practice, but I think the actual mechanism of rootwork and hoodoo practice certainly demand a closer look by anyone interested in sorcery and results magic - from either a practical or academic perspective.

From my own experience of working with hoodoo, it tends to encourage a level of engagement with your environment and openness to creativity that is often missing from a lot of contemporary practice. It could be argued that when late 20th century currents such as chaos magic got rid of the bubbling cauldrons and eye of newt, they were throwing the baby out with the bath water.

The physical process of making up gris-gris bags, uncrossing baths, sprinkling powders, condition oils and the like introduces an element of creativity largely missing from a lot of approaches to results magic. It's not sorcery that takes place within a safe centrally heated flat. You have to go out and walk the streets to get what you need, and that questing process is where I think a lot of the interesting stuff happens. In my own work I might use a combination of traditional hoodoo ingredients acquired from a supplier, along with items that I've drifted for. Literally walking the streets of the City, under the guidance of ally spirits, looking for ingredients to go into the magic. Curious plants growing between paving stones, discarded bus tickets, dirt collected from old London power spots, creepy items seen in charity shop windows, strange objects found in dark alleyways.

All functioning as totemic items feeding into the magic. Over time, an entire language of ingredients begins to develop out of your practice - a personal hoodoo Quabala made out of the things that exist in the streets where you live. It's an instinctive magic that grows organically out of what you're doing. It's not cobbled together on a wet afternoon over a cup of tea and a copy of Crowley's 777. It's alive and within the world. The process of collecting ingredients can be thought of as a two-way dialogue between the practitioner and the universe, or the spirits, or however you may wish to frame it. Items won from a lengthy, difficult or possibly dangerous hoodoo drift take on a numinosity that transforms them from unusual or even mundane objects into holy relics and powerful totemic items.

A bit of plastic with the word "win" written on it added to a gris-gris bag for success, becomes more than the sum of its parts if you acquired it by following a fragment of map found at the crossroads to a dodgy bar in the East End, where a combination of a song on the radio and an overheard conversation inspired you to prize the totem object off a fruit machine - resulting in six enraged skinheads and a terrifying chase across London.

Even the action of collecting store bought items can be considered as part of a questing process. For example, what sort of situations might you find yourself in if you were hunting for something like Four Thieves Vinegar in London, let alone a Raccoon's penis bone? For that matter, where would you go to get something fairly plausible such as lodestones or magnetic sand?

Learning where to find your ingredients re-shapes your understanding of the City and its psychogeography at a magical level. The process you go through in constructing items such as gris gris bags and condition oils is as much a part of the magic as the items themselves. I think comparisons can be made with the stern admonitions in medieval grimoires to go out and forge your own magical sword, or construct your own hooded robe, etc... Engaging with these processes takes you on an initiatory journey, and working sorcery in hoodoo seems to function as a more accessible backyard formula for setting in motion that kind of process. 7, 9 or 13 hoodoo ingredients, each one a potent symbol of your desire, wrapped together in a red cloth, and ritually sewn up on the altar. Placed between 2 red candles dressed in "Fast Luck" Oil and a white candle dressed in "Van Van" Oil, the oils themselves created by hand, mixed from ingredients collected on previous drifts. Words of power read over them. Spirits called. Drums beaten. Magic worked. To my mind, practising hoodoo - with all its paraphernalia, weird stuff in jars, spirit communication and lucky mojo - feels like what magic's meant to feel like, and I think there's power in that. It taps into something primal. Sure, you can work magic with a sigil drawn on a post-it note in felt-tip pen, but that approach has its boundaries and limitations when it comes to practical application.

I think that hoodoo sorcery addresses a lot of the limitations of contemporary results magic. For instance, the sigil method - whereby a statement of intent, such as "I want a bag of crisps" is reduced to an abstract glyph and then ritually charged during an altered state of consciousness - has experienced a rapid growth in popularity over the last ten years due to its accessibility and ease of practice. However it does have its limitations that are rarely addressed.

The sigil method is often approached as if it were a 'one size fits all' solution to every magical endeavour. Need a new job? Do a sigil. Want to sort out a troublesome neighbour? Do a Sigil. Looking for a rare book? Sigil. Want to promote world peace? Sigil. Cat stuck up a tree? Sigil.

However the only way to really refine and target a sigil is by tinkering with the initial statement of intent, and by being really precise with the language you're using to cover as many variables as possible. Some magicians seem to tie themselves up in knots over the wording of the spell, which can sometimes lead to an over-intellectualisation of the processes at work - a phenomena quite removed from the ideas of artist and occultist Austin Osman Spare, from whose writings the sigil method is ultimately derived.

For instance, I've come across people who have this whole other sigil that functions as a kind of "legal disclaimer" that they then append to whatever sigil they're firing to try and cover themselves for any unforeseen eventualities:

"The content of this sigil does not necessarily reflect the true will of the practitioner. Whilst the practitioner endeavours to make sure that this sigil is accurate and contains nothing prejudicial to the position or reputation of any party, the caster shall not be liable for any karmic damages arising in contract, extradimensional or otherwise from this sigil, or from any action or decision taken as a result of charging this sigil"

I mean, what's that all about? It's almost to the point where people are getting so hung up over their statement of intent that their getting a lawyer in to have a look over it prior to charging, just in case there's anything in there that the butterfly effect might misinterpret. Just stop!

In contrast to this, hoodoo allows you to take a very hands-on approach to sorcery. For instance, if someone needs a job, you make up a money-drawing bag and give it to them. If someone has chronic bad luck, you prepare an uncrossing bath for them. If someone is bothering you at work, you mix up some hot foot powder and sprinkle it under their desk.

Over the last ten years this old school 'get your hands dirty' approach to results magic seems to have been suffering a bit of a decline in popularity, to the point that a lot of magicians seemingly don't know how to direct and target results magic towards real life situations that they might encounter.

I came across a situation recently on an occult web forum, where someone was looking for advice on magic to protect a friend from an abusive partner. The extent of the suggestions they were given were just variations on the sigil method, with a few warnings to get the statement of intent right.

In the same situation a hoodoo practitioner would have any number of possible approaches to explore, and have the ability to tailor the selected method to the specific situation at hand. For instance, you could make up a mojo bag to give to the person as a protective amulet. Or you could ask for some of their personal concerns and construct a doll of them, taking it to a place of power in the city and marking out a circle in

protection oil, barbed wire and stinging nettles. Or you could get a photo of the abusive partner and burn a purple candle on it, dressed in Commanding oil. Or wrap an item of his clothing around a high john the conqueror root, place it in a jar with vinegar and other materials, then bury it in his front garden late at night. Or any combination or variation on the above. There's no one size fits all formula. Every situation where magical intervention might be required has to be closely examined and responded to on its own terms. You never quite do the same working twice.

The role of hoodoo worker, as I interpret and try to aspire to, is a profession. Possibly the world's second oldest profession. It's about becoming very good at results magic, in order to administer grassroots occult assistance to the body of people that might loosely be considered your community. Doing stuff for other people. Providing a service to those who need it. Not out of some lofty altruistic sense of duty, but because it's the obvious application of those particular skills. To do otherwise would be like the surgeon who studies medicine for ten years only to perform minor operations on himself, or the barrister who only ever represents himself in court.

If you're operating from the hypothesis that magic works and tangible results can be accomplished through the medium of sorcery, then I think you really have to consider the social implications of that statement. How does the magic that you practice relate directly to the world around you? How do you integrate it into your life and adapt that potentiality for change to the environment you are a part of?

For instance, how many people here tonight that identify as practising witches or magicians or whatever, regularly use their magic to actively engage with the problems that might be going on around them? Helping people you care about, using the magic to look out for friends and family when they're having a rough time, even becoming involved in local community problems at a magical level, keeping the local arts centre open, stopping a small business from going under at the hands of corporations, sorting out the bunch of kids that bricked your next door neighbours window, finding lost property, healing the sick, giving divination, using this stuff to try and make a difference in whatever small way that you might be able to. It strikes me that a lot of people don't seem to even think about sorcery in these terms, or relate their practice directly to the world around them, and I'm interested in why that is. I think there's almost a tendency to shove the whole issue of "doing magic for other people" into a box marked "shamanism" and forget about it, as if shamanism is a completely separate "system" of magic entirely divorced from "chaos magic" or "Thelema" or whatever flavour people happen to identify with. "All that 'serving the community' stuff? It's a calling isn't it, shamanism, on a different shelf in the occult bookstore mate, nowt to do with me". I think that's a load of bollocks. If you can make stuff happen, then using that ability to intervene in situations that really desperately need some kind of intervention, is not some magical mystical "shamanic" vocation. It's just taking responsibility for your skills and what you can do. The world seems to be at a crisis point. You could argue that there's no time for all the theoretical dilettante shit that characterises much of contemporary occultism, no time for magic as an entertaining hobby or diverting little parlour game. If you want a hobby take up knitting or fisting. If you're going to be spending countless hours of your life studying and practising magic, then at least think about finding something tangible and practical to do with it.

Some plausible reasons why people seem to shy away from functioning in this sort of capacity are a lack of confidence in their own magical abilities and perhaps a squeamishness about getting involved magically in a live situation and making a load of mistakes. Making things worse. Meddling in something that should be left well alone. All of which are valid concerns, but the ability to navigate the various grey areas of a complex real life situation, and act decisively and with confidence to bring about a positive resolution, is part of a hoodoo workers stock-in-trade.

There's more to the hoodoo worker skill set than knowing how to stick pins in dolls and knock together a "Let's get it on" mojo bag. The hardest part of the job is often knowing when to act, when not to act, how much pressure to apply and where to apply it. These are skills that you can't get out of any book. You learn them by doing. There's no better way to sharpen up your sorcery skills than to put them to the test in a real world situation where a tangible outcome denotes success or failure. And there's no space for power trips or self aggrandisement when your skills are constantly being put to the test on a weekly basis.

Similarly, the only way to gain confidence and expertise in applying magic effectively and with precision within the world around you, is by gaining experience in the field - by engaging magically with the world and all that it involves. You might well get your fingers burned one or two times, and inadvertently trigger the occasional magical crisis that you have to then try and resolve. But these experiences, as unpleasant and potentially fraught as they might be at the time, are often where the real learning gets done. The role of hoodoo worker can be looked on as an initiatory journey in itself, with its own distinct challenges and rewards - and to my mind, is worth closer exploration by anyone involved or interested in contemporary occultism. For more of Stephen Grasso's work visit his website: Molotavia

A large glass of the best rum in the house to *Catherine Yronwode*, whose work, research and stunningly brilliant website luckymojo.com provided most of the historical background for the first half of this presentation, and remains the best resource for information on hoodoo on the web and in print. Respect.

The Horns of Heresy

by Ray Sherwin

In a pluralist system such as Chaos Magick, symbols, rather than ending up on the scrapheap of *reductio absurdum*, tend to become more useful than they were in the system out of which they were lifted. This has been demonstrated quite adequately by champions of Discordianism such as Robert Anton Wilson. I make no apology, therefore, for using an ancient magical symbol to make what is an overtly political point. In any case, so much paranoid nonsense has been written about the symbol in question, notably by Eliphas Levi and the scribes of the Golden Dawn, that to treat it to a breath of fresh air can do no harm. I refer to the sign of the pentagram.

Anyone who has toyed with the pentagram for more than twenty seconds will have observed that it has two aspects, the first with one point uppermost, the second with two points uppermost. According to the dogma of the old magick, the former is a symbol of spirit in dominion over the four base elements and is therefore good, the latter, having two points uppermost, like the Christian devil, is obviously and undeniably evil. Why occultists have accepted his bizarre Christian double-think is a matter for conjecture. I suspect it has a great deal to do with the laziness brought about by a symbol-system which, superficially, is complete and ready to use. Has anyone out there noticed that the upright pentagram is emblazoned on the American tanks poised and ready to roll into Nicaragua? Has anyone noticed that despite its supposed evil connotations no war has ever been waged under the banner of the so-called averse pentagram? I must admit that these are not wholeheartedly serious points, unless something much more sinister than Eliphas Levi's doomy proposition is afoot. This is, however, not altogether unlikely. As politics becomes more and more sinister the attitude of magicians towards the *status quo* must necessarily change, not only so that their freedom can be maintained but also to encourage non-magicians to avoid the spiritual imprisonment and financial bias of the Establishment. At the moment, however, the Establishment is unshakeable and the upright pentagram is a suitable symbol to express why that should be so.

The Establishment

A. It has always suited governments and religions to encourage the masses to believe in fate or destiny - one possible future, which may be predicted but which under no circumstances can be avoided. In a political sense this is an outrageous lie. When that lie is successful, individuals become the puppets of the combined Establishment forces and can be manipulated beyond the ethics and moralities into which they have already been conditioned to believe.

B. There have always been people who gain power by claiming superior spiritual knowledge. The priesthood of the Middle Kingdom of Ancient Egypt is a perfect example of this. They made the transition from the enlightened Old Kingdom to the repressive new order with no trouble at all, necessarily sacrificing the caring attitude they had previously held for the people, in return for secular power. This transition cost them their integrity, and without integrity a priesthood is nothing. In most parts of the world organized religion either belongs to or is the Establishment, having sold its integrity in return for power. In order to maintain that power religions have to support the Establishment, even though this might mean the neglect or even the contradiction of the religious laws they claim to support.

The Christian Church is a marvelous model of this kind of idiocy. There are few occultists who would deny the value of Christ's moral teachings; although not overtly, most have, at least partly, accepted those teachings as guidelines of conduct. The magician's argument with Christianity begins with Paul, who diluted and distorted the original message in order to make the forming Church acceptable to the Establishment of Rome. It was from this point that the most important and far-reaching tenets such as 'treat your neighbour as yourself' and 'do not kill' were glossed with additions which allowed those laws to be suspended for the benefit of the State which, after all, upheld the Church. This explains why an essentially pacifist religion has managed to uphold brutality and savagery up to the present. Here's a brief catalogue of Christian triumphs to illustrate the point.

1) The Church actively encouraged various European States to ally themselves and bring about the downfall of what was the most civilized society in the world. The crusades heralded the so-called 'age of chivalry'.

2) Christian missionaries were themselves responsible for the annihilation of the Tasmanian Aborigines. This 'mission' took about two years. The heads of the victims were sent to the UK in their thousands. There must, after all, be some psychological reason why these savages were unconvertable.

3) The Third Reich was upheld by the Church. Adolf Hitler took his watchword for women, *Kirche, Küche, Kinder*, very seriously.

4) Between the fifteenth and seventeenth centuries six million people were tortured and burned to death in the name of Christ. The TV presenter who suggested recently that this was all part of the prevailing world-view and that the inquisitors thought they were doing it all for the best was making a diabolical justification. The inquisitors were mean bastards who relished what they were doing. They will do the same again if they are allowed the opportunity. As I said to the man from the Campus Campaign for Christ: 'If there is a representative of Satan in this room, then judging by results, you are he.'

C. Banks support governments; governments support banks. While the British Government urged a predetermined war on the mineworkers in its ostensible determination not to support pits that were seen by many as being quite viable, destroying the lives of people and communities in the process, it was pumping millions of pounds into a bank which had totally collapsed.* Our inner cities changed so drastically in the sixties because the bankers speculated with money housed with them by people paying into pension schemes. In attempting to secure their futures by using the banking system people unwittingly contributed to the destruction of their heritage. As far as Establishment financial institutions are concerned, people and their culture run a poor second to profit.

D. If you want to know where the Establishment is and what it's doing watch television. Advertising is the sorcery of the twentieth century since it persuades people to part with their money in exchange for goods which they neither need nor want. It does this in the most insidious ways, playing on the conditioning to which we have all been subject since birth. Twenty-four-hour television is not far away. It keeps the masses happy and programmes them into the Establishment's one-pointed, no-choices approach. Education, in the wrong hands, can have the same results. At its worst it is no better than Establishment propaganda.

E. Ignorance is not merely the absence of knowledge. It is also the limitation of one's world-view. It is quite possible to understand the workings of the world in which one lives without knowing anything about the wars of Troy. The world-view of an individual ensnared within the Establishment pentagram however, is, by definition, enslaving.

New Conspiracy

For some years now conspiracy theory has ruled supreme. The Jews and the Masons are in it together with the bankers and other rather more sinister groups with members in very high places. They control everything that happens, steering the rest of us in any direction which pleases them. For most people who accept the theory, it is at least a comfort to realize that whatever goes wrong, at least they're not responsible. I differ from the usual theory only in respect of who's doing it and why. Most of us are, unwittingly, the perpetrators of the conspiracy through our own acquiescence. Any contribution made by an individual to the Establishment pentagram increases the hold of the Establishment on himself and on everyone else. Buy

The Sun and you contribute; refer to members of the Convoy as 'hippies' as does the BBC and you contribute. There may well be a number of ill-intentioned politicians and racketeers actually manipulating situations but we are all responsible for the situations themselves. The problem which Chaos Magick first addresses is how to prevent oneself being imprisoned by Establishment values and how to break the chains of events which threaten the freedom of choice and action of all members of society (whether they realize it or not). An analysis of the alternative pentagram will illuminate some of the answers.

1 & 2. The two points uppermost represent the horns of heresy. In its true sense 'heresy' means choice, and in this case it is the choice of the initiate (of whatever) to create his own future by his thoughts and actions through examining the impositions made upon him by the Establishment in terms of his will or magical formula. This does not mean diverging from the norm for the sake of being different - it means a constant and concerted effort to examine prevailing conditions in order to know how to react to them and frequent meditation to discover what initiatives to take. If this were to happen across the various strata of society, organized religion would begin to crumble, since it must be supported by individuals and individualism does not allow for its existence in any form that we would recognize today. Without organized religion there would be no one to teach the pseudo-morals of the State (patriotism, killing for expediency etc.) and the people would be awakened to the possibility of examining situations for what they are, rather than in terms of good and evil or other arbitrary conditions. Exponents of Chaos Magick have always emphasized the necessity to avoid dogma. This applies as much to mundane dogma (which might just as well be called prejudice) as it does to one's magical attitude. Emphasis has also been placed on individualism. When the group ethic, whether it be a magical group or a political party or a nation, outweighs the needs and demands of the individual, the individual is sacrificed on the altar of compromise or, even worse, is victimized for the benefit of the majority. Ultimately, when individualism is outranked by the dynamics of the group, the only people to benefit are the ones who control that group.

3. The right kind of education - that is, by informed people whose aim is not to suppress or control.

4. The magical techniques themselves. Within this category should be included all forms of human endeavour whose practise teaches us about ourselves. All types of meditation and ritual and most forms of art should be looked into as alternatives. The right kind of faith is invaluable in the few people who genuinely have it. By 'right kind' I mean faith that is informed by self or by one's own understanding of the divine, rather than blind faith in someone else's distorted picture. If you don't know where to start read *Liber Null* (for individual work) or *The Cardinal Rites of Chaos* (for group work).

5. The true will. This is the only real guide you've got. It is not something that comes in a blinding flash of inspiration, nor is it easy to define, even when you've been meditating on it for years. But those meditations pay off when you have something against which to measure everything else. Your will demonstrates your position in the universe. Any action which strengthens that position should be taken; any action which weakens it should be avoided (so long as your karma still tastes sweet afterwards).**

* JMB

** Show a Christian Crowley's *Liber Oz* and he will gasp in indignant horror at the line 'Man has the right to kill those who would thwart these rights'. Ask him what Christian teaching has to say on this subject and he will say 'Thou shalt not kill', despite the Church's genocidal past. Personally I don't like rules of personal conduct, but if we're going to accept any they may as well reflect integrity. The Oz Ikiné in question does not allow for war. The man you're pointing your gun at may not have thwarted your rights at all - how can you tell? The civilians onto whom you are about to pour a bayful of bombs cannot possibly have thwarted your rights. If you look at a war situation logically (and in this case thelemically) the people who should be killed are the ones who caused you and the soldiers on the other's team to confront one another. An enemy uniform does not, in itself, signify an enemy.

The Ice War

by as remembered by Stokastikos

Maybe we saved western magick from a fate worse than the Fourth Reich or the Jim Jones Guyana Massacre, or maybe a few occult-sized egos merely created a tsunami in a teacup over money, sex and power, as per usual. Several Order historians have asked me for my version and I present it here. Synonyms disguise the identities of all the guilty except me.

I never met the Ice Lord, nor ever saw his image, during the whole conflict, and he declined a challenge to meet me in person at the siege of Castle L??..s, during one of the major battles of the campaign. I think I know his birth name, but he remains a shadowy figure, by all accounts intensely charismatic and dangerous. I cannot claim to have defeated him, for I merely fought his minions and thwarted his aims. The Chancellor or "Kohl", as I shall call him for reasons of girth, first spoke to me about the Ice Lord on the eve of our best ever combined seminar and Order meeting at Castle R?s. According to Kohl, the Ice Lord's theories and methods lay aeons ahead of anything our magical order got up to. As a reputed master of internal martial arts, the Ice Lord could apparently deliver lightning bolts with his fingertips and paralyse adversaries at a distance. He also apparently demanded and got total slavish obedience from his followers, and I later heard that he had seventy of them disappear completely from society to work in his factory and live in his dormitory. Kohl, who favoured a decidedly old-aeon authoritarian master-acolyte approach to magick, could hardly contain his excitement at the prospect of such power. I found all this highly alarming, as Kohl seemed likely to lose interest in what we had created together, in favour of what the Ice Lord apparently had to offer. Using mainly my ideas and his contacts and organizational skills, we had created a blossoming magical order doing much innovative work. The Order, by now just four years old, met annually in an Austrian castle for a fortnight of work, fun, sex and ideas exchange. Temples had sprung up all over the westernized world and the Order attracted a lot of heavyweight talent. We made the Golden Dawn look like a dull parochial garden party, and left the Caliphate OTO nursing a paradigm half a century past its sell-by-date.

I did not want to see our creation go down the drain, so I restrained my distaste and scepticism about what Kohl had to say, and we went ahead with the seminar and Order meeting. We both gave the performance of a lifetime. Everybody had a wild ecstatic time, and Kohl and I quite amicably had a scene with Soror Babs, a sorceress of his previous acquaintance. Then I went back to the UK to tend my own temple and to prepare for next year's bash. I also made a trip to America and authorised Babs to set up a Section of the Order there. Everything looked good until reports began to filter in that Kohl had started taking Order members to the Ice Lord. Much that some of them reported sounded alarming. Even now I know very little about "Ice Magick" (Kohl's term for it, apparently, not the Ice Lord's). Reports spoke of Aryan supremacism, survivalist paranoia, and cultic levels of obedience. My heart sank: the usual aeons old crap with a charismatic figure, this time with a few good tricks up his sleeve, pandering to cultural fears and desires, with probably enough intelligence to make it all end in tears bigtime if he got hold of a suitable communications infrastructure, i.e., my Order!

Shortly before the next annual seminar and Order meeting, scheduled for Castle L??..s in Austria, I sent a hailstorm of memos to all Sections and Temples alerting them to my suspicions. Kohl went utterly thermonuclear and spent an hour ranting at me on the phone. He then cancelled my appearance at the impending event. He could do this as he had made the Seminar and accommodation arrangements. However, the membership forced him to recant, and I eventually got on a plane with a rucksack full of heavy duty magical weaponry, including a huge oversize dagger acquired from a leading American occult swordsmith with a thirteen-inch drop-forged carbon steel blade, ironwood grip, phosphor bronze fittings which had had no expense spared, was bought without haggling, was aether-fixed and consecrated to Baphomet knows what—in short, the business. I also bore an alpha-helix beechwood staff, found for me in a forest by the love of my life; quite by chance, or so it seemed. Thus equipped, I arrived in Vienna and lodged with the two Black Brothers, rather than in the apartments of the Head of the Austrian Section, as Kohl had taken up residence there. The Black Brothers had acquired a reputation as Gnostic extremists within the Order and, although I had always got on with them, a sub-plot partly involving a woman but mainly involving a lot of power, had developed between them and leaders of various Sections of the Order.

Eventually I confronted Kohl over a table in the apartments of the Section Head. Grim accusations of treachery, deceit, and megalomania flew back and forth for several hours with no ground given. You could not have cut the aether between us with an industrial grade exorcism. Perhaps only the presence of the aristocratic Section Head prevented the massively-built Kohl and my athletic self from seeking a resolution on the physical plane. In the end we left it at stalemate, and in ill humour, started to put together a seminar programme.

The next day the atmosphere lightened slightly as members arrived in Vienna from all over the westernized world, but by now the Order had a serious schism and would divide into two camps. The Head of the UK Section arrived with his other half and the UK contingent including Frater Hardman who would play a minor role. Soror Babs, on whom I mistakenly thought I could rely, arrived with Soror Sapphia, who took instant exception to the accommodation arrangements of Babs and I. The Swiss and Germans arrived, and a single representative came from Australia who was a mild and pleasant chap whom nobody had met and whose New Age background had ill prepared him for the battle zone he walked into.

Soon after we all arrived at the castle, an emergency Council of National Section Heads demanded the excommunication of one of the Black Brothers for having upset most of those present. I argued for suspension but finally reluctantly agreed, to keep the peace. Immediately afterwards a tense situation developed in the castle courtyard when we confronted the Brothers with the Council's decision. After a certain amount of acrimonious debate it seemed that they would both leave with their followers, but then the excommunicant followed the Austrian No.2 into the toilets and attacked him. The mighty Kohl got to the scene first and drove him off. They left, but after the meeting the Austrian No.2 found what looked like the remains of a gruesome sacrifice on his home doorstep. (One suspects that the materials for the seeming sacrifice probably came from a local deerhunter.)

The Seminar did not go particularly well. Kohl led a few introductory Ice Magick exercises whose purpose remained impenetrable to those present. An individual hunting game I had devised for out-of-hours honing of parapsychological skills degenerated into a conflict between Ice or Kohl sympathetic participants against the rest. The Order meeting itself took place after a disgraceful series of initiations orchestrated by Kohl for seminar survivors who wished to apply to the Order and stay on for its meeting. At this event Kohl, as Magister Templi, seemed to betray a subconscious contempt for the Order by reducing the initiations to little more than the sort of hazing ceremonies typical of American collegiate life. Hell only knows why I did not intervene. The Order lost a member or two with interesting prospects that afternoon. I do not blame them. The meeting itself became mired down at many points with debates about procedures and precedents and rules, and with what seemed to many, attempts by Kohl to introduce authoritarian and centralist measures. The majority of the Germans present seemed to side with Kohl and they occupied the dungeon-like taverna each evening, whilst the Austrians and Brits tended to socialize on the terraces. The UK Section Head and his other half floated from camp to camp. Only later did I realize that they had far more interest in what the Ice Magick might have to offer them than I had suspected. Conspiracies, factions, and private briefings sprung up everywhere amongst the forty plus magicians present. In the generally bad-tempered atmosphere, Soror Babs changed her allegiances and her accommodation, although not directly in favour of Kohl. I sought amusement with Soror Sapphia who made for me an exception to her usual preferences. An element of revenge on both our parts probably coloured this interaction.

The crescendo came on the last night, Kohl having made it plain that he did not intend to allow me to participate in future events of the Order that he effectively organized. Some of the young bloods of the Order (mainly Austrian) had planned a ritual to inaugurate a temple of a decidedly non-Ice Magick persuasion, and they asked me to officiate at midnight. Here at last, at the eleventh hour, I saw a glimmer of hope. I stormed about the castle with the sword-dagger thrust ostentatiously in a belt, drumming up support. My last ritual as effective Head of the Order awaited me, I did not intend to go quietly.

Minutes before midnight I stood on the steps leading to the temple cavern (our Order gets venues that you would not believe) and, brandishing the mega-dagger with a mad, glassy stare, I yelled out to those who were with us to join us. A number of Kohl-Ice sympathetic members retreated from the confusion in the courtyard to the tavern. I then stormed into the temple and gave what I experienced as the most wild and electrifying Mass of Chaos of my career. I more or less hijacked the ritual into celebration of Chaos Magick over Ice Magick in the eyes of many of those present. "What the hell have you done?" asked a top Austrian magus. I could not answer. Flushed with the extreme gnosis of it all, I charged down to the taverna and

announced to Kohl's table that I would be the "last to leave". Of all the magical acts that I have performed in this life, this seemed to me amongst the most important. Kohl prided himself on his ability to have the last word in any session lasting into the small hours. So often in the past I had eventually, after copious sacraments, conceded at best a metaphysical armistice, pleaded exhaustion, deferred to his stamina, and gone to bed. But not on this night. I gathered to me Frater Hardman, (whom Kohl mistakenly thought he had bought with promises of lecture tours), and Soror Crazy, (an old flame who had turned up at the last moment "to save the Order" or maybe me, in her own inimitable style). Highly-strung women seem to make the best sorceresses, or perhaps the attitude develops with the job. At my insistence the three of us sat at a table with hands joined in a triangle whilst I shouted bizarre occasional comments at Kohl and his entourage. Most people present probably thought me mad. Madman strategy works, however, as I have discovered. If you appear prepared to do ANYTHING to beat the other bastard, you probably will. Reagan and Thatcher won the Cold War with such a tactic better dead than red—I respect their balls and ovaries. Eventually, at about three in the morning, Kohl led his followers out first. Soror Crazy and Frater Hardman seemed at the end of their respective tethers; I thank them for their fortitude, I was hallucinating. The Order meeting ended rather somberly the following afternoon with many uncertainties about the future. I handed the Great Ring of the Order to Frater Hardman to represent me by proxy at future Order meetings. Kohl looked smug as he exchanged phone numbers with prospective lecturers for next year's seminar. I shouldered my spiral staff and prepared to return to the UK, having apparently blown it. I had seemingly lost some friends, a lucrative seminar programme and my leadership of the Order, yet I had an odd feeling that I had somehow achieved something.

A couple of months later Kohl led a number of German members plus the UK Section Head and his other half to the Ice Bunker. Actually he led them to a sort of mini-bunker near to the main one. As I had suspected, Kohl had done a deal with the Ice Lord to bring him more people in return for sharing some of the absolute authority over them and for receiving a priority line to Ice Magick teachings. I then gathered my temple about me which at the time included a notable psycho who proved quite useful in the battle. Protecting myself with semi-sentient combat servitors against attacks Kohl had reputedly launched, I struck with dissaffinity wedge enchantments between Kohl, the Ice, and the UK Section Head. One can never tell what effects such conjurations have, except perhaps statistically but, fairly soon after, the UK No.1 and his other half made an escape from the bunker and returned to the UK with grim tales confirming all suspicions about Ice Magick in detail, much of which I published in memos to all Sections. Additionally, the UK No.1 made a trip to Austria and briefed the Section Leaders personally. Events then moved rapidly through crisis and farce. The Austrian No.1, and No.2 who had personally made the booking for the castle next year, cancelled Kohl's appearance and invited me, and proclaimed their own seminar and Order meeting.

Soror Babs, the Swiss No.1 and two others then proclaimed themselves in charge of the Order, almost certainly on Kohl's command. I reclaimed the Great Ring of the Order from Frater Hardman and then bulldozed through an agreement between the remaining loyal Section Heads for an excommunication of Kohl. I also excommunicated the gang of four who now claimed to lead the Order. They held a brief meeting which came to nothing. I have to applaud the courage of the Austrian leadership and membership who broke so decisively with Kohl, their long-term mentor. I heard that Kohl's position at the head of another rather older and more secretive magical order had also created huge problems in that order too. Everything now depended on who would turn up at the castle in late summer. When we finally assembled there, no hardcore Ice magicians attended, although a few Germans with ambiguous feelings and loyalties came to argue for a while. The Order had lost perhaps 30% of its membership in the fray, including most of the Swiss and Germans. Considering that Kohl's contacts had originally constituted almost the entire membership, this did not seem unacceptable. The seminar and meeting went well, with everyone determined to preserve and develop the traditions of Chaos Magick. I celebrated with Soror Hysteria and with friends from the Austrian and UK Sections. Few Americans came that year, but their new No. 1 worked hard to build a vibrant and creative Section there. Gradually a new German Section evolved from the ruins.

I went home and retired soon after. It was a sort of bargain I had made with myself. I had not enjoyed using my position to oust the totalitarian tendency which Kohl and the Ice Lord represented, and I wished to devote more time to my family and business, both of which deserved more attention than I had given

them during my five years as Head of the Order. Chaos Magick had, by now, plenty of rising stars who needed room to grow. The Order would now flourish.

I later heard that Kohl had broken with the Ice Lord and that the mini-bunker had collapsed. Apparently he wrote a book about Ice Magick, described to me as "unreadable and uninformative". He seems to have retired from his preeminent position at the pinnacle of magick in the German speaking world. Reportedly, he now tries to sell unorthodox financial advice on the Internet. I do not know what happened to the Ice Lord and his minions. Perhaps he still attempts to create a secret paranoid army of Aryan supermen with occult powers, somewhere in the frozen north according to rumour. Soror Babs sought gentler magics and we still exchange infrequent postcards. I still play a rather distant consultative role to the Order, and pursue my researches in magick and physics. The Order has grown to the point where it makes the Golden Dawn look like a vicarage tea party, and the OTO like a bunch of geriatric ultra-conservatives stuck in an antique mindset.

If things had gone badly, Kohl and the Ice Lord would have ended up at the head of the cream of the western world's magicians with the Order's communications infrastructure in their hands. However, just how many of them would have submitted to their intimidation and insane theories, remains an open question. Metaphysical paradigms often set the themes for entire cultural changes. A handful of Freemasons created the European Enlightenment and a few Theosophists supplied the theory for Fascism, by mistake, apparently. One hears nothing of Ice Magick now, whilst the Internet carries a vast resource of material on Chaos Magick. Its paradigm has influenced virtually the whole of western magick with a current of eclecticism and a rejection of the principles of absolutism, guruship and totalitarianism. The Austrians (rather than the Prussians) threw their weight in just in time, but I like to think, as Wellington said of Waterloo, it might have gone otherwise if I had not been there.

This article originally appeared in *Chaos International* No. 23

Illuminate to Incandescence

by A reply to Rex Monday by Stokastikos

Chaoists prefer to learn to dance upon the shifting sands rather than to build upon the rock which may confound them on the day it shatters. However, not everybody shares their neophilia. Many people look to the occult or to religion to support their neophobia. You only have to consider the symbolism, glamour, and fantasy of any tradition to determine which epoch its adherents want to retreat into:

- Shamanism - Late Neolithic
- Odinism - Dark Ages
- New Age - Medieval
- Hermetics/Wicca - Late Medieval
- Satanism - Renaissance or 1890s *fin de siecle*.

Taken out of their original contexts these revivals do not even merit the title of neo-shamanism or neo-odinism, and so on. We can at best call them pseudo shamanism, pseudo Odinism etc., for they consist only of what their contemporary adherents wish to project into them. In its original historical context, each system arose as a human creation in response to various challenges of the times: natural phenomena, wild animals, warfare, discovery, corrupt religion, and so on. However, none of these traditions, so far as we know, suffered from neophobia during its heyday. The revivalists of such traditions do not have to deal with the challenges that the traditions arose to address, and they try to live the present through a filter of a pseudo past of wishful thinking, combined with a pretence that the future, for which they have no agenda, will not happen. Here we see occultism at its worst. Where then should we look for esoterics at its infrequent best?

We can often more easily appreciate a new concept by looking at its obverse. Existentialism, for example, arose out of a deliberate negation of Essentialism, the doctrine that phenomena have an essence or spirit or soul or mana or whatever. Once you get rid of essences, out goes so much of the occult verbiage that has mixed up magick with mysticism, and prevented the development of useful magical theories and a proper science of experimental metaphysics. Clearly we cannot observe any phenomenon, ourselves included,

consisting of anything other than the totality of what it does. Therefore we have no business supposing that anything has any form of 'being' separate from what it does. We should thus relegate 'being' to a category of superstition arising from faulty use of language.

Phenomena may well emit information about their doing which can act non-locally to fulfil some of the esoteric functions previously ascribed to essences; indeed both quantum and contemporary magical theories demand that they do this. The Information Paradigm, which has supplanted the rather loose and weak 'energy' paradigm at the cutting edge of esoteric theory, allows a much tighter definition of magick and allows us to model magical events which may seem quite incomprehensible within essence or energy paradigms (such as retroactive enchantment). Now, Post Modernism embraces the basic insight of Existentialism, and adds to it the realization that whilst change rarely improves the human condition, as Modernism hoped it would, it certainly makes life less boring than stasis does.

The archetypal renaissance man (women did not count in those days) had a finger in every new pie that the rapidly expanding horizons of the fifteenth century served up. Renaissance magick may appear to have a superficial coherence but a loser look reveals its profound syncretism, containing, as it does, Hermeticism (itself syncretic), Kabbala, witchcraft and folklore, neo-Platonism, and xtian, Hebraic and Arabic demonology. Post Modernists do not shy away from the even greater eclecticism demanded of persons of this second renaissance.

Crowley fantasized that Kabbala, by which he meant the Kabbala 'improved' by Levi and the Golden Dawn, could provide an international language for magick. In practise, no two esoteric systems from widely differing cultures except possibly catholicism/Kardeicism/Voudon will ever fit their metaphysics and symbolism comfortably together. However, all systems do use some practical techniques which occur in other traditions and which in total form an identifiable and quantifiable set of practical actions. By experiencing and mastering this body of techniques we can understand how any system or tradition functions and we can make any tradition work for us. You can call this the ultimate in dilettantism, if you wish-we call it illumination.

Chaoists strive to see beyond all cultural conditioning, and have little patience with occult notions of heritage, race, or the supposed sanctity of master to pupil transmission. Traditions which have collapsed or fallen into disuse or whose adherents have retreated into marginal lifestyles have little to teach us. For all the apparent blood-axe wielding charisma of Odinism, we must remember that it completely fell to pieces when confronted with mere Christianity. Monotheism beat paganism and shamanism, because it had better 'magic', and Modernism beat monotheism for the same reason. We use 'magic' here in the widest sense to indicate the power of a world-view and the technology and attitudes which it spawns. Now, Modernism begins to falter when challenged by Post Modernism in the relentless war of the natural selection of ideas. We must applaud Post Modernism for the deathlessness of which it stands accused. Sufficient intelligent investigation usually reveals quite simple mechanisms underlying the most complex phenomena. Depth and mystery in any field usually indicate that we have not yet asked the right questions Astrology, for example, still exists because astrologers have persisted in asking the same questions that they first asked three thousand years ago, and still have not obtained any straight answers. How long will it take before everybody realizes that the question "what is consciousness?", contains three preposterous assumptions which render it unaskable and deserving of only a facetious answer.

It seems that a little more effort will allow a complete explication of all the phenomena of mysticism and magick. Our own theories of gnosis, the equations of magick, and non-local information exchange in six-dimensional null paths provide, we hope, a preliminary theoretical structure for such an understanding. Knowledge does not make the known any less interesting for us, rather it enhances our appreciation of it. You can regard a tree either as a billion year old self-replicating message that turns starfire and stardust into gradually evolving copies of itself or you can see it as the physical manifestation of a dryad. Personally, we prefer the 'shallow' explanation to the dryad model.

When people actively create mystery and mystification, or seek those things out not for the purpose of investigating them objectively but for the purpose of subjective englamourment, we inevitably suspect a cover-up of either some contra intuitive stupidity (i.e., a belief), or a lack of ability, or just plain ignorance.

For example, the runic alphabet which arose in Germanic cultures only after the Roman Empire began to chafe up against it, has such a large and obvious overlap with Latin script that it can only have arisen as a bastardization of it. In the meagre remains of runic texts we can see a clear development from the use of the runes as magico-religious symbolic pictograms with esoteric connotations to their use as a purely esoteric phonetic script. If you do not believe this, go have a look at the rude runic graffiti in Maes Howe on the Orkneys. Having pinched the Latin characters, the Norse peoples industriously added 'mythical depth' to them. Modern revivalists have worked assiduously to add even more.

Esoteric ideas always evolve in this shambolic mix and match fashion. The result may have genuine value, but every justification exists for picking here and there at the bits which seem most useful, precisely because such systems accreted as a piecemeal basis anyway.

When we examine the 'traditions' of witchcraft and particularly Satanism, we find them rooted almost exclusively in the propagandist ravings of the Christian Church. The Church 'improved' folk beliefs to the extent that it invented witchcraft and Satanism in principle and in considerable fine detail, to justify its various prosecutions, to strengthen its social control, and to make money. Unusually, satanists have not been bothered to cobble together their system in the usual occult fashion; they have merely adopted the Church's version with a bit of Nietzsche and Hollywood thrown in.

Chaos Magick recognizes the syncretic manner in which each generation has accreted its magical philosophy, theory, and practice, and the dubious mechanisms by which esoteric 'depth' gets added. Rather than try and pretend, Chaos Magick openly relishes this approach. Only when you admit that you wish to put together the ultimate meta pseudo-tradition do you gain the freedom to do so.

Chaos Magicians as a group do not subscribe to any particular political or ethical agenda, nor do they in general go for all that triumph of the will to power, so desperately sought after by satanic magicians; although a certain promethean and antinomian self sufficiency usually informs their personal philosophy to a greater degree than collectivist ideas, and self-employment features widely. Some seek knowledge, proficiency, and experience in magick for its own sake as an end in itself. Some look upon magick as a form of life-enhancing fun which has its uses in almost every aspect of existence. When people ask us "what can you do with magick", we invariably reply: "look at it the other way round, identify what you want to do, and then find a way of doing it more efficiently with magical enhancement". Very often you will find that such an analysis leads to far greater eventual achievement than any amount of ill-defined fascist/Thelemic/satanic fantasy about will and power.

In the human race, intelligence and cunning always beats bone-headed obstinacy in the end. Often the greater part of intelligence lies in identifying precisely what it is that you do not know.

Chaos Magick operates as perhaps the most intelligent system for investigating the esoteric, because it starts with but a single principle, itself subject to falsification: the meta-theory that 'Belief Can Structure Reality'. Chaos magicians seek to evaluate, adopt, or refuse beliefs on the basis of their Effects; not against some imagined standard of absolute truth. Advanced science proceeds on exactly the same basis nowadays. Modern, or perhaps we should say, Post Modern scientific theories have the status of formalisms or 'models' which scientists continually modify to yield predictions which match experimental values or which they can test. The quest for 'truth' proved particularly fruitless, especially in quantum physics, the most fundamental of the sciences, where 'reality' dissolves into probabilistic chaos described by abstract mathematics that permit no visual analogy. As we approach the secret of the universe we find it to consist of a mad swirl of equations which have few if any points of reference in our own psychology, and which we cannot even express to each other in words yet. However, such equations do strongly suggest that this universe does allow us to structure reality to some extent with our chosen beliefs and conjurations, as magicians have always known.

The theory and practice and popularity of magick tend to advance only during periods of revival rather than by steady increment. Such revivals tend to occur whenever societies undergo an expansion of horizons. The revival of the 1890s arose largely from the impact of oriental esoterics on the west through the colonial connection. The revival of the 1970s arose as part of the general cultural explosion towards the end of the 60s, as western economies finally overcame the postwar austerities. We still inhabit the cultural paradigm which evolved in the 1970s. Art, music, dress codes, morality, and attitudes have changed only in detail, not in substance, since then. Few people under forty, can easily imagine the sort of top-down society which

prevailed previously, in which almost everybody believed, behaved, and dressed as they were told by a very small elite.

In the twenty-five odd years since the last revival started, magick has developed enormously from the fragments of Thelema, pseudo wicca, and Golden Dawn with which it began. The rediscovery of the work of Austin Spare, the only mage to have effected a serious advance upon the insights of the 1890s revival, did much to push things forward, as did shamanic material brought to light by anthropological research. Interest in magick now shows every sign of falling back to its natural hardcore baseline of the committed few. Much of the New Age fluff at the lowbrow end of the market has now evaporated and few hardcore books are published as insufficient dilettantes remain to support the sales to serious seekers. We have no idea what will initiate the next revival, but it seems likely that Chaos Magick will function as the vehicle of choice that takes contemporary magi to it and provides the initial charge to detonate it.

This essay was first published in Chaos International magazine No.20

Letter from a Luciferean by Rex Monday

Since my last epistle to Chaos International, I have received some correspondence from some readers who have sought further elucidation on the nature of my Satanic philosophy. One question in particular, I found somewhat amusing was that of "Do you follow a *genuine* [my italics] Satanic Tradition?" This is a good starting point for discussion. What is a 'genuine' Satanic tradition? It seems to me, from my observation of the contemporary occult milieu, that a good many people are concerned with distinguishing 'true' traditions from 'false' ones. This search for authentication underlies, to my mind, a reluctance to nail one's colours to any mast for fear of making (or being seen to make) an error of judgement. Related to this, is the forlorn hope that one can seize the 'magical' high ground by finding a tradition that is somehow 'better' - or perhaps - 'darker' than all the others. Although to some extent I can sympathize with the confusion of the modern seeker, faced with the bewildering profusion of traditions, systems and currents on offer, I can only say that, when I was first introduced to the existence of a Satanic group in 1954, I was not in possession of any such yardstick with which to decide whether or not it was 'genuine'. What mattered to me at the time was that I had found some like-minded people who not only shared but encouraged me in developing a perspective which, whilst frightening at times, was exciting and invigorating. Indeed, I did not know, at the outset, that I had become involved with a Satanic group.

This admission may ring strange to the modern ear. My personal odyssey began whilst sitting in a pew in St. Matthew's Church, Colchester, half-listening to the vicar's sermon. An early ban-the-bomb advocate, he was preaching the dire consequences of the arrival of nuclear weapons on the earth. I can no longer recall exactly what he said, but I was suddenly struck with a revelation that the atom bomb was the ultimate symbol of Lucifer - the light-bringer; that this destroying light had ripped away the old world - had removed all absolutes and 'givens'. Everything which I had been brought up to take for granted was shaken - the firm foundations of my world crumbled in that instant, and I was 'lost', as it were.

Some months later, I fell into a conversation with a chap I met in the central library. I expounded my somewhat idealistic conviction that science would usher in an age of rationality, and that the age of Christianity's grip upon the world was passing away. He asked me if I had heard of the 'evil' Aleister Crowley, who had declared that "there is no god but man." I had heard of Crowley - indeed my father had once burnt a copy of the 'News of the World' which had somehow 'found' its way into the house which made much of his death and the devil-worshippers who attended his funeral in Hastings. My new friend was instrumental in feeding my passion for knowledge - he introduced me to the writings of Schopenhauer and Nietzsche, and lent me a much-thumbed copy of the Marquis De Sade's "Justine." After some weeks of our discussions in the library, he asked me if I would like to meet some other people who were interested in these matters. He told me that he was a member of a small group who regularly met to discuss the 'importance' of philosophies which were considered by most people to be heretical. Of course, I was greatly interested, and all too eager to meet some kindred spirits.

To cut a long story short, I was introduced to this group and spent many an enthralling evening in their company. I suppose, to modern eyes, I must come across as a rather naive young man, and so I was. I do

remember that on one occasion I blushed all the way down to my toes when Bernard (in who's house we met) helpfully translated some of the Latin passages in Kraft-Ebbing, especially as Michelle, a statuesque red-haired woman, (one of the two women present) stared challengingly into my eyes as the acts to which the text had alluded became clear.

These pleasant, though at times, I must admit, somewhat shocking discussions carried on for about a year. Then, one October night in 1954 - Walpurgisnacht to be precise - it all changed. When I arrived at Bernard's house, I found that our regular group of four had been added to by the presence of a man who introduced himself as Donald, a rather austere-looking Scot in his early thirties. After some small talk, Bernard rose to his feet and said something along the lines of, "Well, we've spent enough time talking. Now is the time for action." Without further ado, he and Michelle left the room. After a short interval, Michelle returned. She was wearing a scarlet cloak, and carried a lighted taper. She said "Prepare yourselves for the rite of lesser dedication" - and I realized, with a thrill, that under the cloak, she was nude. She ordered us to remove our clothes. Startled, I looked at the others present. They seemed equally unprepared for this sudden development. Once we had nervously complied, Michelle told us that we must wait, and sit apart from each other. She then left us again. I remember well the confusion and apprehension which settled upon me at that moment. We had spent months frankly discussing sexuality and the necessity of frank and open admission of our desires. After what must have been only a few minutes (it seemed much longer at the time!), Michelle returned. She told us that in a few moments we would be called to make our dedications to the "Dark-Light Brother." That we must enter the 'lodge' and make some physical demonstration of our willingness to confront our fears and repressed desires. For this purpose, we could request the assistance of one of our fellows, but that each could refuse a proposition, if we felt it to be 'beyond' our capabilities or current taste. Each act would, she said, provide a spectacle for the others and demonstrate the mingling of sympathies required for the raising of magical potentia.

Doubtless this all sounds rather naïve to the modern occultist, but one must remember that this was long before the advent of the so-called 'permissive society' or, for that matter, the popular occult movement. It was in this way that I was 'initiated' into the "Brotherhood of Lucifer." It transpired that both Bernard and Michelle [not their real names, of course] had themselves been initiated, some years ago, into a group bearing this title, and had, as was custom, formed their own chapter; it being felt that oral transmission and mutation - in the 'light' of personal revelation were of more value than adhering to the dictates of the parent chapter. The core of the 'Rite of Lesser Dedication' is that by an act of personal transgression done before and with other members, the celebrant makes a dedication to his or her personal rebellion against previous conformity and, experiences fully the the power inherent in this transgression. I later discovered that the Lesser Dedication is the first rite by which a new chapter of the Brotherhood formally comes into existence. The emphasis on acts of a sexual nature reflects the now well-understood magical idea that sexuality is intertwined with magical power. However, it is one thing to merely state this as a fact, and quite another thing to experience this power for the first time. Nowadays, all manner of sexual diversity is commonplace, and books on 'sexual magic' are easy to come by. The reader should bear in mind that it was a very different kettle of fish in the mid-fifties.

However, I would not like to give the impression that the focus of the Brotherhood was merely a venue for sexual orgia. The Brotherhood's Satanic ethos focused on the necessity of untangling oneself from the bindings of Christian culture. Since open and free sexual behaviour which is pleasurable, rather than merely procreative, has been for centuries castigated and demonized, our Magister considered it the most effective method of awakening and invigorating the personal magical power, the will to overcome one's limitations. I came to understand this power as the "Shining Darkness" - the luciferean life-spark. Moreover, the sharing of passions within the group serves to kindle the group's alchemica - the sense of, and experience of power which is built up and can be tapped, during ritual work. Needless to say, all ritual work (be it group or individual) was performed naked - all the better to draw on the power of the personal - or interpersonal - erotic impulse.

Since I have mentioned Christianity in passing, I will now deal with the question of the relationship between Christianity and Satanism. I make no bones of the fact that I was a Christian before I became a Satanist, as were, to varying degrees I suppose, my colleagues. I have seen, time and time again, the charge by modern neo-pagans that Satanists are merely inverted Christians. To some extent, this charge is fell-

founded. The relationship between Christianity and Satanism is very much like the relationship between the various schools of Tantrism and orthodox Vedanta. After all, the tantric's use of meat, wine, and sexual intercourse are only shocking within the context of orthodox belief. In the west, we think nothing of wining and dining as a prelude to sexual intercourse - providing of course that the lady pays! In the same way, Satanism rejects the Christian values of chastity, meekness, denial of pleasure and the flesh, and bending the knee to a God who is all-pervasive. What the neo-pagans miss of course, is that they themselves are as influenced by Christian values as anyone else. It is too easy by far to simply embrace something which seems to be the antithesis of normality, without examining how one is bound by those values which, on the surface, one is seemingly rejecting. Christian values have infected modern Satanic groups in much the same way. This can be seen in the way that modern exponents of Satanism have concerned themselves with 'becoming strong, and crushing the weak'. This desire to project one's own values onto other people masks a deep-seated insecurity, and is little more than the Christian desire to 'save souls' by another name. The Satanist does not merely 'invert' the Christian impulse to interminably bother other people, but overcomes it, so that he is not at all concerned with other people apart from his chosen colleagues. For myself, it is much more 'satanic' to have mastered the art of minding my own business, rather than setting myself up to pronounce the fate of other, 'lesser' mortals.

Again, one can detect the undercurrents of Christian impulse in the desire to set Satan or Lucifer up as 'gods'. Here, I will draw the reader's attention to the name of the chapter - the "Brotherhood" of Lucifer. This reflected the view that one relates with Lucifer/Satan as 'elder' brethren. Thus the aim of Satanic ritual (in a broad sense) is to identify the power of Satan as one's own power to overcome. Satan is then, an ideal type with which the Satanist identifies in order to unbridle his passions, hone his will, and test his own resolve. Lucifer, the light-bringer, is an extension of this power, the power of the intellect or genius through which one refines the expression of one's will. The separation of Satan-Lucifer into distinct forms is merely a heuristic device which is used as one moves through different states of progression and for focusing particular ritual works. Thus, acts of dedication to the 'Dark Brother', are ultimately acts of self-dedication. The focus of ritual work as taught by the Brotherhood was to progressively identify with the ideal types of Satan, Lucifer, and Lilith until what starts off initially as external 'powers' becomes intrinsically identified as springing from within. Each 'type' expresses particular characteristics through which the celebrant is able to tap the latent power within himself. Thus, on an initial level (The stage of Supplicant) Satan embodies the power of Discipline, Lucifer, that of [personal] Poise, and Lilith, that of Abandonment. As the celebrant's own development continues, his relationship with these powers or expressions also changes. One final point I will deal with is the relationship between man and demons. Ancient Hebraic lore states that mankind is a race of demons, and indeed that when Adam fell, he spent 130 years engendering demons with Lilith. In the Brotherhood, I was taught to view the demonic legions as kith and kin, and the Rite of the Averse Pentagram was used both to identify with the luciferean life-spark, and to attract demonic brethren who were willing to serve as effectors of one's will. In contrast to the majority of so-called 'banishing rituals' where the emphasis is placed on keeping 'things' out, the purpose of this rite was to, by raising magico-erotic 'energy' (I use the term metaphorically), attract the attention of our demonic kindred. The rite was always performed within a circle of flaming candles. This not only generated heat (heightening the physical response), but provided a 'flicker' effect much conducive to the development of clairvoyant vision. The rite attracted legions of demonic spirits to gather at the edge of the circle, and, through a process of identification with the particular passions of the celebrants, specific demons made themselves known (by name and form), all too eager to effect the formalized magical intentions of the celebrants (i.e. in contemporary parlance, the statement of intent). As has been pointed out on a number of occasions by a variety of writers, the spirits known as 'demons' become individuated by identification with human beings. Thus one acquires one's own demon 'familiar', each of whom has a particular provenance. Any process by which the passions are intensified is central to this 'pact' between human and spirit. To this end, certain sexual acts can be specified as 'sacred' - in the sense that they are only performed within particular ritual circumstances, thus retaining their emotional associations with taboo, 'forbidden pleasures' and heightened sensuality. Ritual sodomy, scatology and flagellation have their uses, but these are greatly lessened if they become 'normative' to the practitioner. In the Brotherhood, the aim of sexual magia was to enable celebrants to move between both apollonian and dionysian modes of expression at will. The popular chaos magic obsession with 'deconditioning' - which I understand as an attempt to surpass all personal boundaries tends to ignore the point that some 'boundaries' if deliberately and carefully maintained, can be

extremely useful for magical work. It is such fine distinctions which separate the magician from the mere dissolute.

The magician as Rebel Physicist

by Pete Carroll

A scientist, whose name eludes us, once described artists as interesting people with dull ideas, and scientists as dull people with interesting ideas; his comments on sports people shall go unrecorded here. Magicians, on the other hand, usually go to extreme lengths to make themselves seem interesting, often with counterproductive results, and their ideas tend to vary from the puerile to the astonishing, depending on the quality of the speculative science that they base them on. We do not necessarily imply negative connotations by the use of the term speculative science. Speculative science exists in both good (useful) and bad (useless) forms.

Established science spreads like a gradually expanding irregular lump of concrete into one field of knowledge after another, replacing rule of thumb and intuition with formal rules and mathematical precision. Many people then tend to regard the captured territory as somehow boring or deadened, usually because they lack the patience to understand the intricate details and principles involved. Good (useful) speculative science occurs in the form of experimental theories beyond the edges of the concrete of 'proven' science. Imagine it as the reinforcing bars sticking out of the existing concrete: some of it will eventually have concrete poured over it, other parts will eventually get sawn off and discarded. Bad (useless) speculative science consists of the pieces already sawn off and thrown away but rescued and carried around like fetishes. Astrology and the supposed healing powers of magnets and crystals provide examples of this. The soft or 'parody' sciences, such as psychology and sociology, mimic but fail to emulate the hard sciences. We may liken them to structures built of jelly reinforced with wet spaghetti, and subject to rapid putrefaction.

Because you need knowledge of established science to create or appreciate good speculative science, far too few people realise how vast the subject has become. Three areas of particular interest to magicians have shown spectacular growth over the last few decades: cosmology, the physics of the entire universe; particle physics, the study of the ultimate building blocks of everything; and neurophysiology, the study of what makes us tick and aware of our ticking.

All three sciences say the same basic things to the magician. In their established form they all imply that conventional magical symbolism remains myopically small and parochial. The Elements, the Kabbala, the Runes and so on: how simplistic and local these now seem. In their speculative form, all three fields offer plenty of scope for an upgrade of magical metaphysics: theories of how magick actually works (or fails to work). Magick can, by definition, only develop such theories from speculative science, for once an idea has entered the fold of the proven or disproved it becomes science or rubbish and ceases to qualify as magick. Thus magical theory must continue to move forward in tandem or even ahead of speculative science if it is to retain its vigour and credibility.

NEURO QUANTUM COSMOLOGY OR BUST!

Religion has generally given up the race and philosophy has in the main fallen far behind, which is why nobody ascribes much credibility to either of these enterprises nowadays. All of our ideas originate in what we can observe about ourselves and our environment, and the theories we construct to explain or extend these observations. Science consists of no more than a fairly self-consistent edifice of theory which allows us to make increasingly sophisticated observations. Thus 'organized common sense' leads to uncommon insights. So do we simply look Out of the window and see earth, air, fire, and water, like the Ancient Greeks, and strive in the face of evidence to the contrary to build a mortal universe based only on these, or shall we have a look at the latest data from the Cern Quark Crusher? Remember that Hellenic culture persisted essentially unchanged for an entire millennium, and the primitive theory of 'elements' survived to little useful effect till the eighteenth century and, incredibly, it still continues to influence occult metaphysics. Shall we rest content with the Neoplatonic assumption that, because we can perceive a mental image of any phenomenon then all phenomena must already have numinous counterparts, and continue to labour under an unproductive psychophysical parallelism for evermore, or shall we look at the new knowledge of how the brain actually perceives information and creates awareness?

So do we wish to inhabit a universe of neo-Babylonian astrology, or shall we make ourselves feel more up to date by adding the outer to our current seven planets? Ye gods, the Hubble Space Telescope has already shown us a trillion times more of a universe almost too bizarre to imagine. When we examine the careers of the great wizards of the past, Dee, Paracelsus, Newton, Agrippa, Bruno, Crowley and Spare and even Barrett, we see renaissance style minds quite at home with the scientific knowledge in their own culture. Okay, so now we have a lot more knowledge in our culture, but that constitutes no excuse for failing to rise to the challenge. We find few things more laughable than someone who pretends to metaphysical knowledge but cannot tell a neurone from a neutron from a nova.

Perhaps we should present a brief taster of some of the more hotly disputed topics up at the sharp end of some of the more interesting fields. Few science fiction writers have yet addressed the hyper-awesome scale of the universe revealed by modern instruments. Whilst many people seem to have accepted that we inhabit a galaxy that contains at least star for every person on earth, and that many of these probably have planets, few people seem to have got their heads around idea that beyond this galaxy we can see at least on entire galaxy for every person as well. We can think of no religious creation myth that does not pale into puerile insignificance compared to this. Furious debate rages over such questions as the rate, if any, at which the universe appears to expand, and how it comes to exist at all, and whether time itself exists independently of, or dependant upon, the universe. Theorists advance fanatical hypotheses involving alternative forms of time and matter to try and explain the extreme weirdness going on in the immensity all around us. Magicians may find much here that they can use in support of their own paradigms.

Down at the other end of the scale in the subatomic quantum domain we can now observe events for which we have not yet even developed convincing visual or verbal analogies, and in which cause and effect and time, as we understand them on the human scale, apparently cease to apply. Again, just what one wants in a magical paradigm. On offer at the moment we have theories of instantaneous communication, extra dimensions, antiparticles moving backward in time, reverse causality, *ex nihilo* creation, and quantum tunnelling which resembles teleportation after a fashion.

As the neurosciences begin to free themselves of the alchemical superstitions of 'psychology', a few enlightened enquirers have at last started to frame the right questions, to which we might get sensible answers, such as how does self awareness arise, and how do we make emotional, creative, unpredictable or even parapsychological responses. Even though the answers to these questions seem some way off at the moment, the fact that we can now recognize such questions as valid and deserving of straight answers indicates a willingness to transcend those pathetic substitutes for real understanding: spirituality and psychobabble.

To sum up:

The speculative theories at the cutting edges of science offer the magician a rich store well worth plundering for paradigms. Those who persist in propping up their *modus operandi* with psychobabble, discarded science, or spiritual theories of mind, relegate themselves to the B-Team.

This essay was first published in Chaos International magazine No.21

Magic for Healing: A Shamanic Perspective by Phil Hine

The shamanic role of Healer has received a great deal of attention from the pundits of the current vogue in new age shamanism - almost to the extent that other shamanic roles have become obscured. 'Shamanic' therapies abound, as the glamour of the shamanic stance has been taken on board by the new age/human growth schools. The growing dissatisfaction with allopathic medicine is leading more and more people to seek alternative approaches to dealing with health problems.

For magicians, whether they define themselves as working from a 'shamanic perspective' or not, magical healing is something of an under-researched subject. Whilst researching this article, I looked for books which dealt with using magical techniques for healing, and found that, whilst it often gets a mention in terms of the use of amulets, talismans and so forth, most of the books written about healing come from the

New Age or Spiritualist camps, although it has to be said that there are some very sane treatments of the subject in books on Witchcraft, too. Healing is an aspect of sorcery. It's about getting an identifiable result, particularly where others are involved. If you come to gain the reputation of being a good healer, then the world will beat a path to your door.

THE HEALING PERSONA

There is a memorable sequence in Wilson & Shea's "Illuminatus!" trilogy where one of the characters slips into his 'doctor' role - he visualizes himself in a white coat, with a stethoscope round his neck. He focuses on being calm, and projecting a quiet confidence and assurance. The necessity of doing this will be obvious to anyone who has ever worked in a counselling/therapeutic discipline. Terms such as 'positive regard' and 'empathy' have become somewhat clichéd, but they are, nonetheless, important, particularly if you are working with other people. It all comes down to establishing mutual trust and respect, albeit retaining a core of objectivity about the situation. I have met many healers, particularly in the 'alternative' sphere who, whilst having no problem 'projecting' a Healer Persona, do seem to have difficulties in disentangling themselves from it. It's equally important that you can 'banish' the Healer Persona when you're not 'on duty', as it were.

Listening

Being able to 'listen' to others is one of the primary skills of any healer. We often get so caught up with what we want to say in a conversation that we miss out on what others are actually saying. A good exercise in this respect is to try listening to what someone else is saying to you, whilst keeping your mind blank of thoughts - thus stopping your replies leaping out of your mouth before you've fully digested what has been said. It takes practice to listen with attention, and then yet more practice to give an appropriate answer. Some people are good at this naturally, while for others some form of formal counselling training might well be appropriate. A great deal has been written about the shaman as healer by other people, so I'm not going to add much more to the weight of words in other books. Suffice to say that healing is more difficult than you might think, and should always be approached realistically. By this I mean that if you try and take on a problem which deep down, you know you can't do much about, then it is wiser to pass the person concerned to someone more appropriate. If you do take a problem on, then make sure that both you and your client know what the score is as to how you're going to approach the problem, and for how long your relationship with them will last.

THE QUESTION OF CONTEXT

Before I turn to actual approaches to magical healing, I think I should deal with the idea that healing is contextual - that it is a process, a series of events, rather than an on-off situation. This needs to be particularly borne in mind when one looks at a potential healing intervention, specifically with regard to goal-setting - the "Statement of Intent", if you like. When I trained as an Occupational Therapist some years ago, I was taught to examine situations in terms of short, medium, and long-term goals. I was also encouraged to develop an intuition towards what can be termed as 'realistic expectations' in a situation. This is as valid for magic as anything else, and particularly in works of healing. Whilst one might attempt to 'heal' someone who is in the final stages of a progressive, degenerative disease, self-castigation if the spell doesn't work is unrealistic. This also raises questions of self-motivation (always an important factor when one considers sorcery intervention) and personal ethics. Again, it comes down to considering what is most appropriate for the individual, rather than what 'you' think is best.

PSYCHIC HEALING

I'm using the above term in order to cover those healing processes which are related to something *other* than the action of potions, lotions, pills, etc. Now I realise that this sounds vague, but I have found that, when it comes to areas such as healing, I am wary of even attempting to sound too cut-and-dried about an aspect of magical work which, paradoxically, is apparently simple but also highly complex. But then again, this kind of paradox is present in most aspects of shamanic magic. It's one thing to do it, but quite another thing to try and explain it to someone else.

Healing is an important aspect of shamanic work, but it's not something which can be easily put to one side and examined separately as a thing in itself or a particular body of 'techniques'. I think it would be more accurate to say that there is an undercurrent of healing in a great deal of shamanic practice. Having said that,

of course, I'm now going to discuss some particular aspects of healing work. Just bear in mind that life isn't so clear-cut as one might think from reading a book or two.

My approach to Psychic Healing is one very born out of my own direct experience, together with what particular beliefs I hold about it. I don't have a complete explanation of what's going on even for myself, let alone anyone else. I have never been taught in any 'logical' manner how to perform this psychic examination, apart from the very useful advice from an elder who told me to 'drop all preconceptions' - including the preconception of what I might find, and even that anything is going to happen at all. What, for me, seems to be the most effective approach is to only attempt psychic healing when the moment seems 'right', but with zero expectation of anything particular happening - "We'll just see what happens" - is what I tell the other person (usually a friend or acquaintance). Whilst I have never gone out and sought opportunities to do this, I will occasionally offer to 'try' if I feel the moment is 'right.' Over the years I have come to understand that knowing when to offer something is almost as important as actually doing it. The two people responsible for encouraging me to become interested in healing were the woman who initiated me into Witchcraft (and no, she wasn't my grandmother), and a Spiritualist Healer with whom I became friends with in my late teens. Whilst my Healer friend showed me the ropes of the 'practice' of healing, it is only in the last few years or so that I have encountered the writings of Spiritualist Healers such as Harry Edwards, Gaye Muir, and Edgar Cayce, some of the ideas of which, are very relevant to psychic healing as I view it. Spiritualism is something which tends to get dismissed by hardcore esotericists, and equally, there are many Spiritualists who want nothing whatsoever to do with anything that smacks too much of 'occultism'. In many ways, this is a pity, as the two camps are not as distinct from each other as they otherwise might think, and there is a great deal that each could learn from the other. For instance, Spiritualists say that healing is a vocation - they make a great deal of being in "service" to their fellow man. The notion that power lies in service of one kind or another, is also, I feel, central to using shamanic techniques. You have to be genuinely interested in helping other people, or there surely isn't much point in attempting to take on the role of 'shaman'.

Harry Edwards, author of a number of excellent books on 'Spirit Healing' makes it clear that in his opinion, the fundamental realization which a 'beginner' must come to is that 'he does not heal' - which is to say, it is not, essentially, the healer which is responsible for whatever is taking place, but that he is merely a channel for healing guides - the spirit operators who are actually responsible for the healing. He also writes, somewhat wryly, that many people find this difficult to accept and that, as a consequence, "all sorts of performance and ritual have been added to the attempt to give healing." Certainly my own experience of healing bears this out. Whilst it is all very gratifying to say "oh yes, it's my 'power' that's responsible for this effect", I must be honest and say that I lean towards the view that whilst I might orchestrate a situation - a context, if you like, where 'healing' may take place, I don't know what is the 'cause' - indeed, it seems more likely to me that the urge to locate a causal 'something' in this sort of situation is never going to be fulfilled. Harry Edwards, being a Spiritualist, would say that the hidden agent in psychic healing is, of course, the healing guide, an assertion with which shamans from many different cultures would very likely concur with. I am reminded here, of something which Aleister Crowley wrote, to the effect that a man of genius reduces himself to a negative and allows his genius to play through him as it wills..., which is a useful description of what I find to be the appropriate mind-state for healing. As my friend Fra. Qodosh once quipped "the darkroom attitude; we'll just pop in and see what develops." According to Edwards, "reception from the Spirit World takes place when the ordinary mind is dormant." Edwards is very much of the opinion that one cannot learn to be a healer, but that what those of us who are interested in healing should do, is to learn to attune ourselves to the Spirit World, in order to become better "instruments" for the healing spirits to work through. There is a kind of passivity implied here which a good many western magicians - limited by their belief that the magician 'must remain in control' would doubtless have difficulty with, but on the whole, I feel this attitude of "it's not me that's responsible - it's the spirits" is a good one to hold. For a start, as I discussed elsewhere, it's often difficult for westerners to acknowledge spirits as having any kind of causal role (except when it suits us) in a situation. Moreover, it is also an effective barrier to becoming puffed up with one's own 'power', and above all, a reminder of the inherent weirdness of life.

The "Hands-On" Approach

The type of psychic healing which I am most familiar with is 'direct healing' that is, with the client present. I often use light touch in order to try and pick up cues about the client's problem - in fact, I often begin (if appropriate) with a massage. Not only does this help relax the client, but I have found I can pick up a lot of cues from massaging areas of the body. I often augment touch/massage with a series of hand passes over the client's body - weaving patterns which evolve without conscious effort. This, I find, helps me fall into the appropriate state for picking up cues. Cues can come in many forms - wounds, scars, knots, lumps etc - all of which have a psychic/psychological/emotional/somatic existence. Sometimes I get the impression that an 'intrusion' (to use Michael Harner's term, though 'extrusion' is sometimes equally valid) will require several sessions in order to get all the badness out, and that like a zit, if the 'wound' isn't treated properly, it'll fill up again. An elder magician once told me that intrusive spirits often attach themselves to a person round the neck and shoulders - which makes sense, as it is a vulnerable part of the body. I have 'seen' psychic scar tissue in this area, and a common image that crops up with people who have a lingering 'attachment' to someone/something, is ropes and cords 'hooked' into the person's back. Now, were I to be taking the standard approach to discussing psychic healing it would be time to start talking about chakras, auras, subtle energies, etc. These are fine as metaphors, but taking them too literally, can be a mistake, nor is it necessary to adhere to these particular models in order to practice psychic healing. A colleague who, as well as being a magician, is a Spiritualist Healer, recently informed me that there is a great tendency to rely on the standard 'seven chakra' system in healing circles. This is just one unfortunate aspect of taking a metaphor too literally, as there are a great many chakra systems in Indian magic, only one of which has become popular in the West. But as I say, you don't need to have 'studied' any of the esoteric 'subtle body' maps in order to be an effective healer. It's more a question of attitude, rather than formal learning in the accepted sense.

Do You Spit or Swallow?

One of the more obviously 'shamanic' approaches to direct healing is that which is known as 'sucking spirit intrusions'. This particular approach to direct healing has been observed in a wide range of shamanic societies, and, given that the practice of sucking out illness is often accompanied by the shaman spitting out an object (such as a lump of flesh or a worm) as part of the process, has led to accusations that shamanic healing rests on trickery or deceit. There are those who argue that the shaman needs to exhibit such objects as 'proof' of his power to his patients, whilst other commentators also argue that such 'benevolent deception' is sometimes a necessary part of any healer's work. A related technique to sucking, which is perhaps more controversial, is the 'psychic surgery' which equally carries the scent of quakery.

I have used the 'sucking spirits' approach on a few occasions, to some good effect. It certainly has a very 'primal' feel to it and I find that the act itself, together with preparation, creates a very intense state for all present. In "The Way of the Shaman", Michael Harner gives the basics of the 'sucking' technique. After locating the place on the client's body where the intrusive spirit is, the practitioner proceeds to physically suck the skin (pulling open clothing at that spot) - pulling out the spirit, being careful to dry-vomit after each bout of sucking. Harner recommends that one should dry-vomit the intrusive spirit into a container of some kind, for later disposal. It should be obvious even from this cursory description that this is a very physical process, and should be used carefully and selectively. In order to illustrate my own approach to this technique, I will recount an incident of its' use, combined with other healing methods:

A few years ago I was doing some protracted healing work with a friend, who suffered from swollen glands in the neck. During a trance-investigation of her 'psychic body', I 'saw' the psychic root of the problem as a toad that had bloated itself up so that it was lodged in her neck. I was informed, by a familiar spirit, that the only thing that would dislodge this toad was an even bigger toad, and following meditation and divination, decided to invoke Tsathoggua (A Lemurian Toad-God) upon myself, following due preparation.

Taking on the aspect of, and drawing upon the power of Tsathoggua would, I reasoned at the time, enable me to command the sickness-spirit toad to depart from the place wherein it had lodged itself.

I prepared for this working with sleep deprivation and fasting, combined with energetic dancing (to drumming) at a stage event the previous evening. The Rite took place at my friends' house. I drew around us a circle using drum, rattle, bells and free-form chants. I covered my face with white face-paint, ash, and blood. I used a meticulously-knotted series of cords with which to bind my friend, whispering spells of binding into the knots as I twisted them.

The Invocation: I began by visualising Tsathoggua squatting in semi-darkness upon its throne, and then oozing through near-black tunnels and hopping lumberingly between the pillars of a ruined city. I began to move about the ritual space, 'feeling' my body outlines as though I were a huge, blundering toad-being; shifting my centre of balance and muttering identifications with Tsathoggua which became increasingly guttural and glutinous. I began to experience those peculiar shifts in consciousness which herald the onset of partial possession; I found that I salivated copiously; that I could feel my tongue swelling to fill my mouth; that my legs refused to bear me upright, and that I could no longer oppose my thumbs, nor could I see clearly through the blur of black and white haze that swam before my eyes. I was, for brief moments, submerged in toad-ness, and then returned, mixing nausea and agony with a thrilling exultation. As I ceased to struggle against the possession, I experienced a curious disengagement. It was as though part of me was standing at one side, observing the entire spectacle, and directing the body that stumbled about the room, moving clumsily to the signals pulsing from the reptilian backbrain.

In this bifurcation of awareness, I saw the big toad and the little toad, crouching in the bound body on the floor. Then I was fully in my own body again, and dragged it over to my friend. Clumsily opening her mouth, I mentally projected my/Tsathoggua's tongue sliding down her throat, engulfing the lesser entity lodged there, returning, and ... gulp! The sickness-spirit was swallowed in my own belly. This act broke the spell. A wave of nausea washed over me and I collapsed, shedding the Toad-skin and metamorphosing from beast-self to human-self, using one of my magical 'masks' as a focus for my efforts. After centring myself, I released my friend, banished the area, and continued with a less extreme form of trance work. Following the working, I slept for a straight 10 hours or so, only to awaken with severe stomach cramps which soon progressed to vomiting. Evidently the 'poisons' of the toad-spirit did not agree with me! The nausea lasted about three days before disappearing, and indeed this sort of after-effect from 'ingesting' sickness-spirits is not unusual, in my experience.

Now granted, this is a rather extreme example of 'shamanic' healing but it is necessary, occasionally, to "pull out all the stops", providing of course, you, and more importantly, your clients are confident of your ability. Mutual trust, empathy, and regard go a long way, and are possibly the crucial factors in contributing to the 'success' of a healing event. I tend to augment the sucking process by using emphasised mouth movements - imagine yourself attempting to stop a lively wad of spaghetti from splattering your chest (without using your hands) and you'll get the idea. This isn't so much about putting on a show for your client's sake, but of deepening the intensity of one's own experience through self-induced feedback. Doubtless Harry Edwards would say that all this 'performance' isn't necessary in order to be an effective healer, and, by and large, he's right. You don't need fancy stuff most of the time, but as I say, occasionally it seems like a good idea. The dry-vomiting which Harner mentions is important - a similar approach is to draw 'illness' out using the hands, and then shaking them as though one were shaking off water, the idea being in either case that it is possible that, in drawing the illness out of a client, the practitioner can unwittingly become a harbour for it themselves. Now this idea crops up in a wide variety of contexts, and the necessity of 'cleaning' oneself as part of the direct healing process is an article of faith amongst many alternative healers. Behind all the theoretical justifications for this, there seems to be a grain of common sense.

Another element in the above example is that, in this particular case, I did 'swallow' the intrusive entity, rather than gobbing it out into a bucket or crystal. This seems contrary to what I have just said about 'cleansing' oneself from association with the client's illness. However, since my body was being used at the time by Tsathoggua, it was 'him' who ate the bulk of the toad-spirit. From the shamanic perspective, my own 'suffering' was a necessary component of the process, as was the period of fasting and sleep deprivation which preceded the actual healing event - which was itself, part of a protracted wider process. I wouldn't swallow a client's sickness-spirit lightly, but then nor do I usually tie clients up and become possessed by toad-gods, either! In some quarters, 'swallowing' is frowned upon, but I have also heard it argued that if you wish to gain an intimate knowledge of a spirit, you must be prepared to experience it directly. This is rather like coming to grips with your own addiction spirits by letting one of them get a hook in you. Whatever you believe, it's up to you to develop a sense for what you do in a particular situation. As Harry Edwards says, there are no 'rules' that govern healing, and what applies to one person or instance may not apply to another.

Distant Healing

Distant healing is basically the application of healing intention to someone who's not actually in the same room as you. In some ways, it's the spookiest form of healing since, at least if one is present with a client, one can always come up with explanations (auto-suggestion, astral vibratory attunement, endorphin stimulation etc., etc.), but if the patient is absent, and might not even know that the healing is being directed at them - but still somehow improves - that's really stretching the old logic-box, isn't it? This in itself, seems like a good reason to attempt it. There are a wide variety of approaches to Distant healing, but I'll confine myself to those which are my favourites.

The Healing Minute

The "Healing Minute" is very popular amongst Spiritualists/New Agers and, if you care to look, you will find advertisements in "Psychic News" for various groups which are co-ordinating "Healing Minutes" every week. Basically, this approach is similar to the mass 'energy-raising' rituals popularised by groups such as PaganLink in the late 1980s. Through meditation, prayer, etc, you are adding your own individual will & desire to (presumably) those of many other people. Adding your drop of consciousness to a stream. Again, there is an element of self-negation (in the sense of being the causative agent in the process) here. It's not really that different to using a spirit or, for that matter, propitiating a god-form. The key, as in all forms of sorcery, is that once will & desire-form has been projected, it is 'forgotten' - "that's that out of the way, I can now turn my attention to something else."

Healing Servitors

A servitor is basically a thought-form, a spirit given name, identity, and purpose by a magician, and then dispatched to do his or her bidding. There are several ways of doing this, some of which are discussed in my book *Condensed Chaos* (New Falcon Publications). I have found it very useful to 'link' the action of servitors whose task is to accelerate healing of some kind or another with an essential oil, used as a perfume or a massage oil. The idea here, is that every time the client uses the perfume or oil, they are reinforcing the action of the servitor. The better the client feels, the better the performance of the servitor. And I often find that it's good to let the recipient of your attentions become actively part of the magical process. Again, the confidence of the client in the magic efficacy, is in itself a significant factor, as has often been found to be the case with placebo drugs conforming to the expectations of not only those who administer them, but those who are prescribed them.

Astral Simulacra

There follows a simple technique which is quite useful in distant healing. Whilst it is fairly common for magicians to visualize the person being enchanted, I have found that building up an "Astral Simulacra" of the subject enhances a working. To do this, one recalls memories of the subject, and project into a specified space (triangle, crystal etc) the emotions that those memories trigger. One does this by verbalising the memories in the form of an invocation:

"I remember (name) laughing at a party
I remember the scent of her favourite perfume
I remember her graceful movements
I remember (name) in the ecstasy of an orgasm
I remember how (name) would complain about the rain
I remember how (name) sounded on the telephone."

By recalling memories and projecting them forth, energized by the appropriate emotions, the simulacra may be used as the carrier for a healing or empowerment servitor, which could, for example, be placed at an appropriate location within the body of the simulacra. The simulacra can be despatched, visualizing it as merging with the body of the target subject. This technique can be very effective when a group of participants build a simulacra of a target from the gestalt-projection of the memories of those present. This technique can also be used in works of self-healing, where one might, for example, be struggling to achieve closure with an estranged partner or relative. By creating a simulacra out of memories and emotions, one might address the simulacra as though it was the person themselves, which can be a ritualised opportunity to tell the 'person' things that one needs to, to move on from that life experience.

Some General Considerations

Psychic Healing is an area of shamanic work where it pays one to be cautious. For a start, it is something of a contentious issue for many people. Over the years, I have met some excellent healers, who have to my mind some power. Equally, I have met healers whose claims to be able to cure terminal diseases, genetic disorders, etc, seem to be dodgy in the extreme. There are people who make all kinds of extravagant claims about the power of Psychic Healing and who decry the medical establishment's 'blindness', and there are those who are obsessively skeptical about anything which isn't orthodox allopathic medicine. In the shamanic perspective, it isn't a question of who's right, but that of getting the job done.

This essay first appeared in *Chaos International* #21, 1996.

Magic in the Great Outdoors

by Phil Hine

Pathworkings and Guided Visualisations are a very popular form of magic. But have you ever noticed how, when you're being led along a path through a sacred wood that you never step in any cow-pats? That when you sit down next to a sacred spring to hear the wisdom of some inner-plane guide, you're never plagued by ants or wasps? This is an example of what I feel to be the tendency to *idealise* Nature which can be discerned in elements of contemporary Paganism & Magic. It's so insidious that we don't tend to notice it. It seems to me that although there is much writing about elements, faeries, spirits and sacred places, we are often looking at Nature through rose-tinted spectacles - and the messy, awkward and occasionally downright *dangerous* aspects of Nature are omitted - or at least ignored. In some ways, this is understandable.

Many of us live in urban centres and the desire to escape them and experience Nature more directly is very strong. Yet at the same time, it's easy to underestimate the power of Nature. I grew up in a seaside town where the awesome power of the sea struck me forcibly at an early age. One memory which will never leave me is being taken to see a trawler which had been literally hurled up onto the sea-wall during a storm. I learned to swim in the sea, and thought I could handle it until I was nearly killed a couple of times, and it was not unusual for each holiday season to be punctuated by a couple of deaths of holidaymakers who did not realise how capricious the sea can be. And this, I feel is true every time we wander into the wilderness. A couple of years ago, a simple trek around the foothills of Snowdonia led by two experienced mountaineers suddenly became for me, a near-death experience. In the wild lands, anything might happen, and in my experience, does, particularly when you think you're 'safe'. Safety can itself be a complex issue, particularly when we do magic with other people and when we go outdoors. In my own experience, even doing guided visualisations set outdoors can have unpredictable results. In the mid-1980s I was training as an Occupational Therapist and working in a psychiatric hospital in York. I was sitting in on a group therapy session where the facilitator was using guided visualisation to help the group members explore their feelings about being with other people. Part of the journey involved the group wandering into a forest until they could not see each other for the trees. Suddenly, one of the participants jumped out of his chair and shot out of the room. I followed him in order to find out what the problem was. It turned out that the last time this person was in a forest, it was during the British retreat from France just prior to Dunkirk. He had become separated from his unit, but could hear their screams as they were hunted down and shot by the enemy. An extreme example perhaps, but something worth bearing in mind.

Coming back to magic, I've never been happy about doing 'formal' rituals outdoors. Rituals which feel okay within a temple, cellar or spare bedroom just seem to feel out of place in the middle of a woodland glade. All that stuff about casting a circle or 'banishing' - which is basically about establishing boundaries just feels plain *wrong*. I've often felt that there's a tendency, particularly amongst modern magicians, to take an 'indoors' ritual and perform it outdoors without any awareness that being outdoors might require a different approach and some basic respect of the different space that one has moved into. At times this has led to some ludicrous situations. A few years ago, whilst I was doing a three-day seminar in Austria, I attended a session being led by another facilitator, wherein we were asked to visualise being in a forest. Nothing wrong with that in itself, but the venue we were at, an ex-Knights Templar castle, was surrounded by about 15 acres of prime forest! Another time, I was outdoors with a group and one of the rites which had been decided upon beforehand called for people to hide themselves behind trees and bushes - the problem being that where we were, there weren't any. So instead of calling off the rite, it went ahead and I recall

feeling somewhat bemused by it all. In retrospect, I see this as an example of a group imposing it's preconceptions onto the outdoors space, rather than trying to work *appropriately* within it. Some years back, a friend and I decided to go into the depths of one the larger parks in Leeds to see if we could establish contact with the local spirits of place - the *genius loci*, if you like. Rather than taking the established magical route - of doing some kind of ritual, we simply walked into the woods and found a spot by a stream and sat quietly, attempting to *widen* our perceptions in order to feel a brush of contact, no matter how faint. After a few hours, we both agreed on feeling a sense of something tentatively reaching out to us. Gradually, we began to discern a shape - huge, shaggy and mossy - not a water elemental or an earth elemental or even a tree spirit - (those are terms, after all, which *we* impose onto the world) - but something which was an encapsulation of the place where we were. The contact was fleeting, wary, but overwhelmingly one of sadness and yearning - something we both found difficult to put into words yet which touched us deeply. This for me was an important experience showing the value of 'throwing away' the rulebook, as it were, and learning to trust feelings in respect to contacts with 'spirits'.

How we look at spirits is in itself a key issue. There is a great deal written about 'nature spirits' - elementals, devas, faeries, etc. but they are often made out to be nice or at least controllable or amenable to contact with us. There are two issues within this. One is that whilst modern pagans have accepted 'Nature' spirits, it seems to me that there is a block about accepting that there might be other kinds of spirits - such as the impish spirits which lurk around overloaded electrical sockets, the vindictive ones who hide your house keys or the spirits who flit around the underground late at night. We walk in the woods, yearning to meet dryads or faeries, but would we expect to encounter a troll in the backstreets of Birmingham? We are learning to get to grips with the *genius loci* of outdoor spaces but perhaps not giving enough attention to the 'souls' of the cities where we live, yet are equally deserving of our attention. The other issue is this whole 'spirits are nice' kick. In my own experience, many 'Nature' spirits are just plain *angry*. Angry at what humans have done to their places. Angry at our unthinking invasion of their spaces. Really pissed off about being patronised, ignored for so long, or even at times, 'invited' by pagans & magicians into spaces which they already regard as their domain, thank you very much. Just like us, some are okay, some aren't, and will, if given the chance, let you know in no uncertain terms how they feel, one way or another.

Having ranted thus far, I find I don't want to offer any prescriptions for how I feel one should take magic outdoors, except perhaps to say this. It comes down to *respect*. If, as pagans we say that we respect the land and its inhabitants, we have to act from that premise at every moment. This requires, for me, forgetting much of the book-received 'knowledge' about spirits, sacred places etc., I have accumulated over the years and experiencing Nature as it is, rather than perhaps how I'd like it to be. Recognising that whenever I go outdoors with magical intent in mind, that I'm moving into someone else's territory where what I want to do isn't necessarily important and being ready for being informed that they'd rather I did it someplace else. Of being aware that a place that felt welcoming during the day can be downright forbidding in the dead of night, and that whatever I think of myself as an 'experienced' or adept magician, this might count for nothing with *them*.

The Magic of Chaos

by Peter J. Carroll

Crowley certainly helped put the boot in against monotheism but the process was already well advanced. Science, which had basically evolved out of renaissance magic, had more or less finished monotheism as a serious parasite on advanced cultures. Crowley was enthusiastic about science and appropriately so for his era, but in the work of Austin Spare we begin to detect a certain foreboding. However it is Spare's work that appears more austere and scientific when compared to some of Crowley's more baroque symbolic extravagances. Spare rejected the classical symbologies of forgotten ages and sought the magic of his own personal arcana. Using the minimum of hypotheses he evolved a magic from his own racial memories and subconscious. Independently of complex systems he developed effective techniques of enchantment and divination requiring only ordinary language and pictures.

Spare's work forms the bridge between an older style of magic brought to fruition by Crowley (which derived most of its appeal, power and liberating potential from its religious style of anti-religion) and the new magic. The new approach is characterised by a kind of scientific *anti-science*. This is increasingly becoming known as Chaos Magic. It would be no more useful to dub Chaos Magic as pseudo-science than

it would be to dub Crowley's ideas as pseudo-religion. It is astrology as it is normally practised that is mere pseudo-science much as satanism and freemasonry are pseudo-religion. Chaos Magic attempts to show that not only does magic fit comfortably within the interstices of science but that the higher reaches of scientific theory and empiricism actually demand that magic exists. This is somewhat analogous to the way in which many religious theories implied the possibility of theurgic or demonic magic.

The best magic has always had a strong antinomian flavour. The most remarkable magicians have invariably fought against prevailing cultural norms and obsessions. Their victories represent not only a personal liberation but also an advance for humanity. History bequeaths us no records of the renegade shamanist magicians who must have brought about the advent of paganism, but we know a little of the anti-pagan magicians who created monotheism: Akhenaton, Moshe, Gautam, and so on. As monotheism became a steadily more repressive and obscene force, a new generation of magicians arose and fought it. Some fought too openly and were destroyed; others were more subtle and planted effective seeds of destruction on a purely philosophical level, and others hastened its destruction by taking theological and theurgical ideas to outrageous conclusions. The roll of honour is here much larger, including such notables as Giordano Bruno, Cornelius Agrippa, John Dee, Cagliostro, Eliphas Levi, and recently, Aleister Crowley. Crowley's great achievement, apart from his mountaineering and futuristic morality was to unearth the power techniques from Tantra, Yoga, Gnosticism, Taoism and Shamanism. He had the courage to apply them to the rather dessicated, intellectualised and effete occultism of his age and created something of lasting value and interest. In my opinion Crowley's mistake was to accept his own mystical visions at face value and become dogmatic about them. He discovered techniques of unleashing the awesome powers and creativity of the right cerebral hemisphere and subconscious but was so surprised at the result that he assumed it was of inhuman origin, and all this despite his dictum that... there are no gods but man. What Chaos Magicians are attempting to do is break the stranglehold of a very limited view of science and rationality exercise over our imaginations and to force science to mutate into something less oppressive. To do this they select as weapons a number of very simple ideas. Chaos Magic concentrates upon technique. Underlying all systems from Witchcraft to Tibetan Sorcery, that the eclectically minded magician may use, there is a fundamental unity of practical technique depending on visualisation, the creation of thought entities and altered states of consciousness achieved by either quiescent or ecstatic meditations. The eclectic point of view implies that belief itself can be regarded as a technique for achieving one's aims. A further implication of the principle of relativity of belief is that all beliefs are considered to be arbitrary and contingent.

Consequently all notions of absolute truth only exist if we choose to believe them at any time. The obverse side of the principle that "nothing is true" is that "everything is permitted", and Chaos Magicians may often create unusual hyperscience and sorcery maps of reality as a theoretical framework for their magic. Improved neurophysiological knowledge combined with the principle of relativity of belief should lead the modern magician to regard the revelation with fresh scepticism. Verily the previously unsuspected parts of our brains can be even more creative than the conscious parts, and no message from the gods, no matter how extraordinary and overwhelming, should be taken as proof of anything beyond our own extraordinary powers, even if accompanied by miracles.

The rejection of any absolute external reality, truth or meaning may seem a paradoxical or even horrific principle on which to base a spiritual quest. I personally do not think so. Absolute truth would be absolute tyranny and historically it has always been. I would rather the freedom to forge my own spiritual vision. The evidence of my senses suggests that the universe is basically random within arbitrary limits which themselves arise capriciously. Reality is a hierarchy of accidents ruled by pure chance. Even so-called "scientific laws" are only statistical approximations describing the most persistent types of accident. I am free, not because freedom was conferred upon me but as a consequence of my being a purely accidental creation with random behaviour patterns.

Chaos Magic necessarily implies a certain individualistic antipoliticism or even anarchy. It is plainly an illusion that people are ruled by politics. People are ruled by philosophies and fashions, and it is from this higher level that Chaos Magic launches its attack on reality. To practice magic implies that you are actively seeking to forge your own spiritual viewpoint often in contradiction to cultural norms.

Magic arises to prominence when the boundary of self is either expanding or contracting. For example, during times of innovation and discovery, or during times of repression. A profound magical renaissance is now in progress because the boundary of self is both expanding and contracting simultaneously. Science, drugs, psychology, communications networks and all the paraphernalia of late twentieth century life have expanded aspects of awareness to a degree inconceivable a century ago.

Conversely, many aspects of industrial civilisation oppress us and hence encroach on the territory of self. The childish allegories of religion have been rightfully jettisoned but the whole principle of the self as a mystic entity has taken a body-blow in the process. The natural environment is being rubbished to feed the industrial behemoth and our capacity to relate to it is diminishing. As the pace of life becomes more frantic the value of introspection becomes diminished except in art where it is encouraged to become grotesque. Consumerism and the prospect of thermonuclear armageddon (which it seems must inevitably accompany it) could diminish us all. Thus with all these pressures on self, magic has mushroomed and taken on a colouration distinct from its historical antecedents. At once there is an extraordinary necrophilia and eclecticism and at the same time a powerful feeling for anachronistic practices. Quantum physics rubs shoulders with nature shamanism and Tantric practices are employed for parapsychological purposes involving telepathy experiments arranged by satellite link between home microprocessors whilst ancient goetic incenses smoke away on the mantelpiece in homemade braziers.

A renaissance is marked by the presence of renaissance people, and the contemporary magician is very much a renaissance figure in the sense that the term is usually taken to imply. Contemptuous of the conventions and paradigms of his age, he looks both backward and forward in time for techniques to circumvent them. Religion, and the neo-religious magic that fought it, are dead or dying.

Arise the Sorcerer Scientist!

Magick is not science
by Alistair Livingston

In his article [The Magician as Rebel Physicist](#) in CI. 21, Pete Carroll argues for the incorporation into magick of 'speculative theories at the cutting edge of sciences', which he regards as offering a more creative magick than those which rely upon ancient cosmologies and worldviews. The suggestion is of a magical equivalent to the collapse of the earth-centred cosmos of the Middle Ages during the Renaissance, with its corresponding broadening of European horizons. A collapse hastened by the first waves of European expansionism, in which not only were non-scientific cosmologies shattered, but also the lives of those 'primitive savages' who held them. The expansion of the rationalist world-view did not only affect non-Europeans, it also relied upon the destruction of ways of life and patterns of thought established by the neolithic (farming) revolution in Europe itself. The connection between land and people was broken, not by Christianity, but by science and industrialization. A bodily knowledge of the world built up over countless generations was replaced by the bodiless abstract knowledge of scientific rationality.

But, in creating bodiless minds, scientific rationality also created mindless bodies. From slaves and workers, though plants and animals, to the world and the universe beyond. Just as handful of Europeans under imperialism tried to control the lives of millions of non-Europeans, so a handful of scientists attempt to define reality as perceived by non-scientists, on the grounds that only scientific knowledge is 'true' knowledge. All else is delusion. Such absolutism goes well beyond attempts by religious or political elites to control beliefs. Indeed, it now extends to an attempt to deny us consciousness at all. For 'thinkers' like Daniel Dennet, we are all zombies, our complexities reducible to the actions of myriad robotic sub-systems. Since such 'robots' (a term used to describe both genes and neurones) are mindless, and we are no more than an accumulation of such mindless sub-entities, we are therefore also mindless entities plagued by the delusions of consciousness.

But here the very word 'robot' betrays the origin of such speculations. The word was coined by Karel Kapek from the Slavik *robotnik* which means worker. Workers (of any type) in an industrial economy are forbidden to use their own bodily knowledge or traditional crafts skills, are forbidden to think for themselves, and be humans rather than cyborgs. But this denial of humanity is critical to the advance of scientific knowledge, since it relies upon instruments (from particle accelerators to computers) to obtain and analyse

data. Instruments which in turn require the dehumanizing process of industrialization for their production. Scientific (rational) knowledge then is generated by the suppression of humanity. It is an essentially oppressive knowledge, historically rooted in both the overt destruction of nonscientific people and cultures and in the continuing marginalization of alternative (i.e., body-centred) ways of knowing the world in the industrialized economies.

Cosmologies reflect social structures. The fact that few people can grasp scientific cosmology is a reflection of our inability to understand our own society. Religious creation myths may "pale into puerile insignificance" in comparison, but outside of monotheism, they are focused on the meaning and significance of human existence within a living 'mindful' non-human cosmos. They depend upon the ability of ritual to embody meaning in the participants-not as an abstract system of knowledge, but within the flesh, as living knowledge which is not part of a linear 'progression', but occurs all at once in the here and now, which includes past and future.

Such knowledge is not easily transmissible through a language of abstraction (which includes this article), but rather through the creative fusion of myth and ritual. When that fusion occurs we are able to remember our bodies and the suppressed memories they contain. Such memories are not individualistic but collective; they are what we are unconscious of. They hurt. Imagine that we are zombies. Imagine the pain of a zombie remembering itself; of the coming together of mindless body and disembodied mind. Subject/object, self/other. Religion/science, as in one of Crowley's slogans, "The method of science, the aim of religion", which I believe Pete Carroll once praised. At the very least it can stand as a distinguishing feature of magick.

To sum up:- In dismissing non-scientific understandings of the world and attempting to place magick within the abstract rationality of science, Pete Carroll's position risks the application of Occam's Razor. (Entities should not be multiplied beyond necessity.) Science is an absolutist/totalitarian system which, for the past 300 years, has excluded magick from its descriptions of reality. The hard science position simply lumps magick in with religion as delusory.

I may have misunderstood Pete Carroll's position in the article, since it appears to be a retreat from his suggestion in *Liber Kaos* that science, religion and magick are distinct paradigms, and that, as science declined, so magick would become the dominant paradigm, just as religion has been replaced by science. An alternative speculation would be to consider science as a powerful form of magick, in which rational belief sustained by generations of scientists as a collective group has shaped reality, and participates in the creation of the formal mathematical structures it believes it is 'discovering'. In which case, successive acts of magick, of remembering ourselves as 'embodied minds/mindful bodies' could result in the creation of a post-scientific (i.e., magical) reality which would appear as undeniably 'true' as religious or scientific bodies of knowledge were in the past. And finally?

Science is usually traced to an origin in Greek philosophy, some 2500 years ago. Yet it is only in the past 300 or so years, and within the sphere of European dominance, that it has achieved its position of privileged knowledge. It has not penetrated very deeply into the belief systems of the majority of humanity. It remains an elitist knowledge and relies for its advancement on the existing structure of global power relations. On any realistic set of future scenarios-the effects of global warming, the industrialization of China, economic war between Europe, the Americas and the Asian economies, fossil fuel depletion, or some unexpected problem (i.e., Nature decides she has had enough, a Ia CI. 21)-the funding for academic research, which allows scientists the space/time to test their theories, will cease. Suddenly the lights will go off. We will all be sitting in the darkness, wondering where our next meal will be coming from. At which point a magick reliant upon speculations about quantum physics will not be very useful. (CERN requires as much electricity for its operations as a small cur Magicks of survival are more likely to produce results. Such magicks do exist. For example. Santeria, which preserved African knowledge despite slavery and transportation to another Continent. Such magicks survived because they are rooted in bodily knowledge rather than texts.

However, I am not suggesting the rejection of scientific knowledge. What ever is to come, nuclear physics will remain to haunt our ancestors for many thousands of years. Science is indeed a powerful magick. The need is not for the subjection of magick to the single vision of science, but for the absorption of science within the sphere of magick. Such a magick will be a painful magick. it cannot fail to fall into the trap of Neo-Paganism. i.e., of a rejection of the past. It will have to be a rnagick confident and powerful enough to accept responsibility for the destructive power of science and industry, empire and oppression, yet able to balance such acceptance with the will to act beyond the desire to "provide itself with plenty of money, sex, power and fun, at the expense of the surrounding socio-political environment".

The bottom line is 'respect'. Respect for our own power as magicians, and respect for the power of others, which includes the non-human environment (nature). This cannot occur in a master/slave! subject/object relationship. It is alien to the scientific belief system, with its solipsistic belief that only reason exists. To respect another does not mean agreeing with or being liked by them. It is about challenging and being challenged, arguing and debating as equals. Science refuses to accept this. Magick has to, or else it becomes no more than delusion, like the whole New Age fantasy. Why should the spirit of a North American shaman reveal his secrets to the ancestors of the people who destroyed his culture? The more likely response would be for the shaman to say "Fuck off and die".

Why should Nature reveal her secrets to a scientist? In which case science does not reveal the truth about the world, but is a self-referential system in which the scientists get reflected back at themselves the stupid questions they ask. By treating nature with respect magick offers an alternative approach. It is not an easy option, but that is why magick is regarded as 'dangerous' by both science and religion. Not because it is a delusion, but because it can lead to the disturbing truth that the world is essentially beyond human comprehension, and as a consequence of this, since our humanity is of the world rather than created by God, we are incapable of fully/truly knowing ourselves.

Science then is the pursuit of an illusion. The illusion of 'true knowledge' which is absolute, eternal and unquestionable. It is equivalent to monotheistic religion where the word 'god' is replaced by the word 'reason'. Magick is confusing since it is pluralistic, offering understanding and meaning rather than 'knowledge'. An understanding and meaning which arise through the union of imagination (mind) and actions (body). The acting out of myth through ritual. As I understand it, magick is distinguished from science by this difference: the magician is changed by the magick; the scientist is not changed by the science.

This essay was first published in Chaos International magazine No.22

Magick and Physics

by Dave Lee (from *Chaotopia: Magick and Ecstasy in the PandaemonAeon, Attractor 1997*)

CONTENTS

- [The Science-Magick Interface](#)
- [The Physics of Consciousness](#)
- [Consciousness as a Bose-Einstein Condensate](#)
- [Consequences of the theory](#)
- [Conclusion: Sorcery, Metaphysics and Science](#)

Chaos Magick emerged at the end of an era whose Grand Narrative was Science and Progress. However, the 'weird science' narrative of Quantum Mechanics has opened the door to phenomena that would previously have been rejected. Chaos Magick has, from its inception, been coloured by this micro-Aeon of postmodernist science. How much use to the sorcerer is this science?

THE SCIENCE-MAGICK INTERFACE

In the past twenty years, mystics and magicians with a theoretical bent have drawn increasingly on the physical sciences for models of their experience. Fritjof Capra's 'The Tao of Physics' and Gary Zukav's 'The Dancing Wu Li Masters' started the ball rolling by developing the mystical implications of the observer-dependent universe; Robert Anton Wilson suggested how quantum physics is compatible with

magick in 'Illuminati Papers'. More recently, Peter J. Carroll has constructed a full-blown quantum-based theory of magick, Chaos Magick Theory (in *Liber Kaos*).

The peculiar features of quantum theory are:-

1. *The wave property of matter and energy*: Any object which obeys quantum theory (e.g. a particle such as an electron) can be in more than one place at once. Its position is 'smeared out' into a *probability function*, which tells us the probability of finding it in any given place when we measure its position;
2. *The particle property of energy and matter*: when we measure the position of a quantum object, we pin it down, as it were, to a particle-like state - i.e., previous to our measurement, the object wasn't really anywhere in ordinary space-time; it only had a probabilistic wave nature; after we measure its position, it gets a real position in ordinary space-time. This is called '*collapsing the probability function*' or '*collapsing the wavefunction*'. What happens is that our observation causes its properties to manifest.
3. *The observer-dependent universe*: The fact that our observation creates the particular manifestation of the reality we are observing, as in point (2).
4. *The quantum jump*: quantum objects have the property of disappearing from one place and reappearing in another *without crossing the intervening distance*. An electron moving from one orbital in an atom to another does it in this way.
5. *Indeterminacy*: The Heisenberg Uncertainty Principle states that we cannot measure with arbitrary accuracy the position and the momentum of any quantum object at the same time. The more accurately we measure the position of an electron, the less accurately must we measure its momentum. Position and momentum are a *conjugate pair* of variables, and Heisenberg's equation also shows that there are other conjugate pairs of variables, like *energy and time*.
6. *Non-locality*: The collapse of the probability function caused by our observation implies that the observer-dependency is non-local in space; this non-locality is further born out by the experiments of Alain Aspect, and John Bell's interpretation of them. In these experiments it was demonstrated that if two photons are fired out from the same source in opposite directions, and we polarize one of them, the other gets polarized too. Somehow, they remain connected, even though they are traveling apart at the speed of light.

These features of quantum theory sounded the death-knell of the old monolithic scientific materialism, which was strongly dependent on the notion of an 'objective' universe out there. The observer-dependency of phenomena makes it very likely that it is the observer consciousness itself that collapses the wavefunction. This makes magick a far more likely option than it was in the Newton-Descartes clockwork universe, in which consciousness was a 'ghost in the machine'. Magick-friendliness is increased by non-locality too: if objects that have been in contact with each other remain in contact non-locally, then we have a kind of magickal link.

Pete Carroll makes use of these features and others in his Chaos Magick Theory (CMT). He also makes some quantum-based predictions about magickal reality. For instance, CMT states that the information about an event or object only continues to be emitted as long as that event or object continues to exist. There are no echoes of an event surviving into its future, no Akashic Records.

A profounder feature of the emerging quantum metaphysics is that it's proponents takes seriously the peculiar quantity called the *wavefunction*. One of the pioneers of quantum theory, Erwin Schrodinger, devised a mathematical description of waves around an atom - the Schrodinger equation - which defined mathematically the wavefunction. This quantity is turned into the *probability-function* by squaring it. The probability function is the quantity that enables us to calculate the probable positions of electron orbitals around atoms. Its square root, the wavefunction, has previously been considered to have no physical reality, even though it is the basis of the equation; most physicists and chemists are accustomed to regarding it as a mere mathematical convenience with no physical or metaphysical counterpart. More recently, both Carroll and the physicist Amit Goswami (in *The Self-Aware Universe*) have postulated that the wavefunction *does* have a reality. Goswami develops a theory of idealist metaphysics in which the underlying reality is seen as a non-local mind that collapses the wave. He regards the probability waves as *potentia*, possible states of a physical system existing in a kind of metaphysical Platonic realm.

He writes:-

monistic idealism takes off from where the Copenhagen interpretation becomes fuzzy; it declares explicitly that the quantum waves are real but exist in a transcendent domain that is beyond and in addition to material reality. I propose that the universe exists as formless potentia in myriad possible branches in the transcendent domain and becomes manifest only when observed by conscious beings

This is clearly similar to Jung's position on synchronicity, familiar ground to most magicians:-

Synchronistic phenomena prove the simultaneous occurrence of meaningful equivalences in causally unrelated processes; in other words, they prove that a content perceived by an observer can, at the same time, be represented by an outside event, without any causal connection. From this it follows either that the psyche cannot be localized in time, or that space is relative to the psyche.

Carroll develops the notion of wavefunctions as metaphysical-magickal realities:-

The CMT paradigm states that the wave functions are actually a mathematical description of etheric patterns and that this ether can be considered as a form of information exchange between material events quantum wave functions do not directly describe the actual behaviour of classical events. They describe the probabilistic effects of ether patterns, which can be considered as a kind of shadow substance, upon the progress of material events. - Liber Kaos

The spirit-matter dualism is rejected by both Goswami and Carroll. Carroll writes of :

that chaos from which matter and ether co-evolve Matter and ether are just two of the properties that the ever-mysterious stuff of the universe exhibits to our perception- ibid.

Returning to Jung, we find the same conclusion:-

it is not only possible, but fairly probable, even, that psyche and matter are two different aspects of one and the same thing.

There seems to be a consensus emerging that ideas based in dualism, as well as in materialist monism, are hopelessly flawed, and that quantum physics needs taking seriously as a theory that embraces the experiences of both matter and consciousness.

THE PHYSICS OF CONSCIOUSNESS

The quantum-based magickal theories propounded so far all relate to the universe at large, and say virtually nothing about the physics of consciousness. The physical nature of the processes which link the events in consciousness with the events in the "outer" world has never been precisely identified; the schism has remained from Cartesian dualism, a link missing, a gulf between consciousness and matter. The observer/actor has been integrated into the equations, but as an unknown, a black box, a fiddle factor; none of the current theories of consciousness are at all satisfactory with regard to a link between magick and physics.

How do we get from the quantum macrocosm to the microcosm of neural processes in our skulls? On the one hand we have a universe well suited to magick - information is delocalized in space, making the basic acts of divination and enchantment possible. On the other, we have a couple of kilos of warm, wet micro-circuitry which science has told us is limited in its effects to the (partial) control of a few dozen kilos of assorted tissues. The two halves of the process do not match; the nervous system seems simply too *classical* in its physics to be doing anything interesting to Our Lady of the Quantum Vacuum. Our physical image of consciousness is arrested at the level of the *soft machine*. The phrase implies mechanical causality, an essentially 19th century notion. This mechanistic image comes readily to mind when one considers the model of consciousness as epiphenomena of events in neural wiring layouts. This model of circuits, this disentangled subway map of the brain's electrical pathways, seeks to contain the phenomena of consciousness. The circuitry model is analogous to switching and memory retrieval systems in computers, but it does not provide a convincing picture of what it is that is doing the retrieving and decision making. So what criteria would a magickal quantum theory of consciousness satisfy?

1. Identity, or at least convincing similarity of type, between the physics of the stuff "in here", in the body mind, and the stuff "out there" in the universe that surrounds it.

2. Subjective credibility, to the extent that the theory collapses the mind/matter dualism. As long as physics leaves credibility gaps which do not satisfy the subjective dimensions of consciousness, transcendentalist theories will fill them. The theory should also generate new magickal perspectives.

CONSCIOUSNESS AS A BOSE-EINSTEIN CONDENSATE

The theory of consciousness as a *Bose-Einstein condensate* was originated by Dana Zohar in *The Quantum Self*. The theory makes the connection between a widespread type of quantum structure called a *condensed phase* and the known properties of nervous tissue. A condensed phase is a system within which all the units making it up do the same thing at the same time - the system has achieved alignment or *phase coherence*. Examples are *lasers*, within which all the photons are in phase, *magnetized materials*, where all the magnetic domains are polarized in the same direction, *superfluids* and *superconductors*. The special properties of all these systems are due to their condensed phase.

The search for a condensed phase mechanism in living systems as a quantum basis for consciousness turned up the *Frohlich pumped system*. Vibrating dipolar molecules in cell walls emit short range "virtual" photons. Above a certain level of energy, Frohlich showed that any additional energy pumped into the system causes all these similar molecules to vibrate in unison. Further input of energy results in further increase in coherence, until all the molecules achieve the most ordered form of condensed phase - a *Bose-Einstein condensate*.

The distinguishing feature of a Bose-Einstein condensate is its extreme coherence. Zohar says; *the many parts which go to make up an ordered system not only behave as a whole, but they become whole - their identities merge or overlap in such a way that they lose their individuality entirely*

The author of that paragraph is not being excessively mystical by the standards of quantum mechanics; she is describing the familiar notion of *the indistinguishability of overlapping electron states*, identical wavefunctions. This gives us a picture of short range virtual photons cohering over enormous numbers of nerve cells, resulting in a large (macroscopic) volume of nervous tissue being permeated with a unified oscillation. We have here the basis of our consciousness model: Consciousness is the subjective experience of this coherent system, of a sizeable chunk of quantum coherence in neural tissue. There is increasing physical evidence for quantum coherence in the brain: meditation researchers have studied brain waves from different brain areas, looking for phase coherence. The similarities in brain waves in different parts of the skull were found to exist, and this work has been confirmed by other researchers. What is more:- *the degree of coherence is found to be directly proportional to the degree of pure awareness that the meditator reports - Goswami, reporting the work of Orme-Johnson and Hayes, 1981*

The passage of electrical currents within neuronal circuits - the classical brain-mind - is no doubt connected with the phenomena of memory storage and retrieval, but the experience of actually being conscious, with all the non-local, quantum properties of consciousness is mediated by the brain from a macroscopic quantum coherence, a Bose-Einstein condensate. Thus the brain operates a two-tier system: the 'quantum mind' gives a physical underpinning to mystical experiences, the experience of the higher neural Circuits, and to the experiences of magickal gnosis; the 'classical mind' describes the experiences of memory, personal history and therefore personal identity.

CONSEQUENCES OF THE THEORY

The Bose-Einstein condensate (BEC) theory actually predicts a similarity between the behaviour of fundamental wave/particles and that of brains - because the one is rooted in the other. The way human consciousness physically works is a more complex version of the way things like photons and electrons behave, things we don't generally consider conscious (unless we've been overdoing the sacraments). Zohar suggests that the process of making decisions actually works like the collapsing of the wavefunction into a single value - a particular thought or state of mind. Thus the wave/particle complementarity of quantum physics has analogies with consciousness states. We could say that the "wave-like" state of consciousness is the condition before a decision is made, various "virtual realities" or alternative possibilities existing in the mind. The mind has a "wave-like" openness to possibilities. Making the decision collapses all these virtual realities except one, and the mind becomes singular, and "particle-like". What is more, the achievement of that particle-like singular state corresponds precisely to the observer who does the collapsing of the wave

function when a measurement is made. The 'classical mind' is the measurer, the observer, in quantum physics experiments. So, does the BEC model satisfy our criteria?

1. It restores the identity in kind between the stuff in our skulls and the fertile chaos of the quantum macrocosm. The BEC of the human mind has the ability to collapse the wavefunctions of potential realities in the universe, because that is the way it operates upon itself. Our consciousness is seen as a property of overlapping bosons. Bosons are the particles of connection and coherence between phenomena - photons, gluons, gravitons and other more exotic particles. Zohar suggests that this overlapping of bosons into states of greater complexity and coherence is at the root of the evolution which produced our consciousness. "As above, so below" is reinstated.

In terms of subjective experience of consciousness, the theory is very attractive, because of the concept of thoughts as quite large patterns of waves in an even larger substrate. I've never been at all comfortable with the idea that thoughts are microscopic electrical impulses traveling round in the "wiring" of neurons and synapses. Consciousness simply doesn't *feel* like that. To adopt an off-the-peg concept from yoga, careful introspection has at times revealed a sense of the mind stuff, *chittam*, the basic background "field" out of which everything else in the realm of mind is shaped. This begs to be identified with the 'quantum mind'. Experience of the quantum mind begins at the 5th Circuit, and reaches its fullest extent in the 8th. In general, this model makes our magickal models work better. It is simpler to understand how divination and enchantment can operate when we consider the quantum nature both of the mind and of the rest of the universe. Two examples of magickal thinking using this theory are:

1. CONSCIOUSNESS OVERLAP

What would it be like if human consciousnesses could literally, physically overlap? Maybe this happens in ecstatic sex. Maybe it also happens in group magickal work. Goswami claims that there are no individual quantum minds in any case - just the one, unitary consciousness, and that individuality is generated by the 'classical mind'. The formation of a group egregore would be modeled as the awareness of the quantum mind within a group, and a downloading into 'classical' divided consciousness of that collective process. Clearly, the key to this event would be intense sympathy of purpose, a degree of motivational intimacy predicated upon a trust strong enough to allow extreme abandonment of self at the gnostic peak. The resultant "egregore wavefunction" is formed at the limits of our concept of self, where the fear of dissolution which held us back from intensity is itself added as fuel to the fire. Something like this is sometimes noted in highly successful ritual work.

Such ecstasis should correspond to an extraordinary gnostic state, even if we still consider the gnosis from the point of view of the individual wizard in the group. An alternative possibility is to consider the gnosis from the viewpoint of the egregore itself: that it is the collective awareness of the quantum consciousness that is actually doing the magick. The consequences of such a paradigm shift are difficult to evaluate at present, largely because of our poor knowledge of the nature of egregore formation. Research into the detailed kinetics and cybernetics of these processes is still in its infancy.

2. THE PHYSICS OF EVOCATION

In evocation, we begin the formation of servitors by imagining a sub-personality, a mere set of automatic mechanisms with a job. The first stage, of making decisions about the servitor's function and structure, would correspond to the collapsing of all the potential forms under consideration into a single idea in the classical mind. The next stage - that of externalizing or launching the servitor - presents interesting challenges to any materialistic theory of magick. Cybernetically speaking, a servitor is a package of information. If we accept the CMT view that information is local in time, and only persists whilst something physical emits it, this leaves us with the problem that for a servitor to continue to act, it must be attached to, or rather emitted by, some material base, which could include the human brain. Three models of servitor launching are considered here:

1. The servitor's base is located in the human brain. Instructions are embedded in the brain, unconsciously present until the external conditions trigger the servitor to run its program. This is probably the simplest model for the talisman or amulet type of servitor, which exists to protect the wearer, or to take advantages of opportunities to perform its function. It is possible that the instructions are only emitted when the

sorcerer looks at his talisman, or alternatively, that a "loop" of instructions plays constantly or intermittently in the subconscious recesses of the sorcerer's brain. On this model, a multi-purpose servitor without an external physical base would correspond to a resource of power with a flexible programming facility located in the magician's brain. Such a servitor could be seen as a kind of tame elemental on the inner levels, or, in a more reductionist paradigm, as a kind of sleight of mind which is performed to give the wizard "permission" to launch what amounts to a new servitor at a moment's notice. This is essentially a 'classical mind' model, up to the point when the servitor runs its program. Then it collapses some wavefunction in the world corresponding to the willed outcome.

2. The servitor's base is in an external physical phenomenon. Such a phenomenon would be required to process energy independently in order to keep itself coherent. It would also have to have the property of being able to contain and carry out all of its instructions without the intermediary of the human BEC. The first of these conditions indicates that the launch would consist of the generation of a localized, coherent pattern of energy. The entity in this paradigm would be seen as a kind of self sustaining *dissipative system* in the sense that Ilya Prigogine writes about. (For some fascinating speculation on this type of structure I am indebted to "Chaos Invocation" by Charles Brewster). Examples in everyday life would be a smoke ring, or a vortex in your bathwater. Such entities consist of systems that maintain their coherence within larger chaotic systems by taking in energy and patterning it in accordance with their existing pattern. The entity seen as a dissipative structure actually takes energy in and lets it out again, in such a way that it sustains its cybernetic integrity.

3. There are no such things as servitors. On this model, we reduce all "servitor" activity to the action of various spells residing in the magician's mind. The theory of servitor action is identical to that of sigil action: the information for doing the task is located in and emitted from some subset of the wizard's neural wiring, 'classical mind'. The magician comes to believe that the same spell can be triggered again and again without the repetition of the enchantment procedure. It is performed simply by having a word with the relevant "entity". Again, sleight of mind has given the magician permission to believe in a short cut. This is a 'classical mind' model to the same extent as (1).

This third theory is destructive of the subjective experience of evocation at the levels of sorcery, ritual magick and shamanism. In these paradigms, you actually talk to the entity, and treat it as an independent consciousness. The servitor paradigm is of far too much practical use to magicians to collapse it summarily into another paradigm which is in itself only partly understood. This is an example of the danger of reductionism in vitiating useful magickal ideas.

Theory 2 is attractive; the notion that such an entity could perform its function without the human sorcerer actually projecting the information is an interesting one. According to CMT, a sigil scribed on a piece of leather will emit information about its shape and materials only, not about its purpose. Its function, the information it requires to do its job, exists in and is emitted by the sorcerer's brain alone. For the dissipative system to fit our theory, all the information required for the job in hand would have to be physically encoded in the energy patterns of the system itself. Such an entity would probably have to be a lot more complex than a smoke ring to contain sufficient bits of information for the average spell. There is little evidence at present for the independent physical existence of dissipative systems sufficiently complex to do spells automatically. Furthermore, could such an entity have the ability to collapse wavefunctions in the world? It would need to have a quantum mind-type of nature as well as its 'classical' structure. The first theory suffers from neither of these drawbacks, but is not necessarily to be preferred over Theory 2 solely for that reason. Further developments in physics will no doubt give us more information on what dissipative systems in magick might be like, and whether they would be capable of quantum mind-like action.

CONCLUSION: SORCERY, METAPHYSICS AND SCIENCE

In our current scientific mythos, we can confidently identify non-local consciousness as:-

1. The 'quantum mind' that collapses wavefunctions by making observations on them, giving rise to the 'classical' universe of ordinary sense-perception;
2. The 'greater mind' that actually makes magick possible, and is the source of psychic effects such as telepathy;

3. The physical basis of all gnosis, especially:-
4. the transpersonal ecstasy of the core mystical experience, in which identification with the 'classical mind' ceases.

As research progresses in this area, we shall see how well the model continues to fit. But we also need to consider how useful scientific models are to magicians in any case. Chaos Magick has always had at its core a profound respect for technical excellence in sorcery, and a profound impatience with metaphysics. When assessing a belief, the criterion is (or should be): Does it help the magick work? Sorcery should thus be absolutely ruthless with metaphysics: what matters is not how consistent the belief is with the rest of one's beliefs, but whether one can believe it long enough to do the sorcery. For instance, to deny pseudosciences such as astrology adds absolutely nothing to sorcery, so why do it? I am reminded of the old joke at the expense of theoretical physics: confronted with an astonishing experiment, the theoretician says: That's all very well in practice, but how would it work in theory....? This position can add only to some kind of Grand Narrative; in this instance, the religion aspect of Science. We are not assisted in any way in our magick by the rejection of non-scientistic belief modes, *unless this position has an agenda of a return to Science as a religion*, the Religion of the 4th Aeon. In that case, such a belief will help us only if we cannot move outside of a single-model approach, a profoundly Modernist limitation.

There is of course nothing 'wrong' or reprehensible in using Scientism as the sole metaphysical basis for your magick, but such an approach is not really saleable as Chaos Magick, unless it admits that this position is a purely personal self-restriction of belief. In other words, the very fact that there are successful magicians out there using all sorts of exotic or goofy belief systems to make their sorcery work just fine, in itself invalidates such spurious universalism. Only to believe in magick if it is backed up theoretically by the present state of physics is fine, but it has the same lack of universal validity in the Chaos Magick metaparadigm as a Rabbinical wizard claiming that Qabalah is the one and only true system of magick. Are everyone's beliefs, ecstasies and hopes to be found enciphered in the mathematical cryptographies of advanced physics? I doubt it, and to say that they are restricts the growth and development of the Chaos Magick current. In any case, totally tidy theoretical closure is probably impossible, and almost certainly inadvisable. After all, great sorcery, like great sex, is usually messy.

Every era has its scientific-occult metaphors. Whether we talk of 'vibrations' the 'aether', or quantum indeterminacy, what matters is the power of the metaphor to facilitate magick. Magicians are at their most effective when utilizing the paradigm that works best for their own sleight of mind. Sorcerers with a scientific background are likely to get the 'Wow! Effect' from such speculations; others will miss the Wow! and therefore view the insights of the model as being over-valued. That is precisely how useful scientific theory is for us as sorcerers.

Further Reading

Charles Brewster - Chaos Invocation, Nuit Isis magazine, issue 9.
 Rupert Sheldrake - A New Science of Life; pub. Paladin, 1983.
 Danah Zohar - The Quantum Self; pub. Fontana 1991.
 Amit Goswami - The Self-Aware Universe; pub. Simon & Schuster, 1993.

Moon Music - In memory of Jhonn Balance (1962-2004)

by Ed Richardson

On 15th November I got a call from a close friend, who rang to tell me that Jhonn Balance from Coil had died. At first, I couldn't register what I was being told. Whilst I never knew him personally, Balance's music continues to inspire me, whether used in ritual or just for plain listening. His death felt like a personal loss. Meanwhile, I have been aware of the split in magical and occult circles between people who knew of him and those who did not. I felt moved to write something, to honour his life and spread awareness of his work to those who have not encountered it.

When people think about music and modern paganism, they inevitably think in terms of folk or heavy rock. To a certain degree they may also think about "festival music" too or electronic music with samples by people like Terrence McKenna. However, there is another major genre that is listened to by pagans and occultists, namely the "Industrial" and "post-Industrial" musics, which started at the same time as and shared certain features with punk. This whole musical arena has been largely shunned by "decent" society,

with its explorations of "darker" themes. Much of it has been directly influenced by and has in turn influenced magical themes.

Geoff Rushton, aka Jhonn Balance, has played a crucial role in this genre. Best known as the creative and driving force behind Coil, Jhonn also collaborated widely with other musicians and groups, including Current 93, Nurse With Wound, Psychic TV, Strawberry Switchblade's Rose McDowall, Thighpaulsandra and Marc Almond. He was also an authority on Austin Osman Spare and collected his paintings. Bom Geoffrey Burton, on 16th February 1962, he adopted the name Rushton from his stepfather. His interests in magic started from childhood and developed through his teens. As a teenager he was interested in the music and performance of occultural pranksters and art terrorists, Throbbing Gristle. In particular, he was interested in the contributions of Peter "Sleazy" Christopherson.

After the demise of Throbbing Gristle, Sleazy and Genesis P-Orridge formed Psychic TV with guitarist, Alex Fergusson and, simultaneously, TOPY (Temple Ov Psychic Youth) was founded. Geoff Rushton became involved in both and appeared in early live performances and recordings of Psychic TV. Collaborating with John Gosling, also from Psychic TV he performed in Zos Kia, named after Spare's system of magic. Gradually Zos Kia transformed into Coil and Geoff Rushton became Jhonn Balance and was joined by Sleazy.

Balance and Sleazy became partners and a powerfully creative force with Coil exploring varied themes including sexuality, psychedelic states of consciousness, magic and, more recently, environmental concerns. Coil's sound has always been incredibly varied, ranging from accompanied Shakespearian sonnets, to folk, to extreme electronic noise. Some Coil sounds are hauntingly beautiful. Others can be danced to while some confront and confound the senses. Where Austin Spare was interested in Sidereal images, Jhonn Balance was interested in Sidereal sound. In his article on Spare in the guide-book that accompanied an exhibition of Spare's work in 1999, Balance described Sidereal as being "of the stars". He explained how Spare's portraiture has a special relationship with the sitter, with doorways to the spirit world waiting to be found in the imagery. Coil's music brings together sounds, loops, instrumental and words and blends them into rich textures creating similar portals through sound. Perhaps Coil's most extreme example of this is the channeled sound of "ElpH" the invisible member of the group, manifesting in "malfunctioning" equipment and the flaws and glitches that occur during normal recording, editing and mixing. The album "Worship the Glitch" has been likened to a séance.

Coil were primarily concerned with recorded music during the 1980's and early to mid 1990's and, in addition to albums, recorded film soundtracks and music for adverts. Their music was recently used in a TV documentary on John Dee.

During the late 1990's Thighpaulsandra of Spiritualised and the Julian Cope band joined Balance and Sleazy to record "Astral Disaster" and "Music to Play in the Dark". This has been described as Coil's "lunar" period and was characterized by "dark ambient" electronic soundscapes and a new richness to Jhonn Balance's voice. Recordings like "The Sea Priestess" and "Queen of the Circulating Library" explored humanity's relationship with the natural world and reminded us to "remember the sea". Coil also rediscovered their live sound during this time, performing at concerts from 1999 through into 2004. Sadly, Balance like many other truly gifted visionaries suffered while he created. While he was lucid and known for his generosity and kindness most of the time, part of his life was overshadowed with his struggle with depression and alcohol. On 13th November 2004 there was an accident at his home. Jhonn Balance was drunk and fell from his stairs and injured his head. Sleazy was at Jhonn's house when this happened and rushed him to hospital, but he did not regain consciousness and died a little later.

With the death of Balance, Coil as a group has come to its end. As Sleazy explained, Jhonn was Coil. However, recordings that Coil were working on in 2004 will still be released. Meanwhile, the lunar spirit of Jhonn Balance lives on in his sidereal sounds as he returns to the stars.

A detailed account of much of Jhonn's life and work is give in the excellent book "England's Hidden Reverse" by David Keenan. Readers are also directed to the following websites:

brainwashed.com
www.thresholdhouse.com

The Nature of Magic: an anthropology of consciousness

by Dr. Susan Greenwood, Book launch at Treadwells, Covent Garden, May 2005

Questions, questions, questions...

I wrote *The Nature of Magic* to answer some questions that I wanted answering (those of you who know me know I'm one for asking questions...!).

I was one of those awful children that were always asking questions. I remember saying to an RE teacher at school, who had just carefully explained that God made the world, 'Well, if God made the world, who made God'. She gave me an exasperated look and just told me not to ask stupid questions.

On another occasion, when I was much younger (about 5), I asked a question of my primary school teacher. I can't remember what the question was but I do remember the answer: it was 'Susan, are you up the pole?' It would be very romantic to interpret this as her seeing some sort of shamanic vocation in my eager, young face - that her response referred to a sign of a shamanic cosmological central axis - but unfortunately I think she just wanted to shut me up. Probably just as well!

So as a celebration I'm going to **Start this talk with a question.**

- this is my own question but it's one that anthropologist, biologist and psychologist Gregory Bateson would understand:

What links boggart (nature spirit) stories, a ghostly cavalcade led by a goddess or god, cyborgs, and Covent Garden?

We'll come back to that question... or rather we'll go on a roundabout tour, using other questions and looking at problems, by way of answering it.

I'm going to talk about magical consciousness, the main theme of *The Nature of Magic*

What is Magical consciousness?

I probably don't have to explain too much about what magical consciousness is to this audience. Perhaps it's something that many of us think we know about but when we sit down and try and explain it - perhaps the words don't come. It's something that's difficult to put into words; concerns what 19th century psychologist William James called 'the ineffable'.

- magical consciousness is difficult to describe - it's an **experience**, maybe of

... a spiritual feeling of connection - seeing a sunset over the sea, the moon (full moon tonight...) being in love or emotionally *engaged*;

Mystery, of profound connection, spiritual insight, deep understanding, communion with other beings or Being, a feeling of expansion, being in touch with something greater, loss of ego-self.... the list continues....

Magical consciousness is developed through magical practice - which might involve meditation, rituals, or going on a vision quest, amongst a hundred other examples - you all know what I mean.

'Magic' and 'consciousness' are both difficult terms academically:

a) **Magic** has meant different things at different times - during the Renaissance it was considered to be a way of contacting God; later during the Reformation it came to be seen as false religion; it has been seen by some as a form of pre-science (before we really knew what was going on). Not going to talk more about that here - like teaching Grandmother how to suck eggs...

There's a prejudice against magic in the social sciences - seen as irrational, superstition; okay in small-scale, non-western, tribal peoples but not in educated westerners; certainly not in academia - it's not taken seriously. Magic isn't examined on its own terms - it's reduced to sociological, cultural, or psychological explanations.

b) **Consciousness** can't be pinned down or measured - it's ambiguous. Science doesn't deal well with ambiguity. Reduces explanations for consciousness to the individual human brain, in many cases; it was left to philosophy to explain.

Is consciousness located solely within the human brain or the human mind, or is it something wider - does it expand outwards in nature; do other beings experience consciousness as part of a wider universe? This is the view being developed by those interested in what's called 'the new physics' - Bohm, Capra and others.

My answer to this question is 'yes' - consciousness is wider than the individual human mind, wider than the human brain; here we can go back to Gregory Bateson (*Mind and Nature: a necessary unity*) who said that mind is in nature: not only in the head (we are nature) but also out there in our environment; and we share minds with trees and sea-anemones (for example) through stories.

Stories create links between personal mind and the wider consciousness or consciousnesses.

So, our brains are not the originators of consciousness but merely the *transmitters* of it (a view taken by transpersonal psychologist Stanislav Grof - see his book *The Holotropic Mind*).

And if you don't believe that it doesn't matter - just suspend disbelief and imagine that it's true (we're talking about worldviews here not absolute truths) so we can explore magical consciousness.

So what is 'magical consciousness'?

Magical consciousness, as I've defined it:

- above all it's an **experience**

- an aspect, dimension, strand of consciousness that allows for creative participation - through the **imagination** - between human beings and spirit - of deities, ancestors, and all manner of other-than-human people - from hedgehogs to prawns.

Magical consciousness works through connections. How? Through seeing things in terms of patterns of communication (and this is an important clue to the question I asked at the beginning...).

If we see 'consciousness' as something wider than just our own minds; as something that enables us to connect with other beings through our imaginations - there are no limits: we can change shape, shape-shift, with all manner of beings - and thereby gain knowledge. We can experience what it's like to be an owl, for example. We can feel what it's like to have feathers and to feel the air moving through our feathers when we fly. Magical consciousness is a source of knowledge that has been devalued and trivialized in Western societies.

Connections are made through our personal minds linking with other minds in a wider consciousness or consciousnesses.

- through **participation**, an ancient concept in philosophy which means that things 'take part' in something bigger...

The term was developed by philosopher Lucien Levy-Bruhl to refer to mystical thinking - a unity of thinking that made associations between things based on the idea that energy suffuses everything. Levy-Bruhl initially said that this was how non-western peoples thought.

This started something of an aggravated debate in anthropology in the early 20th century with various celebrated anthropologists claiming that Levy-Bruhl made native peoples more mystical than they really were. Levy-Bruhl then modified his position but what he said about participation still remains relevant.

Anthropologist Stanley Tambiah developed Levy-Bruhl's notion of participation to argue that people everywhere have two co-existing orientations to the world:

- a. *causality* (logical thinking: abstract, separated, focused)
- b. *participation* (analogical, holistic thinking: works with patterns and connection, through myths, ritual, and symbols) - basis of magical consciousness.

Causality and participation do not form a dualism but rather an 'entwining' - we use both, probably slipping in and out of each with ease without really realizing.

We're looking at magical consciousnesses so we're interested in participation rather than causality. How to examine participation? Lots of examples in the book, but I'll talk about one:

The trance-dance of Gordon the Toad It's hard to write about this kind of experience because writing is the wrong code (in Bateson's terminology) of expression. The written language, and the spoken language are the wrong codes for expression - it's incommunicable in words.

What is the message of the dance? Bateson would say that it's about communication. The dance is a participatory communication between shaman and spirits whereby Gordon invokes the spirits he works with; he moves over and lets them in and in the process both Gordon and the spirits are set free (Gordon's words). Gordon says that he feels a world that thinks and its presence humbles him and sets him free'.

- he is 'bringing through' and giving corporeal expression to the non-corporeal. The dance is an *expression* of magical consciousness; an *experience*. And this is why it is so difficult to write about.

- but the communication with spirits enable Gordon to do the work that he does in environmental education; it enables him to be a shaman in a practical sense as performing a social role.
I'm going to backtrack a bit here:

How did I come to write *The Nature of Magic*?

I was a bit of an odd child! But apart from that, I thought animistically - perhaps all children think animistically. Certainly we're encouraged to think in this way - up to a certain age that is, and then we're expected to grow out of it. Trouble is - I didn't, and I expect most people in this room didn't either (and we just kept quiet about it...!).

What is animism? It's the view that sees all things in the world as alive and possessing spirit and/or soul. For Aristotle, soul was equivalent to psyche - the 'principle of life' that animates a living creature (it's only lately that psychology has developed as a discipline to study psyche in the human head as if that was all it was...)

- we can easily see ourselves as being alive as having the 'principle of life', and the dog, the cat, but stones, and mountains that might be a little more difficult; and this table and the chairs is even more difficult (the more processed things are the less alive they seem).

I remember asking a student on my altered states of consciousness course at the University of Sussex to imagine that a stone was alive. She could just about imagine that, with a great deal of effort; and when I asked her what she thought about the stone now that she had imagined it was alive, she could handle that - just. But when I asked her what she thought the stone thought of her, well that finished her! She thought I was mad (and perhaps I am, but that's another story!).

Back to me being a weird child - I played with worms in my sandpit; I grew saplings from apple seeds and whitebeam seeds; apricot and peach trees from stones. I loved watching young horse chestnut leaves unfurling from a tightly closed sticky buds and I imagined things.... Like most children I used to talk to things - the worms as well as my toys...

But I digress. How do we come to lose this animistic world?

Our Western culture encourages us to separate ourselves off from the natural world; nature and the earth have been devalued. Culturally, we've valued other approaches that control and dominate nature - for economic and political reasons.

And we've valued rationality and disengaged reflection on the world above intuition and sense experience of engaging *with the world*. Culturally we've lost our sense of soul. But maybe if we're into magic we haven't.

- certainly the people I've worked with as an anthropologist haven't lost their sense of an animated, connected, magical world.

So, what's the Problem?

As an anthropologist: how to explain my experience and those I was conducting 'participant observation' with - shamans, pagans, druids, witches, magicians - within a social scientific framework that doubts, doesn't accept, the existence of magic *on its own terms* (that is, not reduced to sociological or psychological (in the sense of relating only to the individual) explanations)?

We don't have a scientific framework that incorporates magic - as an expanded animistic awareness - as a form of knowledge. This was a problem that I came up against in my PhD research. I wanted to explain the world of magic to the world of academia and vice versa. I saw myself as a communicator between two, largely separate, worlds

I ended up in an academic court having to fight for the views contained in my PhD because my examiners thought I wasn't a 'proper anthropologist'; I'd 'gone native'. I won the case (the spirits were with me that day, as were a number of amazing friends), the PhD was eventually awarded, and the result was published as [Magic, Witchcraft and the Otherworld](#) (published by Berg in 2000).

That book led to more questions and eventually *The Nature of Magic*. What was 'nature religion'? How did practitioners relate to nature? Was it how I related to nature? The whole experience of conducting fieldwork and writing it up was an adventure that took 9 years...

When I was writing the book it felt as though it was writing me. You're not supposed to write anthropological ethnographies like that. And even if you do, you're not supposed to say that that's how

you've done it! It's a bit like admitting to a crime. It felt as if it was writing me - like I had to get into the space of magical consciousness in my own mind in order to *experience it*. And then write from that place (helped by a number of spirits that had come to me in the process of conducting fieldwork - you're certainly not supposed to admit to that!).

Back to the first Question (or perhaps I should say 'forward to the past')

What links boggart (nature spirit) stories, a ghostly cavalcade led by a goddess or god, cyborgs, and Covent Garden?

You've probably guessed the answer: the link is 'magical consciousness', and it's now quite obvious really, or I hope it's obvious...

Boggarts and other spirits of nature stories can relate us to the participating land. Through the eye of magical consciousness, the land is made up, as eco-philosopher David Abram says, of multiple intelligences. As Abram puts it:

Magic is participating in a world of multiple intelligences with the intuition that every form one perceives - from swallow swooping overhead to the fly on a blade of grass, and indeed the blade of grass itself - is an experiencing form, an entity with its own predilections and sensations that are very different from our own (Abram, *The Spell of the Sensuous*, 1997: 10).

This is an animistic view - seeing the world as animated and having soul - it's about connection.

The 'ghostly cavalcade' refers to an old European mythos - commonly termed the Wild Hunt - that represents the cyclicity of life; it is symbolic of the connections between the living and the dead, the hunter and the hunted; as well as light and dark, and all manner of other distinctions.

- myth is a 'language of magical consciousness' - it gives the experience a framework in which to expand.

I've used the example of The Wild Hunt but there are many others that have similar or different themes, they all work in the same way.

Cyborgs well, that was a bit of a cheat - just put that in to keep your interest. Refers to Donna Haraway's critique of the Goddess as a relational symbol in postmodern technological societies... How human beings relate to technology, a very processed form of nature...

Covent Garden Nature in the City; not just pristine obviously magical places such as Stonehenge or Avebury. Magical consciousness is how we think in all sorts of situations and places, including here.

Jonathan Raban wrote *Soft City* in 1974; explained how we all create meaning through our own personal reference points: A black-fronted bookshop in south Kensington, a line of gothic balconies on the Cromwell Road... symbols denote a particular quarter - the underground may, for example, turn into an object of superstition, an irrational way of imposing order on the city: the Piccadilly Line is full of fly-by-night and stripe-shirted young men who run dubious agencies' (Page 169).

Bateson called this personal map-making 'ideation', a way of imposing order on the world.

Witch Chris Penczak (in *City Magick: urban rituals, spells, and shamanism*) takes it one step further when he describes the city as a 'powerful landscape of magick' by imbuing it with magical power:

- mechanical spirits manifest physically in the form of subways seen as great electric serpents, akin to underworld gods, like the great king worm burrowing under us (I had to get the worm spirit in somewhere!); they can take us to other dimensions

- tall buildings may function as cosmic axes for interconnecting realms, like the World Tree, linking deities, humans, ancestors, and giants...

- graffiti might be magical sigils...

This is 'abduction' - magical consciousness - *recognizing the patterns*.

Looking for the pattern that connects, Bateson asked:

What pattern connects the crab to the lobster and the orchid to the primrose, and all the four of them to me?

And me to you? And all the six of us to the amoeba in one direction and to the backward schizophrenic in another? This is what he calls 3rd order connection; connection in terms of stories (*Mind and Nature: a necessary unity*). Stories help us connect; help us make sense of our world.

And now we know the answer to the question (I hope!): Magical consciousness

To Conclude

Magical consciousness is about recognizing the subjective patterns that come to us through our engagement with our everyday here and now world as well as the cosmos.

- it isn't something inherently mystical (although it can be interpreted in this way)

- it's a part of being human, a part that has been denied by Western societies.

Magical consciousness is about reconnecting with souls as psyche - the life principle - the souls of everyday lived experience.

An Interview with Olivia Durdin-Robertson

By Steve Wilson

Since its foundation, the *Fellowship of Isis* has grown to over 11,000 members. Membership is free, and open to all who seek communion with the Goddess. Many members of the EQI are affiliated to other groups, such as The Craft, or the Church of Isis in Nigeria (which accounts for one-third of the membership). The FOI is a multi-faith, multi-cultural federation. Members work in Iseums & Lyceums, where the liturgy is performed and training given to those who wish to be ordained into the priesthood. For a copy of the Manifesto and membership details, send an International Reply Coupon & sae to Clonegal Castle, Enniscorthy, Eire.

SW: *How did you become involved in matters psychic & mystical?*

Olivia: It's in my family blood, I think. My cousin Robert Graves wrote the book *The White Goddess* and my mother said that the Graves family went in the things which she regarded as very strange. My family were friends of W.B Yeats. I remember once they were going to a seance at the home of Mr. & Mrs. Yeats, and that I had tea there. I try to remember what W.B Yeats said, but all I remember is having Chocolate Cake!

My father designed Yeats' tombstone, which carried the inscription:

'Cast a cold eye On life, On death Horseman, pass by!'

Later, my mother met Mrs. Yeats and asked her if she liked the tombstone, and she said "Yes, and Willie's delighted too!"

SW: *What were your first magical experiences?*

Olivia: I had curious dreams. I didn't think of them as being psychic, but I knew when things were going to happen, such as when people were going to die. My brother and I had what we called 'extensions' - that is, in this ancient castle I dreamt that you could go through a magical doorway and down long passages into another world. I use this now in our trance rituals.

With regards to the mystical side of life, I more and more became aware that this world is an illusion, compared with the real world which I experienced in waves, like a space between seconds. I want to emphasize a big mistake some people make when they have this experience. They think that they can do anything here, as it is all an illusion. But it's an illusion to test us. It gives us choice. It's teaching you through experience, and therefore the choice between good and evil, laziness and activity, intelligence and stupidity - all this is provided for by a trick story. In other words, the Great Mysteries of the Passion, which are very much like those of Isis and Osiris, are put on for us by an unseen but ever-present *family* of spiritual beings who are organising our life whereby we have a maximum of choice. I think sin is making a wrong choice - you lose the capacity to exercise choice. Take smoking - first you smoke because you wish to, then, because you have to! It's the same with drink, excessive sex, or even the habit of being a serial murderer! My brother and I believe free will is something you have to strengthen. One usually makes one mistake a day so perhaps one should do one act of will a day - even getting up in the morning!

I realised this world is a delusion put on for us as a mystery play, which is why I write so many mystery dramas, so that the participants can act the parts of deities.

SW: *When did you first come across the Goddess?*

Olivia: It was fairly late in life when I had actual total experience - I was about 29. I described it in my book, *The Call of Isis*. I saw this lady made of crystallised white light. I know a lot of people don't believe in UFOs, but she seemed to come in this great spaceship, and there appeared to be an intermediary craft which brought her here. It's a touch embarrassing talking about these things! I associated her with the Moon. The things which struck me were that we could communicate telepathically, yet I can't remember a word she said. Her clothes were hyper-modern, too. Different strips of material ran into each other, with no stitching - an amazing dress of mauve and pale green. Her neat black hair was drawn up into a lace scarf. I

have always worn my scarves like it since. People often comment on this distinctive style - but I'm copying her spiritual headgear! She had the beauty of an athlete, the elegance of a dancer, but she was also a Queen. I think these beings evolve through the four elements - Earth, Air, Fire and Water. Possibly they begin as Elemental Spirits, on a parallel evolution to us. Possibly most beings, including those seen in UFO cases, never get lower than the Etheric realm, which is the higher part of the Physical realm. The Higher Physical seems to be the place of apparitions and Etheric Doubles. It's not Astral, it's here, but like the sound of a bat we're not normally aware of it.

SW: *When did you first get involved with organising groups?*

Olivia: First my own experiences were enough, then I went through a period of reading - I read every book going - Indian Religion, Theosophy, Gurdjieff - and then I began to get spiritual guidance and was told that I could stop reading. My brother and I were evolving in the same way, but separately - he was a clergyman, and was with his wife, who was very psychic. We were concerned with social welfare. In 1963 we got together and started the Glonegal Castle Centre for Meditation and Study. We just had a few heads of Orders come and stay, and shared ideas. From 1964 I became involved with very deep occult work, studied at the College of Psychic Studies, and did a Spiritualist course at the SAGB, which I loved. I joined with everyone - the Druids, the Alice Bailey people, and the Steiner people who were splendid. I enjoyed all of them and thought that it would go on forever.

Then things began to develop. In 1973, my brother and I became aware of the imbalance in the world. Everybody was beginning to wake up to that. I still went to Church and accepted Christianity as part of the package of world religions. Suddenly I realised the missing factor was the total ignorance of, and deliberate attack on the religion of God the Mother. My brother came to this conclusion first - he's much more of a lighter than me. I tend to see other people's point of view, but his determination enabled us to found the *Fellowship of Isis* at the Vernal Equinox, 1976. It began as my brother, his wife and myself, and the aim was to draw together people who sought communion with the Goddess and the spread of knowledge of her. We thought we'd have about 12 people - we got one lady who wrote asking to be ordained as a Priestess, so we thought we'd have one Priestess! We went to our little town of Bunclody and had our manifesto printed very badly! To our amazement people like Geoffrey Ash and Maxine Sanders joined, and people have gone on joining. The Time has come!

SW: *How did people get to hear about the Fellowship?*

Olivia: By advertisements in Prediction and other magazines, and by Networking. People just seemed to hear about us, and now we have over 11,300 members in 72 countries, from Africa to Siberia and Estonia.

SW: *How did you come to create the beautiful and potent ceremonies which have become the Liturgy of the Fellowship?*

Olivia: They were inspired. I was quite a well-known author published by people like Johnathan Cape and Random House, but I never wrote anything which was inspired. Then, through spiritual experience I began to be guided, and received a flow of inspiration. So I sit down and tune in. I do seek the jewels in great religious writings. I'm happy to say that I've had a wide education so I know the jewels for instance, in the Bhavadgita. I'm still a school mistress type so I want to make those jewels known to everybody - you know, Plato's Cave, the Ages of Brahma, the Incarnations of Vishnu, African religions, the Descent of Ishtar - I use a lot of NE, but usually it's something old like Ovid or Hesiod.

To me, it's like a gold mine and I use these sources with the myths of the planets. I have a temple where I let the deities know what I want to do, and then sleep on it, and then wake up knowing how to. I never write anything that isn't inspired. I get up at 5.30am, have a bath like the Hindus do, then meditate in the temple.

SW: *How did your Environmental Order of Tara come about?*

Olivia: The Order of Tara manifested because I was so flaming mad that our sacred mountain, Mt. Leinster, was threatened with open-cast mining - desecration. It's a pre-diluvian mountain. It was Beltaine, and we needed a sword to inaugurate the Order, but in the past I'd been a pacifist, so all our swords had been put away. Looking through outhouses with the aid of a torch, I found one, but on pulling it out of the scabbard, found that the blade had rusted away. Finally, I found one which could be drawn - *Swish!* - a huge sword with the crown of Queen Victoria and the star of the Archangel Michael. I also received the initiation ceremony for the Order in a curious way - while lying in bed, a white light came through the top of my head - it was like being struck by lightning. That was in 1989.

The aim of the Order is to save the Earth from pollution and destruction through entirely non-violent means - to use the sword or spear of spirit. We're more discriminating with Tara than the F.O.I, where we accept anyone who accepts our manifesto. In *Tara* we expect people to really work for the environment. They

have to be prepared to clean up beaches, or campaign, for example, to save Oxleas Wood. Members of the Order are all active in Italy, Wales, Eire, Scotland, the USA, and England.

SW: *What inspired the Order of Dana, your Druid Order?*

Olivia: On a more personal level I felt rather embarrassed bringing it through. I had performed *Danaean* workings ~with Ross Nichols (*founder of the Order of Bards, Ovates & Druids*), but I wasn't interested in Druidry. I thought it was very Patriarchal. What I did know about it I wasn't attracted to. My mother had told me that Irish Druids were older and generally better!

I felt the need to develop the *Sidhe* gifts of telepathy and clairvoyance. It's very tiring working for the environment and I was afraid I was losing my psychic gifts with all the work organising the F.O.I as well as *Tara*. I realised that the Gifts of *Dana* would be more Ying - more receptive. *Dana* was Yang - active. I felt guided by my original vision of Dana.

I looked back through my life and realised that my brother and I had been initiated into a pre-druidic religion by a hermit who lived by the River Slaney, called Daniel Fox. He initiated me as a little girl. We used to go there in a donkey cart from 10 to 15. He had complete vision and recall, and showed me the pre-Celtic little dark people who rose and drank from the water of the well, bathe in the Slaney and assemble round the altar stone. There was a wonderful place called the *Faerie's Seat*, with the water rushing around it, and the Bee's Rock, an enormous stone with a natural cross on it. Across the river was east, and the fairies would wait for the sun to rise. They didn't worship the sun, but the power behind the sun - the source. I used to paint pictures of all this when I was 16, but one's childhood is rather private. I didn't like to share it with others. But the time had come for the Goddess aspect of Druidry to be manifested. I then discovered that my name meant 'Olave' - a Druid bard. I had thought it was from the olive tree! My second name, Melian, is a Welsh Celtic name, only used by my family. It means 'nymph of the Ash tree'. I was given a ritual, following what we had been taught by Mr. Fox. We had a well within our temple, and a ruined abbey which we used for Danaean work! We had our sacred megalith, and a healing stone.

SW: *How do you see the Occult, Pagan & Goddess 'scene' in general around the world? A lot of people on different paths are in the F.O.I.*

Olivia: We believe that as the Goddess is whole, so must we be whole. We can't divide up. I see it in Ireland, Catholics and Protestants killing each other. We believe in working for the good in all people. We don't believe in fighting over theology. The Goddess is in all people, as she is the mother of all. Our Nigerian members have more than one wife - we believe in following conscience. We welcome people.

SW: *Tell us about the Convention?*

Olivia: The Fellowship of Isis World Conventions are for people to meet each other from all over the world. London is very much a focal place, and most people want to go there. It's the Occult Capital of the world now, and it's lovely for people of other races to come. The day is full of presentations and talks from F.O.I members. The night before, we have a lovely party for members and non-members, and they have a happy convention which is with them forever, in Eternal Reality and the real Earth.

SW: *You are a great believer in equality between people in groups, aren't you?*

Olivia: Yes I am. There are beings more advanced than others, older souls, more spiritual or nicer; those who sit at the back. My brother and I have never claimed to be 'heads' of the F.O.I - we're just the founders. Titles must say what you do - a secretary, or a priestess is just a definition of work undertaken. The title does not suggest that you are superior to anyone else. The equality extends to all. We have the animal family of Isis and the children of Isis. We can learn from them, too.

I was talking to some visitors once when my nephew came in, absolutely delighted. He said "Is it true about your new English member Wilfred the rat?" His wife said an English lady had rung up terribly upset in case Wilfred couldn't be accepted because he was a rat. Of course he was accepted. David wanted to go and meet Wilfred! So you see we are all equal, aren't we?

SW: *What future do you see for the F.O.I, and the Orders of Dana and Tara?*

Olivia: As we enter the new aeon, whatever alarms and excursions we have, the Golden Age is returning, and it's coming through telepathically. You couldn't torture someone if you felt their pain yourself. You couldn't eat an animal if you saw and felt how it died. So I think that there is an over-sensitizing of the human race. Pagans live healthier lives, usually vegetarian. We will be able to choose more and know when we are going to the Spirit World.

Olivia Durdin-Robertson, thank you very much.

This interview was first published in *Pagan News*, August 1992

On Cursing

by Phil Hine - a presentation made at UKAOS 1992

People tend to view Cursing in the same way that they view masturbation. There's a hell of a lot of it goes on, but most people aren't going to admit to it, much less that they're any good at it, or have made a careful study of it. Another common factor between the two practices is that those individuals who come to rely too heavily on either, are generally awarded the same appellation Wankers!
But what, after all, constitutes a Curse?

This (2 fingers) is a curse - meaning, 'may your wife be unfaithful to you'.

"Fuck Off and Die" - a curse

"Have you heard about so & so - they've got AIDS" - a very powerful curse indeed.

In popular Occultism, Cursing is pretty definitely seen as 'Black Magick', except of course when you can justify your reasons for doing it - like the Wiccans who once attempted to Magically attack me because I was plugging 'the Left-Hand Way' in *Pagan News*

Cursing is generally held up as being against 'natural laws of magick' - whatever they are, as being rendered ineffective due to the 'law of three-fold return' - whatever that is, or against the moral injunction that a 'good' magician shouldn't need to curse.

All of which flies in the face of a great deal of evidence to the contrary, from historical accounts of wizardry to surviving shamanic societies, that magicians do curse, and occasionally, it even works. The only real distinction appears to be a moral one - if thine enemy curses, it's because he's a 'black' magician. If you curse, it's because of necessary circumstances.

It's a telling point, that Curse Magicks are most sophisticated in cultures where one element of the population is heavily suppressed by another. If fighting back gets you a kick in the face, then a heartfelt curse in the dead of night is often your only recourse to retaliation. If all other routes to power and redress are denied you, what choice is there but to curse? Either that, or swallow your anger & frustration until the bile chokes you. These days, turn the other cheek and you're equally likely to get a rifle butt smashed into it. Cursing is an area that bears investigation and close study. For one thing, it's hard to explain away, especially by the accursed psychologizers of magick who insist on narrowing our vision with terms like 'auto-suggestion' - that if you don't believe the same things as the sorcerer, then the curse won't work, or, if you're not aware of it being done, then it equally, won't work. The truth is that these pedants cannot face a universe where, regardless of whether you believe in sorcery, and regardless of whether you know it's happening, it can still work. There are plenty of accounts of unsuspecting, unbelieving westerners being struck down by tribal shamans cursing them.

I won't insult you with the blanket assertion that "a good magician should never have to curse someone." The word 'never' of itself invokes too many possibilities. Rather, I would say that in the doing of this, just as in any other magical act, you must define your own morality, and stick to it. I have met people who throw curses about like confetti, and with about as much power; they also tend to imagine themselves under almost continual magical attack by imaginary powers. Which leads me to make another observation; that some people attempt magical attacks seemingly, to throw their weight around. They are often so convinced of their superiority that they cannot conceive that they might get caught out.

Let me give you an example. Some friends of mine 'oop North' used to run an occult business. A few years ago they had a week of threatening & vaguely sinister phone calls, followed by the reception of a carefully compiled 'curse object', which had an immediate and powerful effect on them, causing disruption, gloom, and disaster. They came to Leeds in search of advice and a group of us intervened, placing a zone of protection around the people and their dwelling, and explaining the dynamics of the situation. We then took the curse object, placed it within a triangle, evoked a demon prince from the Lesser Key of Solomon and his 36,000 underlings and instructed them to seek out the creators of the curse object and make sure they didn't do it again!

All of the 'arguments' I have heard over the years against 'cursing' have seemed, on one point or another, specious, apart from one, which goes as follows:

- If someone is behaving in a manner that you deem inappropriate and wish to do something about, then randomly blasting them with a bolt of energy is not going to change their behaviour & attitudes (unless of

course you reward them with an early chance to reincarnate into a higher form) - so it may be better to BIND them instead, making sure that they have to deal with that part of themselves which is inappropriate, before being able to move on.

There is much good sense in this argument, and it leads me on to another point about cursing - precision. Magick, in its mysterious way, seems to take the easiest path to fulfilment, so with cursing, as with anything else, it pays to be as precise as possible, otherwise you might wind up getting a result which you really didn't bargain for, or particularly want. If you must let off zaps at people, try aiming instead of firing blindly in their general direction.

What is interesting about cursing is that you're going for a very specific result, and if you can be inventive in your approach, you may find yourself opening up avenues of general magical interest which can be applied to other areas.

A couple of years ago, I was approached by someone who wanted me to perform a magical 'hit' on their behalf. As it happened, I could have far more cheerfully 'hit' that particular individual than their intended target, but let's leave that aside for the moment. I was being offered quite a generous sum of money for this operation, and there is nothing like money to set one's creative wheels turning. Over the years, I have been approached occasionally by people wanting me to do curses for them. I never refuse to listen to a proposal, but then I've never actually carried one out either - if people want to be idiots, then they deserve to be strung along for as long as possible - they always chicken out in the end. What made this particular instance interesting is that I started musing that most magical operations are 'one-shot' affairs - one focuses desire, will and imagination and 'blam' - off goes the arrow of magick. Instead of this, I began to look at situations as complex interrelations between different variables - physiological, emotional, psychological, & 'external' variables - and of assigning teams of demons to 'tip' each chosen situation in a specific manner. Up came the possibilities of loose stair-carpets, gas cooker explosions, the delicate cellular balance which can gradually turn healthy tissue cancerous, the fleeting thoughts which can grow into monstrous phobias and obsessions. So my thoughts turned to looking at the possibilities of taking several variables in different situations and 'tweaking' them simultaneously and gradually. Of setting up chain reactions where one slight alteration gave rise to another.

And so arose the idea of 'Cybermagick' - a sorcery based on using flowcharts & 'circuit-diagrams', which I am still engrossed in unravelling. By and by, I lost all interest in the original intent of the operation, and started experimenting with the ideas which it had originally flung up, applying it in more interesting directions. I told the 'client' that whereas he'd hoped for a nice quick car crash for his intended victim, a long cancer was probably easier to induce, at which his resolve failed him. Watching someone die of cancer is not pretty, especially when you feel that you're the one who set it off in the first place. If that thought makes you nauseous, then you've no business attempting such things in the first place.

It's understandable that, if someone has wound you up to near breaking point, that you should wish something very nasty to occur to them, preferably with a 'fuck off and die' label attached to it. It's understandable, especially if you count yourself a reasonable adept magician, to reach for the blasting rod as you fume. I have learnt to counter this tendency to blaze away indiscriminately by storming off and thinking of something really devious and 'orrible' - like self-replicating Servitors, for example. I then get into exploring how such an idea might theoretically work and so forth, and usually, as I mentioned earlier, get so caught up with the idea and how to execute it that my anger at particular individuals is forgotten, and I spend the next few months trying the idea out in other directions. Then again, I feel that letting your anger out, and using it for something useful, is often better than holding it inwards. It's no good showing the world a placid exterior by day, if you grind your teeth with frustration & rage as you sleep.

A recent development of Cursing Strategy is to curse elements rather than individuals. This has been explored in two major directions so far - Cursing multinational corporations, and attacking idea-viruses (memes) rather than the individuals who they manifest through. Computers are a case in point, and it appears from several anecdotes that I have heard, that they are highly susceptible to sorcerous attacks. However, one individual I heard tell of, having targeted a major banking consortium with his ire, found that he couldn't find a working cash point machine across the entirety of Central London. This is the magical equivalent of Shooting yourself in the foot.

Large corporations are also susceptible - an interesting example of an anti-corporate curse being the 'Black Djinn Curse' which appeared in 'Chaos' magazine a few years ago - mixing sorcery and agit-prop to create an effect. Another avenue which has been suggested is hitting companies where it really hurts - by attempting to lower their share prices!

The other direction that I mentioned is to separate a particular behavioural element, and attack that, rather than the individual through which that behaviour manifests through. I have observed elsewhere that some magicians are quite happy to work with 'demons' and similar 'orrible things which can be described in magical tomes, whilst leaving the more 'major' demons - the dark side of contemporary society, to breed themselves unabated. For instance, we might consider the syndrome of 'Addiction' to be a demon, and recognise its manifestation in individuals as addiction to heroin, compulsive sex, murder, or abuse. So we might consider how to limit and confine this demon, so that it is harder for it to replicate itself through human hosts.

A group of us tried this once, taking the behavioural element which causes infested males to demonstrate their power over others by inflicting violence upon them. We had watched this 'demon' manifesting which increasing frequency in our local community - single women being harassed in the street, an upsurge in queer-bashing, and in one particularly nasty incident, ground glass being kicked into a baby's face. This sort of thing makes me wonder, do those who insist that we should never try and directly deal with this sort of thing ever really confront violence and oppression personally?

So we decided to let forth a counter-blast against this demon, rather than any specific individual. The method was simple but effective - unleashing the raw, repressed anger against violence and oppression - unleashing the 'Furies' - spirits of retribution. It was effective, needless to say. It was as though a ripple went through the community - manifesting in those who had suffered daily violence turning it back on the perpetrators, or standing up to it in other ways. And yes, the operation did radically effect all who took part in it - to the extent that none of us would probably do it again - at least not without the situation being at least as extreme.

In some circumstances, I would say that it is more immoral not to act against a situation, if you feel it is within your power to do something about it. However, examining your own role within a developing situation is, as ever, of paramount importance. Matters of ethics are never as simple as some people would have us believe, because life will always be more complicated than pagan ideals and laws. Turning again to the populist magical idea of the 'Law of Three-fold return' - this is one of the most well-used arguments against cursing, which says that what you send out eventually returns to you, and that if you send out 'bad' vibes (mann..) they will return three-fold.

Again, things are not quite that simple, but there is a grain of truth here. I will freely admit that my first successful act of sorcery was a minor 'curse'. I wanted to throw a scare into someone who had bruised my ego. So I went home and brooded on this - creating a thought-form, which had the desired effect, and I had my first taste of 'power'. Needless to say, this 'power' fed my feelings of being 'superior', 'different' and 'above' others - feelings which I desperately sought to nourish because, underneath it all, I was desperately unhappy, unconfident, and felt acutely inadequate. My operation was based on those qualities, and naturally, its success fed them all - so that I had to deal with them - which I eventually began to, though it took a long while. This sort of reaction is common with cursing, but then its as common with any kind of sorcery. As the sage sayeth, "there's no such thing as a Free Lunch." Since many of the people who get into cursing in a big way are those that shirk from that which often is the most difficult magical work of all - personal identity work - it's not surprising that their 'offensive magick' often blows up in their faces. A person I knew slightly once approached me to help him with a 'magical battle' against a 'black magician' who had lured his girlfriend away from him using 'dark forces'. Oh how some occultists do love the melodramatic! Being somewhat more prudent by this time, I looked into the matter for myself and discovered another angle on the story - that the lady in question had grown sick of this 'White Magician's' pompous posturing, and quit him for another, who was more charming, & less concerned with saving the universe and crossing the abyss before breakfast. Naturally though, the White Magician's ego couldn't accept anything so 'normal' and commonplace, so the whole thing became a magical battle between Good and Evil. If someone is silly enough to threaten you with Cursing - cue staring eyes - why not laugh at them

- it's something most of them really can't stand, as they are desperate to be taken seriously. Most people who rave on and on about how 'powerful' they are usually completely ineffectual anyway. The truly dangerous are those that don't have to announce it loudly.

Just as there are those who wish to be thought of as 'powerful', there are those who desperately want to be 'cursed'. I've met several people who think that you're not a good magician until you're in a constant running battle with an imaginary 'black lodge' or two, and will blame anything that happens to them on 'psychic attack' of one sort or another. Such Paranoia often shadows a sneaking suspicion that one is really not that important to the cosmic scheme of things, after all. Though I said at the beginning of this essay that a lot of cursing goes on 'out there', much of it is done by amateurs, as it were, and it is rarely effective. I've only been 'magically attacked' three times in the last sixteen years - that is, magical attacks that I detected, and was able to do something about at the time, and in one of the instances, was able to trace the sender to the point of going round to visit and giving them a good 'ticking off' - to their credit, they didn't try to dodge the subject, commenting "Oh, I didn't think you were that proficient." To which I replied "Well I'm not, but you were rather clumsy with it."

I'm not going to go into the 'how's' of Cursing or even how to defend yourself from supposed Curses. You can work those details out for yourself. What matters is not so much that you've got a thick Aura or whatever, but that you are able to be sensitive enough to know when something is happening, level-headed enough to distinguish between your paranoid tendencies & someone actually putting the zap on you, and be confident (& experienced enough) to respond in the appropriate manner.

I've mainly talked here about Magical Attacks of one sort or another, but we might consider other forms of 'attack' which are just as, if not more, effective. I do, for instance, consider Malicious Gossip to be a magical attack - one that certainly behaves as a viral form and feeds the transmitters feelings of inadequacy, especially when they are doing it to 'get even'. I would even propose that people who continually promise things - but never live up to them, as a form of attack, because it ultimately destroys any confidence or optimism which you might hold towards the rest of your fellows. The tendency that some people have to label others - and then insist that they 'live up' to those labels, is also invasive, as are gratuitous attempts to manipulate through flattery, obsequiousness, or pretended friendship.

To summarise then. The theory & practice of Cursing is a 'taboo' area in modern magick. The idea that you can 'get' people without fear of retribution does attract some people into the occult. It's one of the glammers of magick - and there is a great deal of difference, as no doubt we all know, between glamour & reality. While there is a great deal of accrued dogma around the subject, ultimately, it is for each individual to come to terms with their own morality, and operate within it. Any form of magick benefits when you approach it with a clear eye to precision, unity of desire, and certainty, and cursing is no exception. Examine a situation wherein you are tempted to throw a curse and you might find that there are more effective options. But at the same time, be mindful that sometimes it is necessary to strike fast and hard!

On the Magical Egregore by Phil Hine

The term egregore is derived from a Greek word meaning "to be aware of" or "to watch over". An egregore is commonly understood to be magical entity purposefully created by a group or order as an encapsulation of the group's collective aspirations and ideals. One such example is the entity GOTOS, created by the adepts of the Fraternitas Saturni. Stephen E. Flowers, in "Fire & Ice" (Llewellyn Publications, 1994) describes the function of GOTOS as:

"Through the experience of the GOTOS the Saturnian Brother or Sister is able to feel directly the qualities of personality that he or she is expected to develop as an initiate of the FS: compassionless love, willpower, resolution, severity (with him- or herself and others). These are developed in order to create the conditions for higher spiritual development through mastery of oneself and the environment. In other words, these are the characteristics of the Saturnian magician."

Flowers goes on to relate how certain initiates within the FS were able to gain 'astral visions' of the humanoid appearance of the GOTOS, and that its image was subsequently cast in bronze. According to Flowers, all members of the FS at one time possessed a bust of the GOTOS in their private sanctuaries.

From what Flowers relates concerning the relationship between the FS and the GOTOS, it appears to have been utilised as a source of 'psychic power' - tapped into through both lodge and individual work as a source of fortitude and resolve, and a guide in the collective developmental aspirations of the FS. Flowers notes the similarity between the concept of the GOTOS and the Golden Dawn's use of "Secret Chiefs". However, there are some major differences which help define the nature of an egregore. In esoteric movements such as the Golden Dawn or the Theosophical Society, the Secret Chiefs or Inner-Plane Adepts were remote figures, accessible only to the leaders of the organisations, who's 'ability' to make contact with them became a source of legitimisation for their mundane authority in those bodies. From what Flowers tells us, access to the GOTOS in the FS appears not to have been restricted. Further, whilst the Secret Chiefs/Inner Plane Adepts appear to have only been vaguely defined (by those who claimed contact with them), the persona of the GOTOS of the FS appears to be very clearly defined.

Another aspect of the egregore is the notion of direct communication nowadays known as 'channelling', and much-practised by the white-light magical orders and so-called Spiritualists. With a few notable exceptions, the quality of the majority of channelled communications from supposedly 'higher beings' is low in the extreme. From Flowers' description of the GOTOS, it seems unlikely that the FS were concerned with attempting to gain verbal 'guidance' from their egregore. Rather, the GOTOS functioned as a 'mask of the void' - a projection of "future otherness" which could be used as a focus for personal, and group development. Given that the GOTOS provided an archetypal guide for the development of FS initiates in becoming "Saturnian Magicians", it would seem to be more appropriate to examine such egregores in the light of modern conceptions of the Holy Guardian Angel or Augoides. Further examples of this type of entity include the Typhonian-Thelemic entity LAM, the antinomian Nyarlathotep in the Cthulhu Mythos, and possibly Odhinn in the guise of master magician. Such entities reflect the aspiration of the magician to become "other". Such entities can be considered 'gateways' through which the magician prepares himself to move into a particular state of consciousness. By this I do not refer to those ethereal 'higher' states so often associated with magical development. Rather, this is a lengthy process of expressing the state of consciousness typified by a particular 'gateway' through aligning one's Behavioural/Emotional/Cognitive patterns in a consistent manner. Since most 'gateway' entities are multi-faceted in the extreme, this is not a restrictive work, but nor, by the same token, is it everyone's choice.

The practice, as related by Flowers, of FS initiates having their own personal representation of the GOTOS, in addition to its role in lodge workings, reflects another common practice of working with so-called 'aspirational entities'. This practice is common in degenerative western manifestations (such as Spiritualism) where individuals seek 'messages' from well-known guides. In oriental religions it is common for disciples to maintain a shrine to a particular guru, in reverence of their influence. In tantrism, it is similarly common for adherents to maintain a shrine to a guru-entity such as Shiva or Dattatreya, however, the focus here, is to aspire to the condition of freedom and attainment that the figure represents, rather than mere worship or obeisance. Dattatreya, for example, is seen as the 'legendary' founder of many tantric clans, and as such, embodies the aspirations of those who come after him. The tantric practitioner is thus aspiring to the mastery of Dattatreya, rather than simply revering him as occurs in the Bhakti cults. It should be understood that, in these terms, it is the qualities embodied by an egregore that is important, rather than making contact with it in order to seek 'hidden wisdom' or the legitimisation of one's own 'spiritual' authority. Further, it seems from the exposition of the GOTOS as given by Stephen Flowers that the egregore is distinctly created to act as such a focus and then subsequently utilised by the members of the group or order whose ideals the egregore reflects.

Thus the egregore becomes a focus for what is known in the Chaos school as "Ego Magic" - the work of integrating and transforming the facets of the personality, in accord with a particular set of aims. In the case of the FS; to become embodiments of the qualities of the "Saturnian Magician". Ego Magic is an area of magical work which is often ignored, possibly due to the fact that it is somewhat unglamorous, having few of the trappings of ritual magic for example, and possibly due to its nature. It is easier, after all, to convince oneself of one's magical prowess, yet ignore glaring deficiencies such as low self-esteem, or lack of confidence when dealing with that most tortuous of magical 'planes' - the everyday world. Self-examination is often painful, yet the challenge of magic is constant self-awareness and vigilance.

The use of an Egregore as a focus for individual work can be extremely useful, since the egregore is a focus for a particular set of attributes and may be worked with as a kind of 'shadow-self'; a perspective through which one experiences the world during specific periods, rather than in the limited space of an invocatory working. Thus the magician draws upon the power of the egregore by seeking to express those qualities which it encapsulates, in appropriate circumstances.

According to Cabalistic doctrine a Group Egeregore must be carefully managed. If the qualities which the egregore is stated to embody are not made clearly explicit, the egregore is in danger of attracting to itself the 'lower' emotions and negativity which abound in a group or order, becoming eventually, little more than an 'astral shell' without a coherent persona, thus reflecting and reinforcing the uncontrolled emotions and conflicting desires of those who work with it. Very much a case of "Garbage in - Garbage Out."

There is, I feel, more than a grain of truth in this view. The creation, implementation, and subsequent work with any higher-order entity requires a good deal of discipline and a structured approach to work. Common occult doctrine holds that any created entity can become uncontrolled and 'malignant' over time, and experience has shown that this can certainly be the case with servitors and tulpas. Caution is thus all the more important with a created entity designed to embody common ideal qualities which a group can collectively and individually aspire towards.

That a vision may empower both individuals' own work and the collective development of an organisation appears to be well-understood by modern corporate consultants:

"Leaders articulate and define what has previously remained implicit or unsaid; then they invent images, metaphors and models that provide a focus for new attention. By so doing they consolidate or challenge prevailing wisdom. In short, an essential factor in leadership is the capacity to influence and organise meaning for the members of the organisation. [The subjects in our study] viewed themselves as leaders, not managers. This is to say that they concerned themselves with their organisations' basic purposes and general direction. ... Their visions or intentions were compelling, and pulled people towards them. Intensity coupled with commitment is magnetic. And these intense personalities did not have to coerce people to pay attention; they are so intent on what they are doing that, like a child completely absorbed in creating a sandcastle in a sandbox, they draw others in."

Warren Bennis & Burt Nanus, *Leaders*.

Tom Peters, author of *Thriving on Chaos* points out that to be effective, visions must be consistently projected and expressed appropriately by those in positions of leadership. This, he says, is more effective than any amount of 'Grand Declarations', which, without being expressed consistently, amount to little more than rhetoric. Peters warns corporate managers of the trap that all too many magical orders seem to have fallen into - that it is all too easy for even the most compelling vision to become static, so that it impedes the very changes that it was first meant to induce. It does seem that, increasingly, managers are becoming aware of the effect of providing an inspiring vision, the core values of which manifest, and are accessible in a number of ways, to both workers and customers.

The creation of a group egregore is the work of those adepts who have clearly defined and expressed the collective aims and ideals of the group. The Wiccan admonition to "keep pure your highest ideals" is certainly relevant here. This in itself is fraught with difficulty in this post-modern era where world-weary cynicism abounds, yet to be able to maintain one's ideals against the inertia, ridicule and narrow vision of the majority of the population is the mark of the true adept.

Occultism: a postmodern perspective by Phil Hine (1988)

Living as we do, in a society which is rapidly mutating itself by means of computers, camcorders and cable TV; in which men can walk on the Moon, whilst others sell their children to the organ dealers; where the mysteries of life are probed during DNA manipulation and the realities of other people's death served up on prime-time television, it is easy to wonder, where does 'the occult' fit in? Isn't there enough fear and horror, beauty and wonder on this crazy old world of ours without looking into dark corners and 'dabbling' with the forbidden? In a world where political 'isms' have largely taken over the job of meat-grinding populations from religious 'isms', who needs more of the same? Isn't the occult just a mess of half-baked psychobabble indulged in by those who need to justify their inadequacies, inequality, and intellectual shortcomings? What is 'the occult' anyway? A quick flip through the dictionary tells us that the term refers to 'secret', 'hidden', or 'the supernatural', none of which helps too much. After all, our society is rotten with secrets;

presumably anyone who studies economics or political theory can be classed as studying 'the occult', since the workings of governments and multi-nationals rapidly leads you into areas which are truly 'occult'. But no, that's not how we usually think of the word. 'Occult' conjures up images of robed figures, or better yet, naked figures, cavorting in graveyards and behind closed doors; of wizened old men studying dusty books inside mouldery libraries; teenagers dabbling with ouija boards and the entire works of Clive Barker.

The subject of the 'occult' covers a vast range of subjects, from Alchemy to Zen, from spiritual speculation about the universe to bending cutlery. What formerly may have been 'hidden' is being increasingly brought into the neon glow of modern society; through books, films, videos, fanzines, conventions, - all the extensions of the new mass communications media. Occult symbols abound on record sleeves, company logos, and designer fashion. In short, becoming another commodity. Occultists can no longer pretend that theirs is a specialist interest. It's another subculture; another fashion. Like any fashion, it moves through changes and fads. Like any fashion you can buy into it and acquire a passing knowledge of its tacit beliefs, values, and assumptions. Like any other fashion, it provides its adherents with a sense of communality, against other groups.

Occultism as a subject of enquiry is perhaps less interesting than the people whom it attracts. A great many people become involved in the occult not because they wish to explore 'lost' areas of knowledge or have conversations with demons, but because it imparts them with a sense of connection with the past. In a culture where the edges of present time are crumbling into the future at a rate that is often difficult to comprehend, the sense of connection to historical time is vague, to say the least. The contradictions of post-Capitalism have fragmented consensus reality to a point where alienation and powerlessness are endemic in our culture. Occultism offers an alternative: a sense of connection, perhaps, to historical time when the world was less complicated, where individuals were more 'in touch' with their environment, and, had more personal control over their lives. Occultism, and the subjects within it, strive to look at basic questions: "Where am I going?", "How will I get there?", "How much fun can I have on the way?". Occultism offers possibilities - that which has not been explained by science; capabilities we may have which go beyond our accepted limitations; powers which we can tap into to change ourselves, and our world. Science does not have the enduring quality that occultism can offer. Science is changing too fast. Most of us are operating on a view of reality set up by Newton (an alchemist, by the way), whilst pure science is already beginning to find out where Einstein went wrong.

Science and the occult are wary bedfellows at the best of times. Most science is based on logic, which assumes universal axioms. This has proved to work very well for building bridges or smashing atoms, but less so when it comes to human beings. Logic is a descriptive tool, no more, and its limitations when applied to human behaviour are slowly becoming apparent. There's parapsychology of course. Probably the most hotly contested area of science this century. And still not much nearer to 'explaining' the effects that it is monitoring. Scientists using the language of science to explain occult phenomena is almost as painful reading as occultists trying to do the same. Appropriating the terms of science though is necessary. We've come to expect it, especially in a society where 'science' sells washing powder and other basic necessities. Science gives something the stamp of authenticity in the same way that religion does. It needn't even be 'good' science, so long as it sounds at least halfway plausible. Veracity of belief is the key, here. Go back a few centuries and the peasant-in-the-street would tell you that yes, the Gods were real, and that if you kept them happy, they didn't strike you down with a bolt of lightning. Unless you have a strong religious sense, it's difficult to achieve this level of certainty nowadays. Instead, Gods can be thought of as metaphors, archetypes, role models, self-replicating morphogenetic fields, etc, etc. Moreover, you don't need huge concolades, vast temples, three thousand screaming worshippers and a naked virgin on an altar to get their attention, all you need is a dab of incense, a meditation cushion, and some electrodrone music. Yet, unaccountably, something wonderful may happen. This perhaps, is the real place of the occult in modern society. Our world is so crowded with marvels and miracles that they have become commonplace to us; especially when we no longer see ourselves as miracles. We swim through the world, deafened by the buzz of machines and the flicker of the videodrome, our senses are dulled from the information overload. Yet, shifting to another position, we suddenly find that the world is magical. That humanity is, as Alan Moore so eloquently put it, "unpredictable beyond the dreams of Heisenberg; the clay in which the forces that shape all things leave their fingerprints most clearly."

If it is so simple, why can't it be simply stated? Well, we tend to need a lot of convincing. The keys to change are not enough, we need a cultural backdrop in which to set them - systems of beliefs, maps, explanations that allow us to stretch the credibility envelope to accommodate new ideas and perceptions. So we search for knowledge amongst books, books, and yet more books, when it becomes increasingly plain that the answers are within our grasp. Entering the doorway marked 'occult' we find ourselves within a labyrinth, which offers packages to suit most tastes, from potboilers of 'mysterious phenomena' to hardcore books on magick. Most people tend to settle into one particular subject that excites them the most, and participate to varying degrees. The first level of enquiry is, often as not, reading. The second level is practice, usually within the bounds of one or another of the many esoteric systems of knowledge. The third level is that of going beyond the boundaries within the occult - the gaps which are usually unmarketable, unattractive, and above all, personally risky. For me, the occult is a fascinating subject because it draws from the past and attempts to synthesize with the frontiers of science and technology, as well as art, philosophy, and social engineering. Occult practices (hopefully) lead the individual to look within, and also, at their social conditioning and adherence to belief structures. At the same time, occult practices can encourage the individual to look at the wider world; what's going on, and what (if anything) we can do about it. It's a meeting point in the cultural melting pot, where all avenues of exploration can meet, merge, and produce new syntheses. A node where ideas mutate each other and, the individuals who wield them. In many senses, occultism is an 'escape route' from the limitations of consensus reality. Some escape routes are well-signposted and, despite their surface gloss, mere dead-ends. We search for that which is 'hidden' from us, and may come to discover that magick leads us back to ourselves, and the very basics of how we relate to each other and the world about us. That perhaps the really engrossing mysteries are those by which we live daily, on an unconscious basis - that which we tacitly take for granted. For me, the potential of occultism is less about becoming 'spiritual', and more about becoming spirited. We live, for the most part, in a dismembered world of things and objects. Magick may lead us to attempt to create a dialectical world of processes - where understanding, rather than explaining, is venerated; where differences are acknowledged, rather than merely being glossed over. The occult may offer the keys to understanding ourselves, but the will to do so must be ours. Else the occult becomes merely another arena in which we continue to act out the same games of power and control - 'being right', 'getting even', being 'an expert', 'being better than so-and-so'. Make no mistake, the occult is permeated with the same word-viruses that permeate the rest of our culture, as is clearly shown in the rapid growth of spiritual consumerism. Popular occultism does not challenge anything. Unpopular occultism challenges consensus reality by enabling us to meet, head-on, our taboos and fears. Not to exorcise or explain them away, but to understand the power of these 'monstrous souls', and in understanding them, allow them to grow. This is a difficult and demanding task, more so because, while it is an essential part of occult development, it has been obscured and mythologised as somehow 'sinister'. Our society has locked its collective demons away in a dark cellar. They have responded by rotting the foundations and occasionally flooding the streets with sewage. Magick and mysticism are two poles of action within the occult. Magick is the way of action-in-the-world. Hence the phrase "Do What Thou Wilt." Magick is about do-ing. Mysticism however, is more associated with transcending reality, or of achieving zero states of enlightenment. Neither are mutually exclusive, however. But mysticism often requires a spiritual dimension of experience, whilst modern magick is becoming increasingly concerned with the world as we experience it, rather than the world as we tend to model it. After all, the map is not the territory. We might create temporary islands of order with which to zoom in on one particular part of our experience, but in the real world, so much of our experience is cast against a backdrop of chaotic terrain. We may search for 'evidence' of a grand plan behind the scenes, but what of the possibility that there may not be one. Why do we need to explain the world so completely anyway? The Uncertainty Principle itself assumes the status of a taboo, and to banish it we search for meaning through the shattered remains of past cultures, through a labyrinth of lost gods and hidden knowledge when we know, deep down, that knowledge alone cannot fulfill the void in our hearts, that wisdom springs from experience and the mindful application of learning and insight. Occultism may give us a link to the past, but it also reminds us that the present is continually changing, and that individuals participate in their own futures. The questions which occultism addresses are changing as society changes, as we dream new possibilities of what we might become.

It is the constant mutation and diversification of contemporary occultism that gives it its postmodern flavour - new magical systems and diversifications are being created all the time. All limitations have been thrown off, and today's magicians are equally likely to be interested in the more novel applications of high

technology as they are the more traditional tools of magick. Witness the growth of 'oracular' performance art, which directly draws upon shamanic techniques such as suspension, body piercing, and trance states. Artists are returning to shamanistic practices, and it is also worth noting that modern magicians are usually occupied with one or more creative endeavors, be it writing, artwork, music, or multi-media using computers. An important part of the magical process is the 'earthing' of ideas and flashes of illumination into consensus reality, so that they can be transmitted and left for others to use as 'signposts' for their own progression. Modern occultism can thus be characterized as an exercise in Collage.

This is an age of magick, where reality can be manipulated, twisted, served up for entertainment and likewise shattered for fun, profit, & control. Even our chosen escape routes feed the beast. Cracking open a new novel, freshly smelling of shrink-wrap and clean pages, I settle back and delve into a larger-than-life narrative outlined in clear, crisp serifs and quickfire bursts of prose. Walking down a street at sunset, striding with a sense of purpose, shades angled for maximum coverage. From a window, a heavy bass line growls into gear, followed by sawtooth guitars. The sounds, the street, sundown & shades form a composite scene; and I realize - I'm in a movie. Like many modern films it has good sets, wild special effects, but the script leaves something to be desired. Desire. All aspirations and desires have been carefully packaged and subsumed into the structure of commodities. Even the most intrepid psychonaut must eventually, it seems, move into the marketplace. Pre-packaged realities eye each other, juggling for position. You only have so much time to devote to any one style. So which is it to be? The only stable principle is pleasure - from whatever you draw your kicks, no matter your justifications, noble or otherwise. We tend to go for the simplest solutions - beliefs in a bag, stereotypes, ideals in bite-size take home portions. Fast-Dumped into our minds, hard-wired in through social conditioning and everyday/extraday experience, they form the bedrock on which we build the shining cities of self, dream, and ideal. The whiter the city, the deeper, more convoluted the sewers that support it.

We are not encouraged to go for 'the big picture', except through the accepted routes of isms and ists, whereby the imagination is fed through logic gates, carefully screened, directed, curtailed and manicured. Going for 'the big picture' conjures up images of psychic panic ...paranoia or other forms of socialized madness where our none-too-stable coping strategies fail under the information overload. If you want to glimpse the big picture, then you'd better wear shades, or better still, blinkers. Reality is at fault; please do not adjust your mind.

We are all engaged in the evolution of the beast, at once both passive and active. Passive in that we can observe what happens to ourselves, and active in that we do participate at many levels, in the continual reflection and intensification of symbols and images that are all around us. In our heads and lurking in every square meter of territory to assault and engage our senses. Reality becomes a sea of dreams on which any individual or group can form islands built from images, symbols, clusters of belief and viral ideas. This is the realm of the magicians, who are able to adroitly manipulate images without any apparent effort. Some may be highly visible as celebrities, media darlings, walking talking ciphers for the projection and intensification of charismatic power. The most successful are the adepts of the invisible. Not so much hidden masters from Tibet as those who can go sub direct to the Deep Mind - those who can pull strings without us being aware of the fact. Puppeteers in the inner theatre of the mind. Slipping in a word here, a phrase there. A blip across our screen, and they're gone.

Art imitates life. In the inner theatre, it pays off not to be stage centre, in full view of the lights. No, to be on the periphery is better, or best yet, to be part of the scenery. Here, the most deadly predators are the ones that we (as audience) have grown used to. If a thing becomes 'known', it is often dismissed as harmless, irrelevant, or we become 'wise' to its games. Alas, appearances can be deceptive.

Sitting in a smoke-limned pub, against a background buzz of deals, assignments and remixed dub, I focus in on a packet of John Player Specials. Black and gold project the image - corporate desire sigilised. A black formula one racing car curves a graceful arc round an s-bend in my brain. Gold is quality. Black evokes associations at once simple, elegant, and hi-tech. Like some billionaire's coffin the packet commands the visual field. An everyday object, yet loaded with images, associations, memories. An icon of the hyperreal. Continually mutating, looping time and image back on itself as fashions are revived, reach a

sudden peak and are cast into the strata of subcultures. Reality becoming a virtual field, constantly recycled through walkmans, videos, computer images, televisions, and playbacks.

A while back I had my first taste of a computer-generated skin-flic. A series of digitised images looped together. A couple copulating. You could slow them down or speed them up, reverse the thrusts and jerks. A frozen slice of fucking, forever doomed to never coming. Suddenly our replication systems have a new dimension to them, faster than we can evolve a framework to fit them into. Whilst the effects of visual images are only just being chartered, the digital revolution is on us. Lila, illusion, spins her net and we are enmeshed in images under other images, dancing to songs hidden in other songs, and lulled to sleep by false promises lurking within other messages. As hackers of the hyperreal we have to lever images apart, disentangling the webs, charting the temporary tunnels, climbing invisible mountains, and slipping between the cracks in the solid foundations of the world which wraps around us. Such is the role of the occultist in postmodern culture.

Operation Overload

by Phil Hine & Dave Lee

The future has a blurred edge to it *...so bright I gotta wear shades*. Accelerated change like the LOGOS has jammed the fast-forward permanently. Video images flicker in our heads. Reality has become *televisual*. The Videodrome throws up images, figures of speech, nuances of body language, styles, fashions that we absorb and attempt to replicate. In a way, the viral images thrown up for consumption are already mutating us past the point of no return.

We live in a magical universe, where the real becomes the Hyper-real - an endless interaction with larger-than-life images of screen, sound and video games. Since so much of our experience is now dependent upon the media-information Gestalt, then we can begin to turn the tapeworm back upon itself by appropriating and utilising the hardware that generates the Hyper-real elements of our experience. William S. Burroughs is the arch-demonologist of the hyper-real - having thoroughly immersed himself in the 'nightmare culture' of hard drugs, forbidden sexuality and magical worlds generated from his artistic and experimental visions. His near-future visions and explorations of time-travel, together with a cast of drifters, outsiders, sorcerers and vampiric politicians twist and turn around each other like Kenneth Grant's convoluted metathesis - the Tunnels of Set. But the tunnels Burroughs bores through the facade of the hyper-real, exposing the mind parasites and vampires who feed off it, are much more tangible and accessible. He, unlike other contemporary magical writers is not concerned with trying to recreate the past - or create an enclave which ignores (and hence is still supported by) the Videodrome. Burroughs' sorcery has a uniquely twentieth-century flavour to it.

Word Virus

The purpose of any virus is to survive by replication of itself throughout the cells of its host organism. The Word Virus is a very small unit of word or image that entraps the energy of its human host into recycling an instruction or behaviour pattern. Ever walked around, unable to get a popular tune out of your head? Advertising, slogans, jingles, words and images are all carriers for the parasitic virus.

The mind may be understood as a more or less stable cluster of instructions, memories and identifications out of which emerges the internal dialogue, the constant static whisper of a self-organising system. In a constant interplay of feedback and feed-forward loops, this system interacts with, and translates information out of the total Gestalt of experience. Emerging from the web of information-processing is the property of selfhood - the Ego. The Ego reduces all experiential information into terms whereby it can maintain the fiction of itself. This is also the psychic censor, the faculty which resists change. Reality is at fault, please do not adjust your mind.

"When the world is not the same as our minds believe, then we are in a nightmare." - Rogan, Werewolf

The Ego maintains itself through the internal dialogue - the beliefs and stories which make up "I am".

Words are common property, and so the manipulation of identity by word viruses becomes very easy, so much so that it passes without notice. The inner voice maintains the sense of Ego by constantly looping a set of identifications which can be maintained within certain limits by the presence of virus mechanisms such as words/images: the IS of identity, the verb to BE, the definite article THE, the concept of

EITHER/OR:

"the IS of identity is in point of fact the virus mechanism, locking you in THE universe ... EITHER/OR ... the conflict formula... is seen to be an archetypal virus mechanism." - William S. Burroughs, *Electronic Revolution*

Those who have become adept at the manipulation of words control thought on a mass scale. We have grown a planet-wide extension of our nervous systems. Information sensors, compiler, memory facilities, transmission stations. Now part of everyday life - mundane existence, this system is another element in our experiential Gestalt; as much a part of our embedded reality as other taken-for-granted elements. This mediational Gestalt projects the Control system, run by a priesthood that vociferously denies its own existence.

Double-Bind

Television is the electronic womb - the birth channel. The artificial extension of our image-making facilities. Insidious, it affects everyone else except ME. Does television reflect or shape beliefs? Answer - it reflects *and* shapes, affirming what we already "know" to be True and so *shaping* belief through a feedback loop. Words and images are the key, particularly covert/overt sex and death messages. These latter form *Control Commands* which subjects are conditioned to respond to. They function according to the theory which Gregory Bateson et al (1960) called the Double-Bind. In a double-bind situation, the subject is enmeshed in a tangle of paradoxical injunctions in which they *cannot* do the right thing. Continued experience of such a situation leads to habituation, and the subject learns to perceive the universe in double-bind terms - i.e. should do/should not do. Usually, one message is simple and overt, the other, abstract and covert. Adolescence in industrial societies is a training period for *Control Command* programming. Burroughs describes the situation in terms of the old army game as follows:

"Contradictory commands are two commands that contradict each other given at the same time. 'TENSUN!' The soldier automatically stiffens to the command. 'AT EASE!' The soldier immediately relaxes. Now imagine a captain who strides into the barracks snapping 'TENSUN!' from one side of his face and 'AT EASE!' from the other. The attempt to obey two flatly contradictory commands at once both of which have a degree of command value at the automatic level disorients the subject. He may react with rage, apathy, anxiety, even collapse." - Burroughs, *The Job*, p.41

R.D. Laing gives more complex examples of double-bind situations and how they traumatize individuals. The process is further compounded by the formation of *anxiety loops* in which a person feels anxious in a given situation and so seeks to escape towards a place of safety. However, that 'place', be it a person or behaviour, can itself become a source of further anxiety. This leads to a situation where, as Laing puts it, the person is "like someone with a hand on a hot plate who presses his hand harder against it instead of drawing away.

For Burroughs, the Aristotlean Either/Or set-up is particularly virulent. The IS of identification in our language leads to the assumption that the label IS the thing. We trap people into labels so that they may be manipulated more adroitly. Particularly labels which carry *fear* messages, and which are used to block thought. Here is Gore Vidal on sex: *"There is no such thing as a homosexual person, any more than there is such a thing as a heterosexual person. The words are adjectives describing sexual acts, not people ... [yet]... Gay militants now assert that there is something called gay sensibility, the outward and visible sign of a new human being. Thus madness begets madness."* - Pink Star and Yellow Triangle, p.161

We are continually told that the varied arms of the electronic Gestalt have only a superficial influence on our thoughts. Keep away from the ovens. The Control Programs work best when you don't realise that they are there. However, once an understanding of how they operate is gained, the next step is to begin to subvert them.

Cut-Ups as Sorcery

"Precisely what is a dream? A certain juxtaposition of word and image." - Burroughs, *The Job*

The quickest way to kill the spirit - be it of individuals, group or tribe is to cut off the dream-world. The white settlers did this to the American Indians by denying the validity of their dream-world, severing access to their cultural mythic experience and replacing it with the narrow limits of fundamentalism - Control Commands.

The mythic world of Dreaming is the bush territory of the sorcerer, a territory in which the Control Program is ill-suited. Dreams are an *escape route* into Space, and like any disappearing act, a theatre is required to take us there - a theatre of voodoo. This has no fixed space but can only be entered by utilising an ever-changing body of magical techniques and masks.

Although it was Brion Gysin who first discovered the possibilities of cut-ups as a literary technique, it was Burroughs who expanded the technique to other fields. Cut-Ups are used to establish new connections between images/words, breaking down the Either/Or of Aristotlean thinking. By cutting up text or images, new messages can be revealed. Text that is cut up and then repasted gives rise to new messages, often appearing as oracles of future events. This is reminiscent of forms of divination such as Tarot, which in these terms, 'cut' a subject into linked images, so that a new Gestalt perception arises from the reading. *"Shakespeare Rimbaud live in their words. Cut up the word lines and you will hear their voices. Cut-ups often come through as code messages with special meaning for the cutter. Table rapping? Perhaps. Certainly an improvement on the usual deplorable performance of contacted poems through a medium. Rimbaud announces himself, to be followed by some excruciatingly bad poetry. Cut Rimbaud's words and you are assured of good poetry if not personal appearance."* - William Burroughs, *The Third Mind*

Burroughs uses cut-up techniques to convey cinematic images and musical repetition in text. He also suggests many applications for cut-ups using film, tape recorders and video in attempts to subvert our control conditioning. He also refers to the use of cameras and tape recordings to disrupt or destroy a certain locality. False news broadcasts could be created to spread rumours, political speeches intercut with pig squeals discredit the power of pompous politicians; weird news stories gently nudge people's realities. Use pictures, sampled writings, photographs, news cuttings etc. as co-ordinates to project yourself back in time.

The parallels with the more 'traditional' approaches to magic are obvious, such as sigils - cutting up specific desires and actualising what Stephen Mace calls *virtual forms*, by concentrating on the image. The practice of metanoia (looking at the world in new ways) is also part of the cut-up process. Our beliefs and attitudes arise out of experience and conditioning, and if beliefs are loosed and reshuffled, even intercut to form bizarre juxtapositions, then we can free ourselves from the limitations of belief. It is relatively easy to shuffle one's political or religious beliefs; less so to break down the more subtle aspects of the control program, since they are the linguistic formulations which form the basis of our thinking. With practice it should be possible to rub out whole blocks of words/images for a period of time:

*"I rub out the Qabala forever
I rub out all the formulas and directives of the elders of Minraud forever
I rub out the word forever
You cannot take words into space
That is all all all"*

Burroughs - The Last Words of Hassan I Sabbah

No matter how disordered words and images present themselves, we can find meaning; create a thesis from antithesis. The *personal* meanings in cut-ups slip through the repetition and juxtaposition of chunks of text. Burroughs' use of them in his novels creates passages which act as *subliminal switches*, seductively opening the reader's awareness of the magical universes which lurk like cracks between the cut-up blocks. Unlike magical sigils, which are actively focused upon by the user, cut-up sequences pull at the edges of consciousness, yielding up glimpses of the null-spaces where Burroughs has created a beachhead. You won't find these realms in any astral travelogue - they squirm with an elemental vitality (and depravity) that cannot be contained within ordered structures such as the Qabalah. Psychic wastelands spewed up by the self-devouring beast of the hyper-real. Cut-ups create a kind of time disorientation - we are habituated into reading text in a linear mode. Cut-ups shuttle words/images and their associations back and forth, building new meanings and hinting of unseen associations. In doing so they mimic the repetitive control commands by which so much of our behaviour is shaped. This is reminiscent of Gematria - the numerical analysis/association of ideas and symbols, which can act occasionally as an inverted Zen koan, overloading the mind with so many concepts that a 'flash' (neurological orgasm?) occurs, giving new associations and insights.

We are enmeshed in a continual exchange with the elements of the Hyper-real; it acts both to *distance* us from reality and turn experience into hyper-intensive images which are loaded with double-bind word-viruses. By entering the cracks in the walls shoring up our field of experience, we can gain an awareness of how we may plot escape routes - tunnelling between the structures which uphold consensus reality. Any lifestyle which generates enough of an *edge* can propel us towards these holes. Magick in particular is concerned with generating momentary *slips* through the fabric of existence, from cracking our personal control programs to contacting the extra-terrestrial 'entities' which lurk at the borders of awareness. The various entities and astral books which can be encountered during magical explorations can be seen as cut-ups of existing associations/images - outposts wherein we may reorder understanding and knowledge in ways which allow us to tunnel deeper towards the possibility of liberation. Yet, paradoxically, even these images are eaten and reabsorbed by the arms of the hyper-real. See, for example, how the artistic revolution of the surrealists has been recaptured and dragged down to be used for advertising cigarettes. Burroughs' writings, once the subject of censorship, has been absorbed into the hyper-real Gestalt of 'modern literature'. The beast will eat anything that becomes visible to its multitudes of heads and feed it back in the form of intensive images to we who live in its belly. Yet the signposts to the escape routes remain, however tenuous, and in this lies our hope for the slow mutation of the whole entity.

A strange pistol in his hand ... wild Pan music ... screaming crowds ... Kim's pistol is cutting the sky like a torch. Chunks of sky are falling away. The music swells and merges with the shrieking wind.... - The Place of Dead Roads

This essay was first published in Chaos International No.5

Paroxysms of Magick by Lionel Snell

Recently I drew a comparison between the two systems of ideas arising at the same moment in history (1904): Einstein's theories of space-time relativity, and Austin Osman Spare's theories which I described as "a relativity of belief". It was interesting that the year of the writing of the Book of the Law, i.e. the first year of Crowley's New Aeon, should have been the time when traditional ideas of "the absolute" came under attack on two fronts.

Einstein undermined the idea of absolute position. So such questions as "does the sun go round the earth or the earth go round the sun" were demoted from being questions about absolute truth to questions about human choice. The answer is that from an everyday perspective it is easiest to think of the sun as circling the earth: it allows us to go on using handy expressions as "sun rise" and "sun set". But in a scientific framework it is much simpler to work with the idea of the earth circling the sun - because the equations are easier.

Because I saw this idea as very basic to magic, the nature of belief has been a recurring theme in mine own ideas. In SSOTBME I pointed out that the question "do you REALLY believe in spirits", which is typical of the non-magician, is not very interesting to the magician. The latter is more likely to argue as Crowley did that "I perform certain actions and certain results follow"; and, as with the scientists' heliocentric equations, the spirits often provide a neater model of the phenomena than any psychological or coincidental theory of magic.

We all recognise the power of absolute belief - fanaticism can move mountains - but we see that it is a power which tends to rule the believer. Magic is more concerned with ruling over power than being ruled by it. The struggle is perhaps to "beef up" our carefully chosen beliefs by making the unconscious accept them as absolute, but without handing over our control in the first place. It is because of this confusion about belief - the heavy associations which linger with the word - that I have wondered about finding an alternative or replacement concept. Instead of "believing in" some idea, might we not "delight in" it? or "rejoice in" it? Or perhaps it is better to kidnap a dated phrase and say "instead of believing in ideas I am going to dig them". So the answer to "do you really believe in spirits?" becomes "no, but I really dig them!"

This "digging" principle was in a sense the serious message behind the "Manifesto of the OTTO" published in Aquarian Arrow number 21. This manifesto was a send-up of "heavy heavy" New Aeon occultism, but

also a justification of it. It began with the plea: "What happened to the occult loonies, the hairy mega-thelemites of the late sixties? Where are they now?"

"When was the last time you attended a festival thronging with bordello witches, warlocks with long beards and flowing cloaks, all heavy with ankhs, pentagrams and all the trappings of kitschcraft. When were you last greeted in the streets of London with cries of 'Do what thou wilt'?"

"Over-the-top occultism is dead. Long live Over-the-top occultism!"

The general theme of the argument was "When occultism disassociated itself from the worst excesses of Dennis Wheatley, it castrated itself; for the worst excesses of Dennis Wheatley are where it's at."

The manifesto ended: "The OTTO is the order that makes the Typhonian OTO look like the Mother's Union; makes the age of Maat sound like the whisper of a politely restrained fart at a Conservative Ladies luncheon gathering; makes Chaos Magick feel like a slightly limp cucumber sandwich remaining on a plate at the end of an exceptionally dull vicarage teaparty."

"So put on your cloaks, tattoo yourselves with sigils, vibrate names of power at the Café Royale, fill braziers with incense, wave kitsch swords ... Exceed! Exceed! But ever unto me!"

The idea behind the OTTO is this. In our early days, when we first become acquainted with the occult, it is often an awe-inspiring thing. After reading "The Devil Rides Out" we see an advert for the Sorcerer's Apprentice in Exchange & Mart and send off in trepidation for a catalogue of amazing incenses and weird paraphernalia to read by torch-light beneath the bedclothes with chattering teeth - expecting hellfire to blast us at any moment. A few years later we have worked our way through W. E. Butler, Dion Fortune and plucked up courage to read Crowley and we are ready to argue the psychological validity of magical technique with anyone. What we have gained is wisdom and understanding. What we have lost is that old gut-wrenching excitement.

We know enough to steer clear of the ego-tripping looney with the piercing gaze and long black cloak. We see through his act and congratulate ourselves. But we overlook the fact that a good act can be a delight, a piece of street theatre, an art-form, an invocation in its own right.

The OTTO message is this: now we have grown up enough that we no longer are in awe of the charlatan, it means that we are now free to delight in the charlatan - to *dig* the charlatan.

Now we are mature enough to realise there aren't any ancient brotherhoods with secrets passed down from time immemorial, we are now free to *dig* those brotherhoods who put on a good act of being just that.

Now we know that all paraphernalia is just trappings with no value other than surface appearance, let us therefore maximise that residual value by making surface appearance utterly mind-blowing!

When the 70's occultist says "there's no point in using a silver censer when a coffee tin serves just as well", the OTTO initiate replies "there's no point in using a coffee tin when a 800 year old human skull looted from the ruins of a Mexican temple serves just as well."

The excitement of the OTTO is the excitement of overdoing it, and I suggest that this approach has something to offer us now. Let's consider an example of its application.

A typical problem of a hard core magical group is getting things to happen on time: after all the excitement of planning a really staggering ritual, when it comes to the day no-one turns up on time, and then they sit around chattering and smoking dope for a few hours before anything happens. If the master of rituals gets stropky and says that late arrivals will be fined or excommunicated, then everyone protests that he is on an ego power trip - and quotations like "let there be no difference made...", "every number is infinite" and "do what thou wilt" start flying around.

Now the OTTO approach might be as follows: the master or mistress of ritual, with eyes blazing and flecks of foam at the mouth, would scream "at the first stroke of midnight the door of the temple will be NAILED SHUT, and the ritual will commence!" Instead of rebelling at this apparent power trip, the brethren of the OTTO say "Wow! NAILED SHUT! That's really over the top! We dig it! And the ritual happens on time. Paroxysms of delight can indeed be magical. They are an expression of the affirmation that pierces clouds of doubt. I can become so entranced by the loopiest of New Age festivals that I can even end up digging the high prices..."

In a sense I see the OTTO as spiritual heirs to the Fabulous Furry Phreak Brothers. Was not much of the "magic of the sixties" a product of people's willingness to cast aside doubt and indulge in paroxysms of delight? Some ageing hippies still insist that the Pentagon really did levitate when they surrounded it with linked hands...

In the terminology of Crowley's essay on the subject, perhaps the Hunchback (?) has now had a long enough innings, and it is time to reinstate the Soldier (!).

And now at last we are fortunate enough to have once more a real incentive to encourage our actions. When the brethren of the OTTO find their enthusiasm for blood sacrifices and desecrated churchyards to be in wane, they have learnt to sit in a circle, link hands, breathe slowly and deeply, and meditate on the image of an apoplectic Geoffrey Dickens.

Peter J. Carroll Interview

by From Abrasax Magazine, Vol.5, No.2.

Q: You've referred to the Illuminates of Thanateros as the "magical heirs to the "Zos Kia Cultus" and as "a satrap of the Illuminati," and in the flow chart on page 8 of the Weiser edition of *Liber Null*, you make I.O.T. look like the culmination of everything from Sufism to Freemasonry. How do you answer critics who say that this is pretentious?

A: The chart in *Liber Null* was presented to show the development of certain traditions of esoteric ideas; each of the groups shown appears to have taken some inspirations from one or more older groups and added something of its own. Each group may be considered as the "Illuminati" of its era in the sense that it possessed the keys to the next advance of enlightenment. This, I believe, is all the Illuminati actually consists of, and I like to think that Chaos Magic is the obvious esoteric current for the postmodern era.

Q: As a scientist, you're naturally familiar with the Second Law of Thermodynamics. If it is true, and the universe actually *is* at some point going to reach a point of equilibrium, won't that obviate Chaos Magick?

A: The Second Law of Thermodynamics was derived from the behaviour of small volumes of gas in cylinders. It takes no account of such things as the strong nuclear force, gravitation, morphic fields, or the activities of information creating systems. I would be very surprised if the law has universal cosmic validity.

Q: You quote from *Magick in Theory and Practice* rather frequently in your works, and especially *Liber Null*, but you do not credit Crowley as the author of your thoughts. For example, "Metamorphosis" actually seems but a rewriting of "Liber Jugorum." Was Crowley a major influence on you?

A: Awful Aleister gets his credit in the chart mentioned above where an arrow leading from the "OTO" box which represents Thelema in general leads to the IOT box. I think I have read most of Crowley and he certainly is a major influence. However, I do not collect books, anything worth reading I pass to friends, the rest, I destroy. The only exception being Austin Spare; I keep the collected works as I feel I have yet to fully understand them. I'm more interested in Crowley's ideas than his personality. As Gerald Yorke commented to a friend of mine, "you would not have liked him if you had met him." Indeed, I'm sure that the few things Aleister would have requested of any of his contemporary followers had he still been around would have been wallet, worship, girlfriend and arsehole. This is not the style of mastership which interests me personally.

Q: I take it that A. O. Spare was an influence on you; for example, the section on sigils owes a lot to him, doesn't it?

A: Austin Spare has influenced me greatly, more than Crowley. For me, Spare's great triumph was in uncovering the basic sleight of mind trick which brings the sub or unconscious into play to effect magic. Once this is understood you have the key to the whole field of magic and the role of any particular symbolism becomes rather secondary. Obviously, most successful magicians must have understood the trick intuitively but Spare made it explicit with no bullshit and has thus allowed us to extend the technique in a planned and deliberate fashion rather by mere intuition or hit and miss procedures.

Q: In *Liber Null*, you advocate, as a tool for "liberating" from conditioning, the exploration of heresies, iconoclasm, anathemisms, etc., including "sexualites which are unusual for you." Isn't this just a rehashing of antinomian *vama marga* techniques designed to rid the initiate of his/her *kleshas*?

A: Yes, it probably is, the antinomian techniques are so essential that they must be continually rehashed to suit current needs. One only achieves "overstanding" rather than mere understanding of any so called truth or law or convention by appreciating the conditions under which it is false or inappropriate or unnecessary.

My next book will deal with a more extreme form of antinomianism, the elimination of the concept of "being" from thought and speech.

Q: Reading the section on "Augoeides," I was struck by the similarities to Crowley and especially *Magick and Theory and Practice* and *The Law is For All*. What is your opinion of him, both as a man and a magus?

A: The further I look into the concept of Augoeides or True Will, the more my opinion hardens against the idea. One can certainly perform operations to achieve it, but I now consider it unwise to do so as it merely bloats one of our component selves to demonic size, at the expense of our full humanity. Crowley was certainly a man of varied and often extreme achievements. More of a mystic rather than a magus, in the sense that he neglected results magic. He was also a bully and an exploiter and an incorrigible self publicist. Although he attracted many interesting people to himself, the best of them seemed to break with him rather quickly. I rather fancy that I would have found him fascinating for a while, but that we would have ended up fighting after a while.

Q: My own theory as to how magick "works" is that by ritual, we reprogram our biocomputers with programs to do magick; that we do this by means of altered states of consciousness, which allow us to manipulate the information in the universal hologram through willed synchronicities. Any comment?

A: Quite so, but I'm sure we could argue for hours about what you mean by the "universal hologram" which would appear to have similar properties to my "morphic information in shadow time." Moreover, I would be pleased to concur with your use of the term "information." Clearly, the concept of occult "energies" is past its sell by date.

Q: When you observe that "the gods came out of Chaos" are you referring to the cosmologies of the ancients, and in particular, the Orphics, Valentinians, etc.?

A: Not specifically, but I tried to imply that "the gods" arise from the same non-anthropomorphic "forces" which create the universe and us within it. This universe does not appear to be the work of a humanoid sentient deity to me, unless it has a very perverse sense of humour.

Q: I absolutely love the section (in *Liber Null*) on "Random Belief." You offer a number of reasons why practice of this art is beneficial, though you seem to ignore one rather obvious one: the ability to throw lesser mortals off-guard. For example, if you met a person and came onto them as a pagan polytheist one day and, three or four days later, you encountered them and began talking like a true believer in fundamentalist Christianity, you would be practising what Setians call "Lesser Black Magic," wouldn't you? (Mental sleight of hand.)

A: Yes, this can certainly have interesting effects, but I have often found it a good exercise to try and enter the paradigms of people I meet who hold extreme views and to keep taking those views a little further with each turn in the conversation until a positive feedback leads us into realms where the absurdity of the original premise becomes apparent.

Q: Were you aware that the statement "Nothing is true, all is permitted" has been attributed, I think properly, to Hassan Ibn Sabbah, the "Old Man of the Mountains" and notorious head of the *Hashshashin* (Order of Assassins)?

A: Yes, it certainly has been attributed to him, but with an understandably wide margin of possible historical error, and the context can only be guessed at. I like the statement very much; it has applications on many levels, but one should never forget that the consequences can be ghastly.

Q: To some, if not all quantum theories, isn't it *literally* true that "Nothing is true, all is permitted" (merely substituting the word "real" for "true")?

A: According to the Copenhagen Interpretation of quantum physics, to which I partly subscribe, I think it would be fair to say, "There is no being, all is doing, and even that is a matter of probability."

Q: When you wrote "...the root of every emotion is also its opposite," were you aware that this is what Kraft-Ebbing said about so-called abnormal psychology?

A: I've not read Kraft-Ebbing; the ideas came to me mainly from Spare, who apparently used to refer to Jung and Freud as Junk and Fraud, even though he obviously was influenced by some of their ideas.

Q: Who was the sage you quoted as saying "Desire is the cause of sorrow" ... Siddhartha? Patanjali? Both?

A: Siddhartha, I believe, although there is of course considerable debate about what the historical Buddha actually said. I think it would be fair to say that there are probably much greater differences between current Buddhist traditions than there are for example between Christian denominations. My point about emotional duality is that life is richer if we are prepared to take both sides of what is on offer rather than neither as many schools of Buddhism appear to suggest.

Q: In *Psychonaut*, you say, "It now seems that magic is where science is heading." Is this in keeping with the fact that the ancients knew intuitively what modern science is only now "discovering"? For example,

the Sanskrit Hindu concept of non-duality will seem to have been "born out," so-to-speak, by Bohm's theory of the implicate order?

A: It's all very well to find *some* ancient metaphysics which equate roughly with modern physics, but the overwhelming mass of ancient theories now seem wrong. Some aspects of Bohm's theory attract me, but only when they don't pretend to be hidden variables; I prefer to allow an element of pure chance.

Q: Your observation that "the creativity of consciousness has mushroomed so enormously that the totality of human ideas seems to double with each decade." Wouldn't it be better to speak of it as doubling every 2-3 years?

A: The doubling period is undoubtedly shortening although much spurious novelty particularly in art and the soft sciences can hardly be called creative.

Q: In "Group Ritual," you observe that "a full-length black robe with hood is most excellent" for depersonalization of ritual, and add, "as is nudity..." Don't you think that the latter might actually be distracting and that one would be constantly reminded: "This isn't a god-form, it's chubby Harry with moles," etc.? In other words, nudity might be a hindrance?

A: You can quite easily get used to nudity so that it seems the most natural thing in the world, or you can reserve it for works of an explicitly sexual nature. In my order, we have used both strategies in the course of week-long meetings.

Q: Your writing on "Magical Combat" is, simply put, the best I've seen. Are you familiar with the "Battle of the Magicians" in 19th century France? Any comment?

A: Sorry, I'm not familiar with that one; apart from Eliphas Levi, French occultism seems to be a more or less closed book to us in the U.K.

Q: In your "Invocation of Baphomet," you mention an essentially Tantric rite of breathing on the *muladhara* chakra, identifying the latter as the peritoneum. Wouldn't this necessitate major surgery under a full anesthetic?

A: Permit me a joke or two. No matter how wild the celebration of the Mass of Chaos "B," I have never seen anybody actually try this particular ritual gesture! It's optional.

Q: You remark that "There is actually no scientific view of mind at all," and yet, even in the 1980's we had the views of scientists such as Dennett, Fodor, Wolf, Hofstadter, Eccles *et al.* Have your views changed since the publication of *Psychonaut*?

A: The mind is what the brain does and that is more or less all there is to it, although one must remember to consider the actions of the shadow information fields with brain activity. Behaviourism is almost scientific on a phenomenological level, but limited in scope. Psychology cannot become scientific until we understand the actions of the brain in detail, and this is a long way off.

Q: In the *Liber Nox* section of *Principia Magica*, you characterise as "futile" the "heroic efforts currently being expended on projecting quantum physics into the big bang epoch to forge a Grand Unified Theory..." Are you aware that the American congress recently halted construction of a superconducting super collider and would you agree then, that the multi-billion dollar project wasn't worth the money it was eating up?

A: I am devastated the American congress misinterpreted what I wrote and cancelled the superconducting super collider. Particle physics is great fun and worth every cent it costs, but one of the things I predict that it will not do is prove the big bang hypothesis or yield a deterministic explanation of how the universe came into existence.

Q: What is your opinion of Sheldrake's morpho-genetic fields? Do his theories amount to a kind of neo-animism?

A: More of a neo-platonism than a neo-animism, really. The basic theory is fine, but I find no evidence for the persistence of morphic fields from material structures which have ceased to exist. This is a sore point between Sheldrake and I. He has not bothered to perform a simple and definitive crystallographic experiment which I have proposed which could settle the matter. His first book was brilliant, but the follow-up, *Persistence of the Past*, is a mass of assumptions which I find to be highly questionable.

Q: In *Liber Null & Psychonaut*, you say that astrology is bunk, yet you provide us with your own natal chart information at the very end of *Liber Kaos* - why the apparent contradiction? (By the way, Sun opposite Uranus indicates a person who is so self-willed he has difficulty getting along with others, often "rubbing people the wrong way," to quote my Visions software. You apparently like to have things your own way and to be high-strung.)

A: I have no difficulty getting along with others so long as I am in charge. I find that if I pick any sun sign at random the description fits me perfectly.

Q: As did our reviewer, Leo Viridis, I very much enjoyed your explication of the "Psychohistorical" model of the Aeons, though I tend to disagree that acausality, indeterminacy, and action-at-a-distance are, as you put it, "magical [rather than] material" theories. I think writers like Zukav and Capra, among others, have shown how very transcendentalist such theories are. Apparently you disagree?

A: I'd say that only theories within the classical and relativistic descriptions are purely material. Quantum theory, although arising from the scientific enterprise, has begun to touch on matters which I classify as magical. Transcendental theories are those which are neither provable nor falsifiable and they hold little interest for me.

Q: Why do you say that the model "does not predict the nature of the characteristic post-industrial technology for the impending aeon"? Isn't it rather obvious that the technology is upon us and that it is information itself, or the use of it, leading "mind2 to its reductio ad absurdum: the "pure information" of the implicate order. One of Lily's paradigms of "god" is the computer. Comment?

A: Well, yes, in the absence of disaster, the future is a high tech information culture. However, there seems a general lack of awareness of just how vulnerable such a culture would be to the breakdown of its information systems. A single EMP bomb could reduce everything to a Neolithic level without killing anybody. Imagine a cash-free society that got a serious virus in the whole system. Concerning Lily's paradigm, didn't somebody once say that an ant had once said to him that God was rather like an ant except that it had *two* stings.

Q: The story of the star ruby and the sailboat in the Arabian sea ends with your musing on whether the octarine stone had been given to you as a curse. I thought you were free of superstitions?

A: A curse perhaps, in the sense that giving someone a Las Vegas poker chip might be considered a curse.

Q: In the section on references, you mention Robert Anton Wilson and suggest that the reader "read all his books." Do you know Wilson personally?

A: I've spent a couple of very pleasant evenings with Robert Anton Wilson and his wife, Arlene, at their place when I visited the USA. Probably the most interesting people of their generation that I have met. Bob has a mind like a ramjet; it sucks ideas in at one end, compresses and accelerates them, and blasts them out of the other. We also drank a great deal.

Q: Have you ever been accused of lacking a sense of humour? (This is a lie; you can be very funny, as, for example, when discussing blue magic - e.g. the myth that the rich are unhappy; that lotteries are only won by the poor because only the poor play and then lose their earnings in a couple of years. I also learned from this section why I am always broke: I hate money. Thanks.)

A: I like to think that I normally exhibit a rather dry sense of humour; in the USA, this is often missed, in Germany, it is rarely noticed at all.

Q: Do barristers and counsellors at law have any innate ability to practice Orange Magic?

A: I understand that in the USA lawyers attract vast amounts of wealth, power, and respect despite that they are seriously undermining the fabric of your society. Over here they seem to have a similar sort of status to undertakers or funeral consultants as you may call them. I suppose that anyone who speaks well with a forked tongue could be regarded as practising orange magic.

Q: I found your remark that homosexuality is "unsatisfactory, if the frenetic merry-go-round of partner exchanges in that discipline is anything to go by," rather curious. Are you aware that some homosexuals are monogamous and thus, put your observation into the category of overstatement?

A: Possibly an overstatement, but I notice that the conquests of promiscuous homosexuals are often a whole order of magnitude greater than what most promiscuous heterosexuals achieve, and good luck to them if that's what they like.

Q: Anything you wish to add?

A: No, but thanks for some interesting questions.

Political ritual reconsidered

Phil Hine

This essay first appeared in *Moonshine* magazine, Winter Solstice 1987.

The injection of a political dimension into Western magick has a number of encouraging side-effects, these being:

1. Mass ritual generates community and raises the scope for further collective action.
2. It helps draw together people of differing orientation through the commitment to bring about change.
3. It is empowering - re-emphasising the inner certainty that we can act to make a difference.
4. Feedback from participation in such rites is directly proportional to the initial input given to power the rite or build it's organisational structure.

Having made these positive points about our enterprise it is necessary to look critically at the process and look for ways and means of extending the politicization of magical activity. A first point to make is that it does matter what kind of power raising technique you utilise for the ritual. the most convenient technique is solo meditation, but solo meditation is not the most effective means of raising energy - drumming, dancing, chanting, hyperventilating - the more energetic ways of raising power are preferable. When this is done by two or three people, better yet.

The site of the ritual is also important. The back bedroom is probably the easiest, but again, ease is not the prime consideration here. To go outside is preferable, particularly some high place where you can see a large tract of land about you.

Obviously the more effort you take in organising something; choosing a site, getting people together and deciding what is to be done, then the more special the event becomes. And special; the event must be if it is going to be effective in any way. Remember that this is a Sacred act being performed - which is not to say that it must be totally serious, just don't go about it in a half-hearted fashion.

Since the targeting of present political ritual is the group consciousness of the world at large, or at particular sections of the populace, the results of such workings are going to be subtle and long term. there is no reason why we should be content with this situation, so it is necessary to look for other ways in which we can intervene as a magical act.

Our xtian bretheren are in this respect way ahead of us. When the more militant xtian sects get wind of something they find morally reprehensible, they organise a pray-in to stop it going on. Any small group, empowered with daring and will (and a little know-how) can throw quite a number of "spanners" into the machinations of the state and the corporate "idiot-gods".

Out Demons Out

This is the sharp end of political ritual - selective psychic terror waged against those institutions and dogmas which maintain the current levels of psychic/physical pollution. The first point to make is that targetting these rites of resistance is of the utmost importance. It must be in an area which is going to bring about some kind of result. Trying to "waste" individual figures is rarely any good. To use the 'beast' analogy - chop off a head and five more grow in its place. So put away the pins and Ronald Reagan image dolls.

More useful is the idea of cursing institutions rather than individuals. Complex and delicate data networks have been shown to be highly susceptible to magical interference, and there are a wide range of electro-elementals and gremlins who can easily be persuaded to go and play around with the hardware of some company who'se been messing you about.

Magi-Prop

The most subtle forms of opposition are those which are not immediately recognisable as such, those which are aimed not at the waking awareness but the deep mind. the best example of this kind of Sorcery is the advertising media. its very banality lulls us into a false sense of security whilst the real message sneaks in unawares. To counter this, the politically-inspired magician must be equally, if not more, cunning. The

least effort for maximum effect, using secret weapons - humour, superstition and chaos, to counteract stupidity and narrow-mindedness.

Assuming you have some kind of code or identifiable ideals, print them on a broadsheet and hand them out to local shoppers. You never know, someone may be illuminated by your words.

Such is the role of the shaman - to inject chaos into order and shatter reality for an instant - opening the gateway to liberation. in other words, be sneaky. Leave a false name, proclaim a new age of enlightenment, not to your friends, but to total strangers. Become a legend in your own lunchtime. Don't hang around to quibble, exit stage right! But most of all, don't get caught.

Possession

by Phil Hine

"My skull is a drum; each great beat drives that leg, like the point of a stake, into the ground. The singing is at my very ear, inside my head. This sound will drown me! ... I cannot wrench the leg free. I am caught in this cylinder, this well of sound. There is nothing anywhere except this. The white darkness moves up the veins of my leg like a swift tide rising, rising; it is a great force which I cannot sustain or contain, which will surely burst my skin. "Mercy" I scream within me. I hear it echoed by the voices, shrill and unearthly: "Erzulie!" The bright darkness floods up through my body, reaches my head, engulfs me. I am sucked down and exploded at once. That is all." Maya Deren

The phenomena known as Possession has been, until fairly recently, a comparatively rare phenomena in Western Magical practice. This is possibility due to it's association, in the nineteenth century, with some of the more grosser elements of Mediumship, and a general misunderstanding of non-western magical approaches such as Voudoun and Santeria, which have, until the recent popularisation of anything possibly "ethnic/shamanistic", been denigrated as "primitive" religions - particularly by descendants of the Theosophists who, as Michael Bertiaux put it in a recent interview "are obsessed with their childhood experiences of voudon, based on 1930's and 1940's zombie movies."

It is also the case that experience of possession is difficult for many people, particularly those conditioned by a European upbringing, since possession requires disinhibition and the ability to surrender oneself to passion - something which, on the whole, is neither socially sanctioned or consistent with the self-image of "being in control".

Over the last few years however, there has been a marked rise in the practice of possession-oriented ritual, where the aim of the working is for the appearance of an entity into a human vessel, for purposes of enchantment, illumination, or oracular utterances. The use of possession-based work is particularly strong within Wicca, the Northern Tradition, and the freestyle approach generally termed as Chaos Magick. Having had many opportunities to participate in such workings (both as a vessel and a celebrant), I hereby offer an analysis of the possession experience for discussion.

Possession is a wide-ranging phenomena which is probably the most popular form of union with the divine in human history. Possession-oriented rituals are apparent in ancient Egypt and it has been shown that the earliest forms of Cabbalistic practice were oriented towards this type of experience. Possession was a recognised phenomena in ancient Greece, two examples being the Delphic oracle, and the practices of the Theurgists, defined by Proclus as "... in a word, all the operations of divine possession." Possession is a central feature of Voudoun, Santeria, and Macumba, religions which are gaining increasing popularity, and is apparent in most tribal cultures, from America to Australasia.

Possession also appears in early Christianity - particularly with the manifestation of "speaking in tongues" which remains popular in modern-day forms of evangelical Christianity. St. Paul's dramatic experience on the road to Damascus bears all the hallmarks of a sudden divine possession, yet he was worried by the phenomenon, and found it necessary to lecture the Corinthian Christians on the need to carefully manage speaking in tongues: *"If therefore, the whole church assembles, and all speak in tongues, and outsiders or unbelievers enter, will they not say that you are mad? ...do not forbid speaking in tongues, but all things should be done decently and in order"* (1 Corinthians, 14)

In general, there are two routes into the ecstasy of possession. The first is solitary, and the second is group-oriented. Solitary possession is often the result of an extended retirement of meditation, prayer, or ritual, whereby the celebrant attains union with the chosen entity. The basics of this procedure was eloquently described by Steve Wilson in his article Results Mysticism in C.I 15. This was the path of solitary mystics such as St. John of the Cross. Within the context of monotheism, this practice is not without its dangers. The Sufi mystic al-Hallaj announced that he was "God", and later, was crucified. The Christian mystics of the Middle Ages were often, one step away from being viewed as heretics. In India, this form of solitary possession is known as Bhakti Yoga.

The key elements of this experience are easy to identify. Firstly, there is a degree of isolation from other people. Isolation, in varying degrees, contributes greatly to the loss of a sense of ego-boundaries. Isolation places great stresses upon the human psyche. Secondly, there are varying degrees of deprivation - fasting, sleeplessness, removal of sexual relief, self-inflicted pain, etc - the monastic favourites which would be recognised and approved of by shamans and tantrics alike. Thirdly, there is the constant turning of attention to the subject of the retirement. The mystic continually directs his awareness to the union with the divine which he seeks, through prayer, meditation and ritual. Crowley's Liber Astarte is a fine example of this kind of work, as is the Abra-Melin system; if you are inclined towards grovelling before Jehovah. The published Abra-Melin diary of William Bloom is a fascinating account of the 'self-abasement before god' gambit in action. Crowley, of course, was much more inclined to lie back and let the 'god' enter him through the back door, as it were, and readers are referred to my own reflections on 'passive' sodomy in Chaos International 11 for more on this particular form of possession.

It is the group-oriented form of possession which I wish to pay particular attention to, since contemporary possession-workings are most often in this form. In religious cults, possession plays an extremely effective role in validating belief in the system. This is precisely what worried St. Paul about the "tongues" phenomena so widespread in early Christianity. As an adherent of reason, he was worried by the fact that participation in this form of ecstatic experience produced a fervent, yet uncritical belief.

DISINHIBITION

The ability to 'loose control' appears to be a key factor in the possession experience. I have seen people who, upon attempting to take on a manifestation for the first time, clearly 'lose' the trance when their inhibitions over what is acceptable behaviour conflicts with the persona of the entity they have taken on. Expectations over how to behave, even within the free space of a magical ritual are, once they have been built up, difficult to shed. The ability to release one's inhibitions and 'go with' the possession takes time to build up for many people, though it can equally be the case that individuals who seem otherwise, to lack charisma and confidence, can sometimes very quickly 'let go' and enter possession trance. One explanation is that the possession experience gives participants "permission" to act out of character. As a voodoo celebrant said to S. E. Simpson (Religious Cults of Caribbean: Trinidad, Jamaica & Haiti, 1970)... "What a person is afraid to do, he does when possessed." Permission to act in a manner appropriate to the God is effectively sanctioned by officiating officers, celebrants and audience. However, in modern rituals, the limits of permission are not always clearly defined. Anthropological accounts of possessed persons seemingly going 'out of control' agree that any relating violence is approved of and expected - part of the 'play' of the ceremony. In teaching others the 'trick' of becoming possessed, it is essential to convey the message that the individual is not 'responsible' for the behaviour of the spirit. Once one understands that all present are able to divorce the behaviour of the individual from the presence of the God, the need to hold fast to one's personality diminishes.

GROUP EFFECTS

It should be understood that possession is not merely a matter of entity & vessel, but an experience that arises from the total interaction of those present. In some senses, possession is a form of theatrical performance. Certainly I have heard actors describing an experience akin to possession - that, when on stage, they are able to do things which are associated with their characters far more eloquently than when out of role. Accounts of possession ceremonial by Deren, Seabrook, Belo et al show that the interaction between performers (those possessed by spirits), audience, ritual officers and the Master(s) of Ceremonies co-creates the possession experience. Of particular interest is the role taken on by the Master of Ceremonies or officiating Priest.

Keith Johnstone (Impro, 1981) notes that in Voudou ceremonial, the officiating priests have high status, yet are "indulgent" to the possessed participants, who often exhibit child-like, or playful behaviour. Another useful analogy is the idea of the M.C as "ringmaster", coaxing the possessee towards the ecstasy of gnosis and whipping the audience on. A good MC ensures not only that the spirit behaves (or misbehaves) appropriately, but also that the audience participates in the performance. All too often, I have seen the 'audience' in a possession working standing uneasily round the possessee, and occasionally, being berated by the spirit for their lack of participation. Invocatory rites are similar to evocatory rites in that they are context-derived. In my experience, the successful appearance of an evoked goetic spirit depends very much on the ritual space - the use of appropriate props & paraphernalia. In the same fashion, good possession working requires a clear context that is known and understood by all participants. Conflicting expectations often give rise to results which are at variance with the participants' intentions. A good example from my own experience is of a working which was clearly designed by the officiating priest to be the opening act for an orgiastic celebration. The entity he chose was IUSTINA, a persona derived from a character in the works of the Marquis de Sade (Justine: The Misfortunes of Virtue). The entity was based on the character Justine who, whilst undergoing every kind of debauchery imaginable, retains an aura of virtuosity. During the working, the possessee displayed behaviour which was quite in keeping with the Justine of the book, although that was not quite what the officiating priest had in mind!

This is not of course, an issue, in ceremonies where the entire assembly knows what to expect of the entity manifesting. William Sargant gives an account of a Voudoun ceremony he witnessed in Haiti, where two girls became simultaneously possessed by Ghede, a loa who is known to be particularly sexually active: "They half stripped each other and one girl symbolically raped the other with a masculine type of pelvic approximation. It ended with the total emotional collapse of both participants." Sargant goes on to say that the group was somewhat amused by this episode, and that the girls, who were normally restrained and quiet, had no memory of what they had done. He notes that the only people who were 'upset' by the incident were the boyfriends of the girls, but that they could say nothing, as it was the manifestation of Ghede. This in itself is an important point. In many possession-oriented cults, there is a tacit understanding that whatever a possessed person does, it is the action of the indwelling entity and as such, they cannot be faulted. Furthermore, after the person comes out of possession, they are not told about how they behaved. It has often struck me that the size of the group participating in a possession working can also contribute to the depth of trance on the part of the possessee. Whilst work in small, close-knit groups allows a strong atmosphere of trust, confidence & relaxation to build up, which is conducive to possession taking place. However, large groups, particularly frenzied workings involving strobe lights, massed dancing & screaming, allow a celebrant to achieve a deep possession relatively quickly. Again, the effect of being in a crowd enables the dominant personality to be shed quickly. Also, the fact that the vehicle for possession is the focus of attention for the entire group brings on an excitatory state of arousal, kicking in the fight-flight autonomic reflex, washing away the borders of self-image in a flood of adrenaline.

TRANSMARGINAL INHIBITION

William Sargant, in his book *The Mind Possessed* makes a thorough examination of possession-type experience. He believes that the key to this phenomena lies in an 'abnormal' response to extreme stress which was identified by Pavlov as Transmarginal Inhibition. Sargant describes this reaction as having three stages, the Equivalent, Paradoxical, and Ultraparadoxical. The Equivalent stage is characterised by a response whereby the individual's reaction to both weak and strong stimuli is the same. In other words, a person suffering from depression may react to both significant and trivial experiences in the same way. The Paradoxical phase occurs when weak stimuli produces stronger positive responses than strong stimuli. An example of this phase is the depressed person who does not react when verbally threatened, but can be motivated by a gentle command. The third phase, the Ultraparadoxical, is characterised by the appearance of responses that are diametrically opposed to those which have been previously conditioned or habituated, and new beliefs and behaviours may be implanted. Sargant also notes other phenomena associated with this state. These are: increased suggestibility to beliefs and stimuli which would not normally be paid much attention; the isolation and inhibition of certain thoughts and behaviour from memory, and the "inhibitory collapse" which wipes recent behaviour from memory.

Sargant sees the possession experience very much in terms of the above process. He points out that possession is very much an abreactive, cathartic experience, and notes that in some societies, possession,

when brought on through dancing, drumming and chanting, serves to release accumulated tension in the celebrants. He cites his own work with patients suffering from shell-shock; the inability to release a traumatic experience from consciousness. Sargant and his colleagues deliberately subjected clients to an extremely stressful reliving of the initial trauma, to the point where they collapsed. Afterwards, it was found that the trauma had released its hold upon them.

How does this mesh with the possession experience? From my own experience, I can confirm that possession is certainly both abreactive and cathartic. Intense physiological activity - muscular strain, hyperventilation, etc - followed by release, are often more relaxing than quiescent relaxation techniques. Another interesting point concerns that of memory loss following the state of possession. This is widely documented, from accounts of hypnosis, to instances of possession in cults such as Voudoun, as noted above. There is some suggestion though, that the degree of memory loss is related to group expectations. In some cults, it is an article of belief that when the god enters, the human 'soul' is displaced. In *Prime Chaos*, I have discussed the possession experience in terms of a continuum - at one end, there is "full" possession, which may result in partial or total memory loss, and at the other, the phenomena of "Overshadowing," where the celebrant retains a degree of self-awareness during the possession experience.

Sargant also recognises the importance of the group atmosphere in creating a space where possession may occur. He notes that the overall effect of possession ceremonial is to place the celebrants in a state of increased suggestibility. Rhythmic drumming, dancing and chanting are three of the most popular means of creating a possession experience, to which modern magicians have added the use of strobe lights and audio effects.

MASKS AND POSSESSION

The use of Masks, and other ritual props, is an important feature in possession. In some cults, when a celebrant begins to display the symptoms of possession, the character of the incarnating entity is discerned by the officiating priests, and that individual is given the appropriate props for the particular god or goddess. In Western approaches to possession, it is more likely that the vehicle visualises himself, or is already dressed in the appropriate garb. In contemporary magick, the vehicle for possession by a particular god tends to be chosen before the ritual proceeds, rather than, as in Voudoun, spontaneously ridden by the loa. Masks are particularly useful in conferring a degree of anonymity to the wearer. Masks which are particular to a certain spirit tend to exhibit consistent behaviour, no matter who is wearing them. As has been noted, spirits tend to a certain conservatism - the invading spirit may be defined as a mask - an arising character which has its own behaviour and personality, as defined by belief and context. This may not however, be the case for "unfinished" gods - that is, entities who are not reinforced by an informing tradition, belief system or even a general expectation of character formed from the pool of celebrant's experience. This appears to be the case for entities such as Baphomet.

PROBLEMS ARISING FROM POSSESSION

Whilst in a religious context, the direct experience of the indwelling entity serves to validate belief in that religious system, possession can be occasionally be problematic from a magical perspective, where certain, unshakable belief is not quite viewed in the same light. While within the ritual space, it is important to invest total belief in the possession experience, the continuance of uncritical belief outside it can become dysfunctional. This, however, calls into question the function of possession-experience, particularly within the context of Chaos Magic. I have often heard an incarnating entity utter oracular or prophetic statements during possession workings. In a context of generalised belief, one assumes that the results of possession workings would be integrated into the successive experience of the participant. I often wonder how far this is the case in Chaos Magic, where consensual belief in the reality of the experience may be shed as soon as one leaves the temple space.

A second problem which relates to possession is that of knowledge of the entity. It may occur that an entity manifests within a vessel that is unprepared. By this, I refer to an individual who has no prior knowledge of the entity, in terms of its character, mythological associations, or relevant behaviour. This is particularly relevant when we consider entities that have knowledge of specific areas. In possession-oriented cultures, it is usual that entities who can offer diagnostic advice manifest through healers or witch-doctors. It would be difficult for someone with no knowledge of such specialisation to give a coherent delivery, even if they

were possessed by the relevant spirit. A related problem is that individuals who are new to the possession experience may not have the skills to accurately deliver a message - again, the ability to disinhibit, as discussed above, is relevant.

Thirdly, there is the problem of fixation. Some magicians appear to become fixated on manifesting a particular persona, often to the point that regardless of the character of the entity, the same behaviour & persona is apparent. Arguably, this is not true possession, but an expression of ego-reinforcement in front of an audience. This can result in obsessional mania, as the self being continually reinforced dominates the magician's behavioural repertoire, to the point where it is difficult for any other selves to manifest, and the individual's beliefs & behaviour are limited to that of the dominant self. There is often a deep-rooted insecurity behind such fixations.

A fourth problem relating to possession is related to the idea of banishing or earthing. It is not unusual for individuals to remain possessed even after a rite has been concluded. There are instances of participants in such workings becoming possessed hours, or even days after the event, spontaneously. In the religious context, this tends to lead to conversion. Sargant's model of possession relates the experience to the release of accumulated tension, and if the experience does not culminate in exhaustion (it's own banishing) or collapse, then the effects of it may linger. Those who wish to make use of possession-oriented work would do well to bear this in mind.

TRAINING FOR POSSESSION

Like many other types of magical experience, possession is a learned response. When an individual first experiences possession, it may have far-reaching consequences as a life-changing agent. It may occur suddenly, or gradually, and in some accounts of possession, it can be agonizingly painful. The degree of resistance to the experience is interesting in this light. Sargant notes that often, the more one resists the onset of possession, the more intense the experience actually becomes. I have noticed that, in my own experience of being possessed, whenever I have consciously tried to limit the depth of possession, it has in fact, proved to be much more intense than I expected. With practice, one may achieve a state of possession relatively quickly.

Whatever the setting or the context, the key elements of possession remain similar. Warm-up rituals such as banishing, prepare for the main event by helping the celebrant to focus attention on the entity to be manifested. The use of excitatory gnosis such as drumming & dancing place the body under stress, allowing awareness to be inflamed with the image of the incoming entity. Individuals may become spontaneously possessed, or the possession may be directed into one individual chosen specifically to be the vehicle. Whilst it is possible for someone other than the chosen vehicle to be possessed by the entity, it appears rare that entities other than those being invoked manifest. As Sargant says, Christian revivalists do not become possessed by the Goddess Kali. The behaviour of a possessed person is often very much in terms of Sargant's model of transmarginal inhibition. Since the "gods" have a certain amount of regality, they often react badly to being commanded, yet can be steered by weaker commands. Hence the 'indulgence' on the part of officiating priests as noted by Keith Johnstone. It is often the case that the God is reluctant to leave the vehicle. In modern magick, this tends to be dealt with by placing the celebrant under further stress - capturing them (if necessary) and calling them out of trance until the invading persona has departed. In extreme cases, a lustration of cold water is provided.

CONCLUSION

Possession remains a powerful form of magical work. It can be used to derive oracular information (as used by the Greeks and Tibetans), to charge magical weapons, to share in the power of the God (as in ritual Masses) or 'live' a particular mythic transformation. In constructing possession-workings, it can be useful to examine magical and religious paradigms where possession is a recognised and culturally-defined technique. The experience itself can be related to wider phenomenon such as religious conversion, hypnosis, and abreactive therapy. As with all types of magical technique, its use requires careful analysis and evaluation if it is not to devolve into a habituated limitation. In general, magical possession is both useful and enjoyable, if a little hair-raising at times.

Post-Structuralism & Modern Magic

by Ed Richardson: I - A deconstructive look at structuralist theory

Introduction

A post-structuralist stance in modern magic can be best summed up by referring to a Taoist concept outlined in the Tao Teh King. The word 'Tao' is in itself effectively meaningless as it is not a linguistic term and can be applied to any 'way' or 'method', beyond any imposed limits from language. Therefore the argument shall be made by quoting the Tao Teh King, substituting the word path for Lao: 'The path that can be named is not a true path'. Structuralism and Post-Structuralism are terms which belong to social sciences, yet their meanings and implications are massive. Sociology claims to be the science that considers how human beings interact, and so operates on many levels and within other disciplines, including psychology and magic. The difference between sociologists' and magicians' explanations of social change is that magical attempts tend to come from an unformed, 'cosmic' point of view, and tend also to be over-idealistic. Occultists tend to make poor armchair sociologists.

To understand Post-Structuralism it is necessary to first look at Structuralism. This should hint at how Post-Structuralism came about, and if not it will at least provide a background for the more explicit explanations in the second part of this essay. It will also provide all the non-occult definitions needed as we proceed. Afterwards these ideas will be applied to magic, and also a look at the magical concept of aeonic progression in terms of Post-Modernity. I shall not waste time defining magic as hopefully you are reading this because you already have a few ideas of your own.

On Structuralism

Structuralism is the world view that the structures within society shape our own individual structures and behaviours. Social structures here include the political, ecological, religious, economic, magical and a whole host of others, the important point being that behaviour is *structured* by these external (and sometimes internal) influences. For example, AB. Hollingshead & F.C. Redlich (1958) *Social Class and Mental Illness* showed how mental illness manifested itself in the urban community of New Haven, U.S.A. They divided the population into five classes according to wealth, class I being the richest and class 5 being the poorest. Class I consisted of 3.1% of the population and had 1% of community psychiatric patients belonging to it. Class 5 consisted of 17.8% of the population and had 36.8% of community psychiatric patients belonging to it. There were more cases of psychosis at the poorer end of the scale and more cases of neurosis in the richer classes. This would suggest that social class influences mental health. Structuralism itself can be divided into two major types of theory: Consensus theory shows structures holding and binding society and individuals together in a benevolent way, whereas Conflict theory shows structures of oppression where structures serve the interests of particular groups or individuals, often at the expense of others.

Functionalism is a type of consensus theory within structuralism. Its major theorists include Emile Durkheim (1858-1917) and Talcott Parsons (1902-79) and though having declined after the 1950s due to the popularity of Neo-Marxist thought, is now making a revival in the USA. It basically views society as a system, which is worth more than its total population and is self-regulating. Institutions appear, expressing the needs of society and to provide solutions. These institutions are also the forces within society which give it shape and regulation. Such institutions include morality, religion and divisions of wealth and labour. More complex societies have more complex concerns and therefore, more complex institutions. Institutions and individuals, and the actions they take, serve functions (hence 'Functionalism') within a society to maintain the status quo, the media being a typical example, as it helps define and maintain the class system, which is seen as inevitable and necessary in Functionalist thought.

Another example is religion serving the function of maintaining moral unity. Even crime has its place, as it shows the acceptable boundaries of behaviour and may play a part in social change. It also highlights any dysfunctions within society. In this way society maintains its own equilibrium, so social change is very gradual, comparing with Darwin's notion of evolution. Politically this approach lends itself to traditional conservatism.

Conflict theory has its origins in the study of oppression and the works of Karl Marx. Its later developments include the works of Max Weber, feminism, black power, grey panthers, Neo-Marxism and Neo-Weberian

approaches. Strictly speaking, the ideas of Adolf Hitler and Benito Mussolini belong to Conflict theory. However, Mussolini made up his theories after taking power in Italy so he could legitimise his position. Hitler combined racism with misunderstanding of Nietzsche and both dictators were reactionary enough for their theories to be considered ludicrous by anyone with a grain of intelligence.

Marxism, like New Age magic, sees social change occurring in a series of epochs. Each epoch is governed by its economic method, its mode of production. Our lives are intricately bound to the mode of production. However, each epoch is characterised by contradictions which provide the seeds of social change. The mores in each epoch are governed by social and public relations which are in the interest of dominant classes who control the mode of production. Epochs experienced so far include tribal communism, followed by slavery, then feudalism, and now capitalism. After revolutionary change, capitalism will be replaced by socialism which will develop into communism, the last stage in social change.

Capitalism is of vital interest to Marx and Marxists as by studying it they can understand how our current epoch may change. As previously stated, dominant classes control the mode of production (industry) which they use to maximise their capital. The proletariat (workers) own only themselves and sell their labour to capitalists. This is one of the contradictions which must be resolved, as is the fact that workers receive wages whilst the capitalists receive surplus value, or profit. Thus the proletariat are underdogs and are open to all sorts of exploitation they have to sell their labour or starve.

Marx studied society in much more depth than this, and Marxists, such as Gramsci, looked at other factors such as ideological domination by the ruling class. As society is far more complex now than it was when Marx wrote his theories, and that his most important prediction has not come to pass, NeoMarxists have worked to revise his ideas. This key prediction was that the proletariat would become aware of its plight (which it did) and form a revolutionary movement (it formed the Labour Party instead!). After a period of violence a socialist administration organising common ownership with government regulations would be set up and after an unspecified period of time a withering away of the state would occur, leading to communism.

Max Weber wrote as a Marxist but accused Marx of being an economic determinist. He suggested that inequality was related to other powerful factors such as the Protestant Work Ethic, brought about by Puritan Christianity and making capitalism possible. He also looked at how class domination can take place beyond economies, focusing on status and party (the way groups organise themselves to achieve goals, such as clearly discernible 'staffs' of power holders). He also pointed out how dominant classes look to legitimate their holding of power. Weber's aims were not to totally disagree with Marx (he did not hold idealistic hopes for a revolution) but were more to refine Marx's theories. However, Weberian and Neo-Weberian theories have developed based on Weber in his own right.

There is not space to look at all of Conflict theory, but a brief word on Feminism shall be included. Feminist theory has some of its historical origins in Marxist thought and can be approximately divided into several different schools including Radical, Socialist, Liberal and Marxist Feminism amongst others. However, all forms of Feminism concern themselves with one particular problem, namely patriarchy. The different schools approach the problem from different angles and suggest different solutions, but they all aim to relieve the oppression of women by a male-dominated society. This branch of sociology has directly influenced the occult, especially Radical Feminism which has brought about Women's Mysteries' and all-female groups.

Conflict theory has become very sophisticated, with many changes in the different approaches. Ultimately, from Structuralist Conflict theory came Post-Structuralism, with the help of cool philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche along the way. However, before we consider Post-Structuralism we should consider Semiotics (the study of signs) within Structuralism, as Post-Structuralism builds its ideas on this. Before this, though, a brief magical interlude.

A Deconstructive Interlude

So what's all this Sociology bollocks all about then? Well, so far it has all been about mainstream society. However society is just a great big group and a lot of this can be scaled down to smaller groups, such as magical orders, covens etc. Most magical groups function in a Structuralist mode.

Structuralist magic can be divided into two types: Consensus and Conflict. Consensus groups tend to be traditional magical orders, where there is a hierarchy with everyone knowing their place and carrying out their function. Nobody complains about being at the bottom as that would show how 'unenlightened' they are. Persistent trouble-makers end up expelled or running the group so as not to upset the status quo. Some covens with authoritarian High Priestesses operate on a consensus basis as are many 'traditional' paths where people look to the past for authority. There are in existence larger organisations that foster this kind of approach too.

There are a number of problems with Consensus/Structuralist magic. Firstly, this type of group or individual is often incapable of moving with the times and dealing with new issues, such as the Criminal Justice Act (and any magician calling himself a libertarian yet not concerning himself with this act has SHIT for brains) and road building. Secondly, they tend to foster inequality in their power structures, such as degrees of initiation providing how much weight your ideas carry in a group beyond intelligence or experience. Thirdly, the many rules and 'traditions' restrict self-expression (and therefore Self-Love). Hierarchy adds further restrictions and guarantees a largely unintelligent! over-religious mass instructed by an elite. Finally, such groups tend towards political apathy due to having no interest in social change or the future.

Conflict theory lends itself to structuralists who recognise the problems within Consensus models, both within the occult and the wider society. Its supporters include magical orders and covens that claim to represent a radical change. Also included are individuals following paths who reject the orders and covens as they disagree with initiation, hierarchy or the rules but still have similar practices. There are also the political or separatist groups who want to right the wrongs of the world, such as patriarchy. Finally there are the umbrella organisations that claim to represent 'paganism', 'magic' or a 'tradition' in terms of 'rights' and such in a conflictual occult world.

There are a number of problems with this type of approach too. The main problem is the tendency to remove existing structures (in the case of radical groups). New structures may be just as limiting as structures in the Consensus model. Specialist groups representing the needs of a particular tradition or cause, or separatists, are often overly idealistic and escapist, further alienating their participants rather than solving the issues they set out to tackle. They also tend towards political extremism and encourage the advance of their own special interests, whilst ignoring wider, more important issues (like the destruction of Twyford Down). Overall, Conflict

Structuralists run the risk of becoming their own worst enemy when attempting reform. It seems that, generally, structures get in the way of actually doing anything useful.

Before you start to violently disagree, or worriedly try to work out which category you belong in (which is not the aim of this essay), there is light at the end of the tunnel. Most-Structuralism and its mutant bastard child, Post-Modernity, come to the rescue offering a real alternative and hopefully some of the deconstructive arguments shown so far hint at more. In Part Two we shall consider Post-Structuralism in some depth and the final section of this essay provides a background to this.

Semiotics and language

Semiotics, the study of signs, has its origins in a fusion between linguistics and anthropology, and particularly in the ideas of Claude Levi-Strauss and Ferdinand de Saussure, who coined the term. Levi-Strauss focused on myth and had a notion that it worked by underlying structures. Similar underlying structures were to be found in other forms of culture and in wider society, hence the term structuralism. Myth was a means by which these structures could be studied, and most were seen to be linguistic. Through language, each individual is socially constructed. This idea will be considered again later, in the context of Post-Structuralist analysis; in which no single agent is responsible for our social construction, thus giving

the Chaostic power to move from one construct to another, using belief as a magical weapon to achieve this.

Returning to Levi-Strauss, he was very much influenced by the work of Ferdinand de Saussure, a linguist, who had said that language is made up of two components: *langue* (the system or rules) and *parole* (the content). Levi-Strauss aimed ultimately to discover the *langue* of any given culture through analysis of its *parole*. However, he suggested that the *langue* of myth was universal (not in the same sense as Jung), as it dealt with cognitive powers of categorising information in terms of binary opposition. Hence, whilst in myth anything can happen, the same themes are reproduced world-wide, and can be translated into different languages, whilst poetry cannot. He took a functionalist position, saying that myth served the function of being a tool to deal with Society's intellectual problems.

Pierre Bourdieu built on these ideas, speaking of 'habitus' or dispositions. Habitus is a product of history, and works on both individual and collective levels. Individuals do not simply absorb information passively, but interact with it according to their habitus. In doing so they create further dispositions, in an ongoing dynamic fashion, thus constructing reality, and reasonable, common-sense views and behaviours. The world is a multi-dimensional space through which individuals can move. However, differentiation occurs by people constructing ideas of relative position, such as race, class, gender, etc. In reality, these concepts are illusory, but we act as if they were real as we construct properties, including power relations which then define our behaviour.

Marxists are quick to criticise this position as it ignores the very real issues of economic inequality and the notion of struggle. Marxist critical theory is however influenced by Structuralism and Gramsci's ideas of ideology. Roland Barthes, in his book *Mythologies*, looks at the French media and advertising, as creating and legitimating the myth of bourgeois values, and illustrates this by deconstructing mythical signs in a dynamic, demystifying way, showing how myth is related to meaning and form. A rose becomes a 'passionated rose' carrying the myth of romantic love. As a Marxist he always emphasises how these myths, or semiological systems, relate back to bourgeois values, or avant garde struggles against them.

Post-Structuralism came about as a reaction against Marxist over-simplification of a more complex power system. It built on this linguistic tradition but is highly critical of much of it. In part two of this essay, we shall consider a Post-Structuralist analysis of the magical world and the effects of Post-Modernity, and how both can provide rich pickings for the opportunistic sorcerer.

Post-Structuralism & Modern Magic by Ed Richardson: Part II

In the last part of this essay, structural ideas were compared and contrasted in an attempt to achieve two aims. Firstly, by providing an account of Marxism I wanted to frighten any obsessive anti-Marxists. Secondly, the similarities between sociological and occult methodologies were shown. This was an attempt to deconstruct outmoded and unrealistic structuralist models and also provide a background for considering post structural sociology/philosophy. Post structuralism is currently part of the leading edge in social theory. Inevitably, social theory has an impact on all areas of culture including magick: Freudian psychology, Marxism, Feminism and Nietzsche being typical examples. If you are sceptical of the impact of Marxism on the occult, look at all the groups who think a new age (or aeon, if you prefer) will happen that's going to be better than the current one! Did Marx not say the same thing? In this part of the work, post structural themes shall be explored as well as similar but not quite as useful post-modern ideas. Post-modernism seems to be a bit of a buzzword in magick at present and some of its glamour shall be deconstructed. First, the early post-structuralist ideas of Nietzsche shall be considered, followed by the central ideas of Derrida. From here a background for post-modernist ideas will be provided which will be explained after considering some of the relevant ideas of Michel Foucault. Throughout, these ideas will be applied to the magickal/occult scene.

Nietzsche, Knowledge and Power

Structuralism was explained in terms of linguistics in the last part of this work, and this provides a framework for dealing with some of Nietzsche's ideas (which shall become apparent when examples of the problems he highlights are given from the occult world). Language, as a structure, is to the structuralist part of the production of knowledge, and, indeed sets the limits of knowledge.

However, Nietzsche has a problem with knowledge itself, and as the first post-structuralist, sets the agenda for an entire movement in social science. Nietzsche took two characters from Greek mythology, Apollo and Dionysus, and applied these mythical characters to ideas about the human mind. Dionysus, as God of wine and ecstasy, represents the power of nature, emotions and wild, untamed aspects of our psyche. Apollo represents civilisation, law and the disciplining of human spontaneity. There is tension between these powerful forces and this is a characteristic of human life. We like to think we can provide theories about our experience and thus understand the world. However, this is not really possible as we only project our Apollonian desires to discipline and control nature onto the world around us.

Thus Nietzsche is a sceptic. Knowledge is merely an attempt to control the unruly ways of nature. The quest for knowledge is the 'will to power' which shows how knowledge and power are inextricably linked. This shall be further developed later in the section on the ideas of Michel Foucault.

When applied to the occult and magical scene, the examples are fairly obvious. Look at all the umbrella organisations that say they represent paganism. They claim to be offering a service, protecting pagans from the media, social services, from nasty black magicians (which surely must be a racist fear if ever there was one) and so on. However, what they are really doing is telling a lot of people what to do, what to believe in. One of these umbrella groups even makes its members sign a creed! And I thought paganism was an individualistic path with people thinking for themselves!

Then there are all the books on how to do it. OK, so I've written one myself and this is not a criticism of others who have done too. However, we should be aware that magick is a living process involving change and that it has a lot of wildness about it. The danger is in writing too much describing magick as this limits what magick might be. Suggesting techniques rather than defining magick is probably more useful than Apollonian trends to dictate not only how magick works, but to peddle a whole load of accompanying bullshit ideas about karma restraining your enchantments and so on. Pour enough shit on something and it inevitably gets swamped, then drowns. Many of the books around claim to be helpfully informing us about magick and paganism but seem more like attempts to control the way we think. Hopefully the next section of this essay will be of use in dealing with this problem. By defining opinions as knowledge, authors appear to be linked to the same power process as that exercised by the umbrella organisations. More on this later when we have looked at Foucault.

Derrida and Deconstruction

Jacques Derrida's ideas are not presented as any theory or collection of ideas. Instead he demonstrates a methodology for dealing with theories and assumptions called deconstruction. The following example of Derrida's method concerns itself with Western philosophy. Early structuralism treated language as a servant of thought in the acquisition of knowledge. However, Western philosophy in general (in which Derrida includes structuralism) makes an assumption that language is not properly disciplined to generate knowledge as it is, but needs to be trained first. In this way philosophers say that there is a difference between literary language and philosophical (academic) language. Derrida attacks this position by demonstrating how philosophical ideas are often thoroughly literary.

Philosophy has concerned itself with the attempt to master language. Structuralists then showed how language itself can provide meaning beyond the subject, which undermines the philosophical linguistic project. However, by theorising on language, structuralists have also attempted to use language as a tool in the production of knowledge. Derrida deconstructs this position by saying that language is capable of producing knowledge beyond the control of the theorists. Derrida says that any attempt to put limits on our discourse (this is the next big word) is a self-defeating exercise and demonstrates this in an example of the futile efforts of writers who try to distinguish between the real thing and something else that resembles it but is somehow lesser. philosopher Jean-Jacques Rousseau described masturbation as a substitute or supplement to sex. Derrida shows how this literary distinction is meaningless. The separation of sexuality and masturbation breaks down and the relation of dominance between the two hobbies breaks down until

sex can be seen as a form of masturbation. Thus, where structuralism had built itself on theories of opposition, Derrida collapses the notion of opposition.

In the *Book of Lies*, Aleister Crowley tells us to doubt. Doubt, says the big C, should be applied everywhere, even to doubt itself. This idea can be a useful tool for deconstructing occult "knowledge". Whilst I was completing this part of the essay, C.I.18 came out, complete with Dave Lee's article on word viruses. This, I felt, was a perfect example of deconstructing the occult nonsense of today. This should be an activity of all magicians, as one of the first skills that should be learned is discrimination. Discrimination and doubt should be applied wherever an idea is presented as knowledge, or whenever a more visible structure is presented. Structures that fail this test should be discarded as all they do is restrict the freedom of the will in its own quest towards creativity and excellence.

This process of deconstructing should also be applied to notions of the self. If the self becomes one thing and stays at that relative position, the creativity of the will is stifled. Magick is about change and this has to filter through to the self as well as the world outside. Many fixed notions of the self are likely to either be false, or act as masks for obsession and these hold back the will. As the world changes, we are in a stronger position if we change. Traditionalist magickal paths look back and stay in the past, fixing themselves and their devotees in a static position, incapable of dealing with modern living with their weird, reactionary attitudes sapping them of social skills.

Foucault and Discourse

Another deconstructive measure to use with both sociological information and occult ideas is to view them in terms of discourse. Discourse is a term now popular in the social sciences, which although originally used by the structural functionalist Emile Durkheim, is more originally defined by the French philosopher Michel Foucault. Foucault took the concept of discourse, which had previously meant argument, or opinion, and stretched it to include other ideas.

Marxism, as discussed in part one of this article, has fixed notions about the social structures of ideology, social class and so on. Similarly, feminism has notions about the objective reality of patriarchy. The Foucaultian perspective views these structures not as objective reality, but in terms of discourse. In the same way sexism and capitalism are discursive phenomena.

The reasons for this shift are as follows. Foucault's use of discourse is linked to the idea of context, or, using language as an example, what makes one statement appear instead of another in a conversation on any given topic. Discourse helps to understand what has been said by fitting it onto an historical matrix with associated conditions of existence. Edward Said is cited in Michelle Barrett's *The Politics of Truth* as saying:

"What enables a doctor to practise medicine or a historian to write history is not mainly a set of individual gifts, but an ability to follow rules that are taken for granted as an unconscious a priori by all professionals."

More than anyone before him Foucault specified rules for those rules, and even more impressively, he showed how over long periods of time the rules became epistemological enforcers of what (as well as how) people thought, lived and spoke."

Here we see the power of discourse itself, and how discourse sets the agenda for practices. The magician must therefore be aware that discourse creates occult common sense. This is why the chaoticist is shunned by the new age. By stepping outside or even against established creeds, or discourses, we seem to be either subversive or mad as we revolt against what is perceived as common sense. In common with the post-structuralist use of the concept of discourse, chaos magick has redefined the word 'paradigm' to include the set paths of Thelema and Wicca, Satanism and Asatru, Druidry and Shamanism to name but a few. The word paradigm itself has different meanings depending on whether it is used in scientific or chaos magick discourse.

Foucault said that discourse is made up of statements that carry a coherence in content and style, such as economics, biology or English grammar. If the statements are regularly dispersed they make up 'discursive

formations'. If irregularly dispersed, the statements do not form a coherent discourse. Foucault's concepts of knowledge, power and truth are linked to his concept of discourse and these shall be considered below before we look at post-modernity.

Knowledge/Power

Foucault's interest in discourse comes from his interest in history. Where structuralists focus on the human experience being ultimately based on communication, with structures arising from the rules of the communication, Foucault said that the historical context of social life was more important. Without this there would be a timeless, unchanging order. Foucault aimed to restore the historical issues at the expense of the system, thus totally rejecting structuralism. Also, by looking for differences in social phenomena, rather than the structuralist quest for unity, Foucault took an 'anti-humanist' stance, which attacked the subject by defining it by its context (see later for more).

In his attack on the notion of the subject, Foucault aimed to find the historical origins of the notion of the individual. In this he looked at the appearance in history of modern organisational forms like the prison, the clinic and the asylum. To the structuralist these were all products of our social and linguistic structures. To Foucault, the reverse is true, that the language has its origins in historical context. For example, the clinic made medical ways of talking possible. Before this modern medicine was not thinkable.

The Enlightenment project had held that reason was the means to emancipation of the soul. Foucault demonstrated that reason was rooted in oppression. Concepts of reason are attached to concepts of madness. Foucault showed how the insane were first incarcerated in Europe when it became apparent that leprosy houses were no longer being used to contain lepers with leprosy dying out. For the first time the insane were no longer cared for by their communities but were excluded from the sane by incarceration. Thus reason originates in domination of its opposite, unreason.

Incarceration is in itself a growing trend in society. Foucault demonstrates how prison came to replace brutalising the body with discipline being achieved by controlling the mind. Prison is designed that continual surveillance is possible. Foucault describes surveillance as a metaphor for modern life, although more important than physical control is control of our thoughts.

Our thoughts cannot be physically restrained so are under surveillance from doctors, social workers, teachers, the police and so on. In his colossal work *The history of Sexuality* Foucault looks at the changing attitudes about sexuality. He points out how we think of Victorians repressing sex, even avoiding any talk about it whereas in these more enlightened times sex is no taboo and we are free to talk about it as we will. However, Foucault interprets this talk as a sign that we are under surveillance. In this society we are COMPELLED to talk about sex as civilisation DEMANDS it. Power has thus created a vast discourse on sexuality giving thorough access to our thoughts on the subject, making us amenable to regulation. These examples show how knowledge and power are closely linked. In fact Foucault referred to 'pouvoir/savoir' or 'knowledge/power' joining the words together to show their inextricable links. Knowledge gives way to power which generates further knowledge through the process of surveillance and new discourses. In this way discourse also generates practise.

Power has been mentioned here, but Foucault's notion of power is quite different to the Marxist notion of power. Foucault sees power not set in one centre, with one group dominating another, but operating more autonomously. We all exercise power, often in the most unwitting of circumstances. For example, social workers, who may have the most altruistic motives to help and liberate, are given the power to look into other people's lives and then supervise them. Power thus works in a capillary fashion rather than being directed from a centre.

Much of what has been said here amplifies what has already been said on knowledge and power in the magickal scene under Nietzsche. However, the dimension of surveillance and the unwitting use of power can also be applied. Here surveillance is used in talk about magick defining what is to be considered normal practice. In the same way some Pagan umbrella groups define paganism and work out who the nasty South London subversives are (who might even be into chaos.. aaaaaaggghhhh! !!!!) so they can warn people off. The local contacts who "help" new comers will often unwittingly feed them the accepted belief. Before I get myself in further trouble, let's look at post-modernity.

Post-Modernity

Post-modernity and post-modernism are two terms that have become quite fashionable amongst chaos magicians at present. They have often been used to mean the same thing whereas there is actually a difference. Post-modernism is a cultural movement that manifests itself mainly amongst artists and 'luvvies' whereas post-modernity is a process of social, political, cultural and economic fragmentation. Post-modernism is thus an aspect of cultural post-modernity.

First, the economic issues of post-modernity shall be considered. Capitalism has moved to a late stage which is marked by its becoming increasingly chaotic. Booms and slumps aside, capitalism once was reasonably organised and now is disorganised. This is associated with the move from the Fordist model in the West to a post-Fordist mode. The Fordist economics (named after Henry Ford, who was the first to manufacture massed-produced cars) worked from the late nineteenth century until around the early nineteen sixties and represented not only a peak for organised capitalism but also a peak for the enlightenment project that looked towards both efficiency and emancipation of the soul (more on that later). Industry was characterised by massed production and low wages battling against powerful trade unions (the battles between Henry Ford and trade unions are almost legendary). Manufacturing was the first source of income to the West and government economic policy was able to make a difference to the successes and failures of industry.

In the post-Fordist model the West has switched to a service industry base and Westerners are operating in multinationals for massed production. The multinationals move around relocating where production is at its cheapest, especially in terms of wages. Third World nations in the far East are therefore major producers of products once produced in the West. This has been helped by the acceleration of new technological advances, especially in telecommunications and computing. This allowed Nick Leeson to wipe out Barings International, which was based in the City of London from an office in Singapore. At the same time government economic policy is virtually useless as multinationals simply relocate if they don't like the situation. Many multinationals have larger economies than small nations.

Counterfeit industries using both technology and non-interference by governments mean that a large proportion of what we buy is not what we think and often lacks the quality expected. In short the economy has become disorganised and globalised, shrinking the world and saturating us in advertising discourses and consumerism. The market is fragmented with anything for sale, but no guarantee that you get what you pay for.

Cultural post-modernity has come about partly as a result of economic post-modernity and the manufacturing of a multitude of styles. At the same time it has been influenced by the end of the Enlightenment. The Enlightenment was a period of history characterised by its search for truths. Its aims were to emancipate the soul through finding truth and a grand narrative that would explain everything. Science, politics and philosophy were driven by this process from the Reformation onwards. In the nineteenth century, Darwin offered an alternative view of our origins to that offered by the bible. More importantly (a lot of people ignored Darwin) radical philosophers like Marx and Nietzsche offered different accounts of reality itself and showed different histories. With more than one history the ideas about grand narratives became shaky. With feminist accounts and post-colonial accounts from black historians, the whole notion of history is threatened. History becomes a relative argument (witches take note) and grand narratives collapse.

With the collapse of grand narratives and a fragmented market the individual develops a schizoid, jumbled up view of reality that is open to change (sounds pretty cool, eh?), and designer cults (like magick!) start to replace organised religion. At the same time organised religion becomes increasingly paranoid and fundamentalists learn to use guns and bombs.

The arts and popular culture lose their separation, with fine art no longer owned by the elite, but appearing on 'P'-shirts. This fits in with waves of nostalgia with revivals in fashion being fashionable themselves. Teenagers rush out to spend their pocket money on the sort of flares I was FORCED to wear as a seventies kid by my parents. Temporal distortion accompanies this mixing of styles with cities having architecture from a number of different periods, again much of it counterfeit. Television has entered all homes and

provides a blend of advertising/propaganda and programmes spanning the styles and different times (including the future), all in a couple of hours viewing.

Effectively culture has become based on surface over depth. This is reflected in the political world as political parties converge in their ways to end up almost resembling each other. With a fragmented and global market, governments carry far less influence and this is characterised by the growth in pressure groups. The pressure groups replace the political parties as the agents of political change by their ability to 'think global, act local', focusing on specific issues within wider spectra of interest. With the fragmentation of the self these projects are also more likely to be supported as they do not need to be attached to party political movements. Thus a Conservative can go on a Gay Pride march and a Labour supporter support the death penalty.

Magick stands to benefit from many of the effects of post-modernity. Firstly, the mixing of and times makes it easier to explore other paradigms to those we are more accustomed. The influence of television has provided plenty of images that we can attach ourselves to. (Thanks to Star Trek I learned to visualise firing bolts of energy around!) As post-modernity implies a depthlessness we are free to drop ideas or paradigms that are of no more use to us.

This is all useful in the process of deconstructing the self as discussed a little earlier. We should be free to explore different styles and different selves. By fragmenting the self and being selves instead we are open to change and are therefore more adaptable. There are limits to the use of post-modern analysis based on its depthless conclusions. There is no room for self-love in a universe of only surfaces. Similarly, the will also looks pathetic and pointless if it is only an issue of style. If the will and the originating self in the process of self-love are seen in terms of truth and subjectivity, post-structural explanation makes ample room for them.

Truth and Subjectivity

Much of post-modern theory has its foundation in post-structuralism, and on the whole the two theoretical perspectives can work together. However, there is an important difference between post-structural and post-modern emphasis on truth and subjectivity. Foucaultian concepts of truth are based on concepts of discourse. Subjectivity is in itself defined by discourse. Foucault said that the individual is situated at the intersection of discourses. This idea shares with post-modernity the idea that the self is fragmented and open to a variety of different combinations and dispositions. However, this is where similarities end as whilst post-modernity neatly cops out of dealing with the concept of truth by saying that it does not exist, post-structuralism looks at truth and subjectivity in the same way. In other words truth is defined by discourse. As discourse generates action as shown above, there is a link between action and truth. Truth is effectively defined by what you are doing and/or discourse connected to what you are doing. To magicians this should be obvious. Truth is the statement of intent. If nothing is true, there can be no statement of intent. We can agree that truth is not out there somewhere in the astral realms, it is not in any dogma or creed; but it is there in the intent, and this should be the only important structure in any ritual work or group. Any other structures are only important if they support this one truth. Effectively, the intent of the group, whether for one ritual or for longer, more permanent arrangements, is the mission statement for the entire show.

This essay first appeared in Chaos International, issue 19.

The Psychedelic Wizard

by Dave Lee

THE STORY OF ALEX

I'd like to tell you a little story. It's about a young man, called Alex, in his teens, in the late sixties. It's 1969 and he's already missed the first wave of the first wave of the new psychedelia. The main books on psychedelics available are Tim Leary's Politics of Ecstasy, his early essays about the impact of psychedelics on culture, and Tom Wolfe's The Electric Kool-Aid Acid Test, his docu-story of the Ken Kesey and his Merry Pranksters as they journeyed across the USA in a bus painted in what became known as psychedelic colours, enthusing the merits of LSD... The media talk about hippies, but down on the street it's a meaningless, derided term. People think of themselves as heads - more specifically, acid heads, dope heads and so on. Most people on the Scene are a bit down on users of addictive drugs. It's not hip to do

these things. The emerging values of the scene have been set by the two books mentioned above; the more scientifically-inclined dig Leary and his models of higher consciousness which draw on Tibetan buddhism and Tantra. The more folksy and religious end of it is catered for by Ken Kesey.

It's all heavily influenced by eastern mysticism, and largely unsympathetic to magick. It's very one-sided. Some of the mystical traditions drawn on regard magickal powers as mere delusions and sidetracks on the path to complete illumination, and therefore to be despised. This is not the tenor of all Eastern mysticism, as our hero later worked out: there is a whole tradition of the Left Hand Path in Tantrism, for instance, and in Taoism too. Perhaps Castaneda was the exception, but readers tended to find themselves reading exciting tales of power, but with no way to continue on that path in urban UK at the time.

Anyway, Alex did acid for the first time - and immediately found himself wanting to break the rules. His first impulse was to examine what was wrong with science - his background had been scientific so far. Secondly, he wanted to blaspheme, to exceed. He imagined doing a Black Mass up on the moors... He was definitely not playing the same game as the other acid-heads around him, with their beads and mantras. All he'd had was a very low dose of acid, as he later realised. However, it had opened his nervous system to the entry of something it took him a long time, many years, to understand: the Angel of the Future, which is of course his own Holy Guardian Angel, or Wode-self, looping backwards in time to begin his initiation into magick... his own future Self, his own being on a higher arc...

The next time, the dose was much higher. Alex was spun out of this world, the spectre of his own subtle bodies as six different-coloured ghosts of himself falling, as he was falling, into the centre of everything... He came to under the kitchen table of his girlfriend's bedsit, the galactic spiral condensing into the edge of the table above his head. How he'd got there, he'd no idea. He had no memory of the intervening 3 hours. Having experienced personal annihilation, he was intrigued; perhaps some of these mystical acid-heads knew what they were talking about after all. He signed up for the Void Trip, *a la* Leary's *Psychedelic Experience*. He took on a mind set of surrendering to that emptiness, letting his self dissolve... He had the opportunity at a free concert in Hyde Park. It was a big event, with the big bands of the time like Pink Floyd playing free, so there was a lot of acid around. Alex took a yellow capsule. When it started to come up, he knew something was wrong: the trees looked all warped and sick, and like a badly-painted backdrop. Something prompted him to triple the dose, so he took two more, going for some confrontation with the confused ideas in his mind which pointed at the Void...

All the reality bled out of everything, and it all looked distant and abstract... the trees turned into gigantic dark plastic numerals leaning against each other. Part of his mind was excitedly saying 'Oh wow !!! I'm having a real hallucination!!!', and the rest of it was terrified. This is when he went in, down to the ground, the grass and earth a stream of ticker-tape numbers, the sky a rage of equations streaming into nothingness at the edges... he went right in, to try and surrender to the experience. The attempt made it worse; the more he tried to give in, the more frenzied the hallucinations got. It was a hell of half-finished thoughts rotating at a terrible frictionless speed, an inner scream of panic. Suddenly, after an eternity of spiritual terror, someone rescued him: a voice came into his head, saying: 'You cannot allow this to continue'. That was all it said. Instantaneously, he stopped it, just like that. The world held its breath, and he looked around. The middle of his chest was swelling with rich, sexy golden light, and it spilled over, all around him. He wanted to hug all his friends, could communicate telepathically with people, could understand everything about what it meant to be alive and human. Alex was in total bliss, for the first time. He knew what it meant to feel a living, sensuous part of everything, everything working out perfectly that enchanted day. And more than anything, he learned the primacy of his individual will; he learned that he was responsible for how he felt, and how his life unfolded. In short, at that moment he entered the Left Hand Path of magick. However, this gnosis faded; the rest of his life at that time was a mess, and few people around him actually understood what he was talking about, even other acid heads. He began to suspect the depth and genuineness of many people's commitment to their psychedelic principles. Much of it seemed off-the-peg, un-thought-through, mere slogans. Lack of contact with other people whom shared his gnosis eventually wore him down. Others around him were rebelling too against the Kesey orthodoxy, the re-heated Christianity of hippie dogma. But the style of rebellion was aimed inward, at the self, at the body: a needle-fuelled so-called hedonism, which was really just broken ideals and a victim consciousness.

Alex went down into that nihilism for long enough to see that it led to boredom and stagnation, then started off in the only other direction he could see: becoming a touch more normal; joining a college course, settling down a bit. He was 21, and needing a direction, any direction almost. His gnosis slept for a few years; he was in a state of spiritual compromise. But during this time, he grew himself a career, a life... and when it no longer satisfied him, when change was in the air again, he was ready to begin a serious study of magick.

Just as the writings of 60's psychedelia carried over the contempt for or fear of practical magick & sorcery, the magickal traditions that Alex began to study, had had all the psychedelic technology bowdlerized out of them. Obviously, the magickal revival of the 1970's owed much to the mass consumption of acid in that decade. So someone must be aware of a connection, but even Crowley, with his wide experience of mescaline, seemed to have written virtually nothing about the use of psychedelics. And of course this was the 70's, before Shamanism became a buzz-word. So Alex found that his nature had placed him on the outside of another world, the world of ritual magicians who insisted that psychedelics were bad for him, and of course had never taken any.

Many years later, Alex began to see what had happened in broad terms: he had become part of a new magickal vanguard, who had had to grow up enough to write their own manuals. Of course, he reconnected to Eternity, and became his own Angel of the Future... but that is another tale, for another millennium!

PSYCHEDELIC CULTURE

Looking at the history of the use of LSD, it was first used by Dr. Albert Hoffmann in 1943. Most of the subsequent use over almost two decades, apart from in very small circles of intelligentsia such as Hoffmann himself, was in some rather nasty experiments conducted by the CIA and so forth, supposedly as an incapacitant and tool of deconditioning / reconditioning.

Literature on the psychedelic experience doesn't really start to surface until the late 50's; The first widely-available essay on the subject was Aldous Huxley's *The Doors of Perception*. Huxley took mescaline in 1953, and introduced the notion that our nervous systems have evolved to filter out all experience that does not relate to survival. It became a key idea for Huxley that humans need the assistance of psychedelics to breach this survival barrier for long enough to explore the potentials of visionary consciousness. But for Huxley, this meant a small elite of people, who would be the spiritual leaders of a future society, essentially a high-culture position. This position was of course exploded by the mass availability of acid from the mid-sixties onwards. I've already covered the main tendencies in the literature of that period.

The late Seventies saw the Punk reaction against the new age consumerism that had become the mainstream of the 60's generation; speed, solvents and booze were back in fashion.

The 80's was extremely hostile to non-consumerist forms of hedonism. The popular drugs of the era were cocaine for those with a job (all it does is make you work harder - perfect work-ethic!) and heroin for those without (it keeps you from caring about anything but the next hit - perfect Thatcherite consumerism!). Since the late 80's we've had the rise of the Acid House culture. The drug of choice was of course MDMA, or Ecstasy. The dance club scene, evolving from the underground raves of the late 80's, became mainstream, a new subculture, and eventually a new consumerism, wrapped around the friendly warmth of MDMA. I don't actually regard MDMA as a true psychedelic personally - it is too easily turned into a mood-drug - but the Acid House subculture did create a new popularity for the psychedelic experience, especially through the sudden popularity of Terence McKenna, who'd actually been around for decades already.

Now there's a sense in the air this year that something new's happening. Of course, there's all the Millennium furor, but I suspect that it's more than that, and that in years to come we will look back on this year as the year some new current, some new subculture started. Of course, it's probably already happening, and people will say in 10 years, 'Oh, blah de blah actually started in 1998 when we put on a blah-de-blah event ... etc etc'. Taking the history of psychedelic culture as our paradigm, let's see what happens when we put numbers to it:-

1943 Acid first used by Hoffman
1954
1965 the first public acid era
1976 [we get Punk]
1987 Most people's year for when Acid House starts, new psychedelic era
1998 [And we get whatever the new current will be called in a couple of years' time!]
2009 The mass involvement with 2012 ideas.

Notice we've got 22 year intervals twice. 'Oh no', they're all thinking, 'he's going to do a Terence McKenna and show that everything's going to happen in 2012...'. No, what actually gave me the idea was a comment Pete Carroll once made about sunspot cycles being 11 years long, and what's more having a kind of alternating polarity, so that you get the same type of maximum, the same type of peak, every two cycles, every 22 years. Apparently, the actual maxima were in 1968 and 1979, but this doesn't matter at all for the purpose of this argument, because it may be that new currents start just after or just before a maximum, or wherever. This is not a serious theory of cultural history, just a fun attempt to peek behind the veil of cultural fashions. The 22 fitted well enough for that.

So what happens if we put in the 'negative' maxima in between the big ones here, put in the 11 - year points? So what is the relation of all this to magick? Looking at the timescales:-

The first acid era [65], people are doing religious stuff, and scientific stuff, but not much actual magick. There's a trickle building to a flood of books on the occult throughout the seventies, but the big explosion in actual practical magickal work happened in the Punk era, at the end of the 70's. One reflection of this was Chaos Magick, which articulated a refreshingly extreme version of this tendency towards actually doing something, but this influence spread throughout many parts of the magickal scene in the 80's. Of course, it was never a mass movement, magick never could be, because it is by its very nature a fringe activity in its most exciting forms, anyway. But the spirit of Punk, of DIY, was there.

In contrast, the emergent Acid House scene rapidly developed its own gurus, who reflected a desire for a philosophy of sweetness and light. New boundaries were erected to keep out the darkness. This basically religious tendency, whenever it appears, always tends to be hostile towards magick, which is about personal illumination, will and wholeness, all the aspects, all the selves which make us up.

So in contrast, we might expect the next subculture to favour magick, and have a more DIY and pragmatic approach to illumination. It looks like an exciting time for magicians and this is certainly a great year to be doing magick - with all the pazzazz of the Millennium at our disposal, plus a total eclipse!

Psychoplasmics by Gyrus

In an age where anti-flesh puritanism seems to be waning, and yet still persists in subtle manifestations, more and more extreme stimuli — both physical and conceptual — may be necessary to re-establish our relationship with our bodies. The vicious and relentless suppression of bodily awareness that is our inheritance from Pauline Christianity will not just fade away if we ask nicely. It seems that the growing popularity in the West of body modification practices, and physical forms of S/M sexuality, is indicative of the what may be necessary to reclaim our flesh and provoke ourselves into a deeper body-consciousness. And, as we shall see, our cultural myths, the imagery and conceptions that our artists generate, may also have become equally extreme in their treatment of the flesh, *of necessity*.

What is most relevant to us here is the phenomenon that stands as the most violent litmus test of attitudes towards the body — physical illness. I say 'physical' to distinguish from mental illness, and straight away we're plunged into the arbitrary, and only sometimes useful division of existence that is embedded deep within our psyches and our language. We're talking Cartesian dualism, of course... body = matter, mind = spirit... they're utterly divorced, and God knows how they interact. To me, this is less a scientific observation than a philosophical rationalization of the core myth of Christianity. That is, the belief that we have been expelled from the spiritual paradise of Eden into this lumpen world of mortality, matter and disease. This world, and thus our bodies, in which our souls are supposedly encaged, is our punishment for the transgression of Adam & Eve. However, as Science gradually replaced Christianity as the West's

guiding mythology, there was a growing impatience with the whole idea of 'spirit' or 'mind' ("Where is it? How can we measure it?" cried the anxious minds in the laboratory). So the concept was dropped altogether as an embarrassing ghost that evaded quantification — and we arrive at materialist reductionism. All mental phenomena are seen as illusory by-products of the chemical and electrical activity of the brain. The world, and our bodies, move from being seen as *corrupt* to being seen as essentially *meaningless*. Disease is seen as just a mechanical fault, to be repaired and patched up. Patients are usually allowed to believe that their thoughts and emotions are real, but any connections and correlations made between the mental and the physical are seen as dangerous superstitions.

To set the debate rolling, let's look at Susan Sontag's *Illness as Metaphor*, perhaps the most concise, lucid and passionate statement denying a non-physical basis for physical illness. Briefly, her main argument runs along these lines...

In the nineteenth century, tuberculosis was a relatively widespread terminal disease that was seen in popular folklore, and through the eyes of artists, as indicative of a certain emotional temperament. The Romantics romanticized TB, seeing it as a sign of a passionate and sensitive nature. Then science discovered the physical basis for the disease, and consequently found a cure. The mythologizing of TB rapidly faded away, to be completely superseded in our century by another disease ripe for fantasy-projections: cancer. And, as a guaranteed medical cure remains elusive, cancer remains a condition muddled by unnecessary metaphorical thinking.

Sontag's book is very persuasive, but tends to be very glib with regard to non-orthodox medical practice. Her persuasiveness largely stems from how she plays with the belittling connotations of 'folklore' and the authoritative tone of 'scientific truth'. Also, she attempts to claim that 'illness as metaphor' is a dominant cultural myth of the modern era, when materialist science — 'illness as mechanical breakdown' — undoubtedly holds this honour.

Neglecting to mention the vested interests that drug companies have in patients being treated solely via medicine, she states that "such preposterous and dangerous views", such as the idea that illness is a manifestation of unexpressed desires or impulses, "manage to put the onus of the disease on the patient and not only weaken the patient's ability to understand the range of plausible medical treatment, but also, implicitly, direct the patient away from such treatment."¹ This is a common distortion. The idea that a psychological view of certain diseases automatically places the blame for the condition on the patient is overly simplistic. In her criticism of Wilhelm Reich ("who did more than anyone to disseminate the psychological theory of cancer" — Sontag), for instance, she entirely neglects his extensive sociological analyses. While Reich placed the blame for cancer on unexpressed emotions, he usually placed the blame for this repression on repressive social systems. Of course, when thought about deeply, this reasoning leads to a classic 'chicken and egg' loop — which came first, consciousness or culture? To avoid metaphysical 'first cause' speculations, it is obvious that the most practical model for causality here is to accept the loop; to see causality as a dynamic interplay of external and internal factors.²

Essentially, then, Sontag is reiterating the doctrine of Cartesian dualism, or Christianity in disguise: that mind is separate from body; that the body is no more part of our identity than a car is; that disease, though painful, is merely a mechanical breakdown or invasion. And, like a car, the body should be repaired from a purely physical standpoint — any reference to emotional states or character traits is romantic mythologizing at best, dangerous delusion at worst.

While posing as a radical out to scythe down the perilous weeds of mythology, she perpetuates yet another form of the mind/body split that has drastically alienated us from the world we are part of.

The films of David Cronenberg are, if nothing else, resolutely body-conscious. Although the average reaction to this consciousness is one of hysterical revulsion, and although many critics claim that Cronenberg demonstrates a puritanical disgust with the flesh, it is my view that his films can be seen as a bloody and painful — but natural — conceptual birth process. The birth, back into awareness, of our relationship with our bodies. Just as scarification or piercing may be necessary to re-invoke body-awareness on an individual scale, the visceral pain of Cronenberg's imagery may be a good example of what is necessary to kick-start the cultural meme-pool's body-awareness.

Cronenberg has stressed his fascination with Cartesian dualism in statements too numerous to mention. He envisions the ultimate comment on this unfathomable 'split' (and the basis of all horror) as being the process of physical death. "Why should a healthy mind die, just because the body is not healthy? ... There seems to be something wrong with that. It's very easy to see why many philosophers detach the mind from the body ... But I don't believe that."³ It is this anguish of contradiction that lies at the heart of the painful mystery in his films. Cronenberg sees an apparent split — but his intuitions deny that such a thing exists. Martin Scorsese once said that Cronenberg doesn't understand what his films are about.⁴ Cronenberg himself has admitted that he makes a film to find out why he wants to make it. It is my argument that, from film to film, his central line of questioning has revolved around the mysteries of the mind/body/disease axis; and that in recent years, he may well have started to brush against some answers.

The Brood (1979) was Cronenberg's first film with 'name' actors — starring Oliver Reed and Samantha Eggar. Reed plays Dr Hal Raglan, a maverick therapist who has set up a retreat to practice the controversial technique he has developed, known as Psychoplasemics. It is here, at The Soma Institute, that the film begins.

We are immediately plunged into a dark auditorium, where Raglan is giving a demonstration with a male patient. Psychoplasemics appears to be a rough parody or caricature of many of the alternative body-therapies of the seventies. Here, the patient is taunted and humiliated by Raglan, who plays the role of the dominant father, persuading him that he would have been better off as a girl — his weakness would then be more 'acceptable'.⁵ The patient resists this suggestion fiercely, and as his anger wells up, Raglan encourages him. "Show me your anger!" he shouts, and the patient removes his top to reveal his torso — which has developed strange scarlet boils. With a mixture of defiance and frustration, the patient cries, "This is me, daddy!"

In line with the real-life therapies it apes, Psychoplasemics proposes that bodily dysfunctions give physical form to emotional dysfunctions — a hypothesis amplified here under the cinematic lens into a quite immediate process. This concept is neatly expressed in the title of Raglan's book, *The Shape of Rage*.⁶ And this, in turn can be seen as a reflection of Cronenberg's greatest contribution to cinematic expression, its visual grammar. In exploring and revealing hidden anxieties and abstracted conflicts, he has utilized the "gloop" (his word) of prosthetic special effects to give visual form to these mental phenomena. The basic model for nearly all Cronenberg's films is to turn a violently alienated individual *inside-out*, to externalize their internal dynamics for the audience's inspection — in the same way that illness, in the psychosomatic model, brings repressed conflicts to the attention of the individual.

Videodrome (1982) is probably Cronenberg's most complex and provocative film, in both form and content. It deals with a vast constellation of issues that infest the late twentieth century: mass media landscapes, censorship, the effect of technology on humanity, loss of stable identity, violent sexuality, mind control... All these themes are woven together in the film via the body-mind of one individual, Max Renn (James Woods).

Renn runs a small cable TV station, Channel 83, which specializes in softcore sex and hardcore violence. While looking to commission a new show, he is intrigued by the latest illicit interception made by Harlan, Channel 83's satellite broadcast pirate. Renn watches a short scene from a show called 'Videodrome'. We see a rust-red chamber, lined with electrified clay, in which naked women are beaten and tortured by men clad in enveloping black uniforms. No plot, no dialogue, no characters, just "torture, murder, mutilation". Max tries to track the show down, encountering an intricate maze of leads, and it is revealed that what he has seen is in fact a prototype of a new TV show to be broadcast in the near future by a large, sinister defence corporation, CONSEC. He had been shown pre-recorded tapes by CONSEC plant Harlan to expose him to a signal which is transmitted together with the televisual images. The violent imagery supposedly opens up neural receptors, allowing the signal itself to sink in, and to eventually induce a tumour (or new organ) to grow in the brain — which in turn triggers bizarre hallucinations. It is also revealed that this Videodrome signal was invented by an eccentric, McLuhanesque media prophet, Brian O'Blivion, who was killed by CONSEC — they intend to utilize his creation to facilitate extensive mind control over the population.

Max's hallucinations begin with video cassettes turning fleshy, and imagined episodes of sadistic violence against women. Never a friend of the censors, Cronenberg is confusing expectations here by following the censors' own 'screen violence leads to real violence' logic. But, as in reality, things are not quite so clear-cut. On viewing some Japanese porn intended for Channel 83, Max remarks, "There's something too *soft* about it. I'm looking for something that'll break through, y'know, something... *tough*." Thus, before he's even aware of Videodrome, we can see his attraction to the violent, penetrative shades of sexuality. And later, when confronted by CONSEC head Barry Convex, he comes close to having his rationalizations about Videodrome undermined. "Why would anybody watch a scum show like Videodrome?" Convex asks, "Why did you watch it, Max?" "Business reasons," is Max's glib answer. "Sure, sure," Convex smiles. "Why deny you get your kicks out of watching torture and murder?" Convex knows Max better than he knows himself. This is precisely how CONSEC was able to lure him into being exposed to the signal, placing him under their control and giving them access to his TV station for the broadcast of Videodrome. Then there is Masha, an ageing woman who commissions shows for Max. She can also sense Max's hidden desires. She asks him what kind of TV show he would produce, given the chance, "for the *subterranean* [read: *unconscious*] market. Would you do... Videodrome?" Cut immediately to a scene between Max and Nikki Brand, a radio personality with a strong and guiltless penchant for scarification and masochism. Here, after Renn has frantically tried to persuade her not to 'audition' for Videodrome, she takes a cigarette and burns her breast.⁷ Previously, we have seen Max pierce her ear during sex. Nikki's role in the film, then, is to initiate Max into the expression of his sadistic impulses.⁸

But the relationship is never allowed to settle into an easily categorized top/bottom, male/female one. And it is here where the role of the body becomes paramount in the revelation of Max's unconscious dynamics. The first body-image hallucination that Max experiences involved his stomach opening up into a throbbing vaginal slit. In a startlingly literal scene of self-penetration (=self-knowledge?), he forces his handgun into his stomach, which then, inexplicably, closes up, leaving Max to search vainly for the gun. It is this slit which provides CONSEC with their control over Max. Fleshy video cassettes are inserted into his slit to 'play' a programme (or program) on his psychic video (or biocomputer). So Max's body has become the site where his unacknowledged receptivity has manifested, with a vengeance. Aleister Crowley once wrote, "The act of repressing has the effect of exciting."⁹ Max's repression of his passive receptivity (which seems to be more insidious than the repression of his sadistic aggression) leads to this receptive aspect emerging even more strongly? allowing CONSEC to control him with relative ease. But categories are mixed up again when Harlan tries to insert a cassette, only to have his hand 'bitten off' by Max's slit. Vagina Dentata is evoked as Max (with help from O'Blivion's daughter) turns his apparently receptive organ into a tool of assertion.

It may be time to pause here, and return to alternative therapeutic theories. In his many books on his clinical discoveries, Arnold Mindell has described his concept of the 'dreambody'. He envisages this aspect of humans as a very fluid and pervasive version of the standard unconscious. It manifests in dreams, hallucinations and fantasies, as well as in bodily symptoms — the two areas are seen as opposite poles on the continuum of the dreambody. Mindell's theories, developed through extensive work with ordinary patients in therapy, psychotics and the terminally ill, suggest that bodily symptoms reflect processes in the psyche which are trying to manifest. These processes are often natural developments in the individual's evolution, stifled by various repressive mechanisms. His basic method for therapy involves 'amplifying' the symptoms (analogous to Jungian amplification of dream symbols) until their full intensity and meaning is experienced. Evading both Sontag's criticism of models of illness that seem to blame the patient, as well as avoiding any absolutist mind/body split, he states: "I don't believe that a person actually creates disease, but that his soul is expressing an important message to him through the disease."¹⁰ There is still a duality here — that of the individual ego and the unconscious, or the 'soul'. I don't think that many (except perhaps radical Taoists or Buddhists) will deny that this split exists; my main point is that it negates, through re-modelling, any *absolute* mind/matter division. Many consciousness researchers have realized that the ego/unconscious split is an imposition of our culture, and has been bridged in the past — and may well be bridged in the future, with the creative use of the many techniques of psychic integration we have at our disposal. What is important for now, though, is to recognise that the body, diseased or not, can be seen as a reflection of the unconscious — the regions of the soul, or Self, that the ego is removed from. Antero Alli describes this nicely: "The physical body is the visible manifestation of the so-called Subconscious Mind. The body is the fingerprint of the soul, a Rorschach of the Self. Nothing can be hidden. The body

communicates it all."¹¹ These last two sentences may be the motto of Cronenberg's work — the unconscious is never as 'un-conscious' as we like to think.

I'd also like to briefly look at another objection to psychosomatic theory — that this view doesn't acknowledge the effect of the external environment on a person. In fact, in all but its most extreme versions, the philosophy I'm describing here has plenty of room for this side of the equation. In his vision of a utopian state, where medical science is entirely balanced, Mindell sees a world where a doctor will sometimes prescribe drugs, sometimes operate, sometimes work on body processes, sometimes bring the whole family in for therapy. And sometimes, "the doctor might say, 'My dear man, go home, and wait and see what happens. Your problems are coming from planetary disturbance, and there is no sense in taking your problems personally. Wait until the city government makes certain changes. Write them your dreams now.'"¹² Given the cultural milieu of Max Renn's world, this may be a valid way of looking at his body mutations. Indeed, in his essay on media, identity and modern sci-fi, Scott Bukatman sees the body, in Cronenberg's films, "as the overdetermined site for the expression of profound social anxiety. The subject of the Cronenberg film is hardly human action: it is instead ... the structures of external power and control to which the individual (in body *and* soul) is subjected." Though valid, for me this is also too one-sided. Far better to view ourselves in terms of a continuum, a focused point in an *organism-environment field*, in the words of Alan Watts.¹³ Alternatively, in Mindell's process terminology, "The inner world and outer world dreambodies are two-way streets, and it's impossible to place blame, for we all contribute to the body as a whole. Our dreambody is part of the entire world's dreambody, yet the world's dreambody is also found within us."¹⁴

To return to the film itself, we can now discern a process of psychic integration, of sorts. In the final scene, Max ends up in a derelict boat — a 'condemned vessel'. Inside, he is informed by Nikki, or at least her televisual image (if there is any difference), that it is time for him to let his body die. His present physical form, like the boat, has outlived its usefulness. He is shown himself committing suicide on the TV — placing a gun to his temple, saying "Long live the New Flesh," and firing. The screen explodes and spews out guts and intestines. Max proceeds to carry out his suicide, and the blast of the shot echoes over a blank black screen before the credits roll.

It is unfortunate that the intended ending never made it into the final cut — not due to censorship, but to inadequate gloom.¹⁵ The original script called for a scene following Max's apparent suicide, where Max, Nikki, and Bianca O'Blivion meet in the Videodrome chamber and engage in a polysexual union, each producing new mutated sex organs, Nikki and Bianca developing cocks to match Max's slit, all of them physically melting into one another. The New Flesh, the New Self. The Videodrome chamber, previously the site of Max's fantasies of violence and torture, is transformed through (ego?) death into a place for a more creative, viscerally psychedelic existence — boundary dissolution and mind manifestation *in the flesh*. The womb connotations of the chamber were quite consciously wrought — "Freudian rebirth imagery, pure and simple."¹⁶ The dark orange/red colour of the chamber and the rusting boat Max finds himself in blend and evoke both decay and bloody birth. Note also Nikki's advice to Max to "go all the way through". However, Cronenberg thought the scene may not have had the intended effect, that the mutated sex organ prosthetics may have been laughable.

As it is, we are left with a taste of the tragic finality that was to characterize his films' conclusions throughout the eighties.

It is fitting that Cronenberg's last overt 'disease movie' (to date) brushes closest to the roots of the quest for meaning in bodily illness.

In *The Fly* (1986), Jeff Goldblum plays Seth Brundle, a lonely, obsessive scientist who has virtually perfected the world's first teleportation system. There is one glaring fault — it cannot teleport live, organic matter. A baboon ends up being turned *inside-out* by the process. "I must not know enough about the flesh myself," says Brundle after the disastrous experiment. "I'm gonna have to learn." His first lesson occurs in bed with Veronica (Geena Davies). In post-coital play, Veronica pinches Brundle's skin. "I wanna eat you up," she says. "That's why old ladies pinch babies' cheeks. It's the flesh — it just makes you crazy." A flash of 'Eureka!' descends on Brundle, and he quickly realizes that he has to program that same 'craziness' for the flesh into his computer, so that it can cope with teleporting organic matter.

Another baboon is put through, this time successfully, and they agree to wait for tests on the animal to be performed before a human goes through. But Brundle gets drunk and jealous one night, believing Veronica to be with her ex, and teleports. He fails to notice a housefly in the telepod with him — the computer gets confused, and decides to splice the two genetic patterns together. Brundle emerges, apparently invigorated; but deep within him are insectile DNA patterns waiting to erupt.

Now, neuroscientists, psychonauts and tribal cultures alike know that we've already got some animals inside us. Evolution has built up layers of brain tissue, so that the human brain can be seen as being composed of an old reptilian brain, an overlaying mammalian brain, and the most recent and explosive development, the uniquely human neocortex. It seems that this neocortex developed so rapidly that it failed to fully integrate with the older animal brain sections, leaving a neural discrepancy that has been held by some to be responsible for humanity's notorious inhumanity.¹⁷ And yet techniques for forcing integration of these layers have existed for many thousands of years. Frequently, researchers have come to the conclusion that the copious animal mythologies of tribal cultures around the globe, and the many pagan human/animal hybrid deities, represent an ancient awareness of our animal inheritance. And perhaps the most direct method of contacting and integrating this inheritance lies in the shamanic practice of shape-shifting. I believe that in *The Fly* the genetic splicing idea and its subsequent developments represent a science-fiction model of this ancient consciousness-expansion technique, which finds its modern equivalent in Austin Osman Spare's 'atavistic resurgence' (Spare's art contains numerous shape-shifting motifs). Using various trance techniques, a state of consciousness is induced which allows total identification with a certain animal. This may be used for achieving certain effects in the world, but often it functions as a method of psychic integration — balancing. It seems clear that Brundle's experiences propel him through an unexpected and violent process analogous to many aspects of the traditional shaman's vocation. Aside from the shape-shifting aspect, the film also contains the following correspondences:

- What the teleporter does is what the shaman goes through during the initiatory experience — deconstruction/reconstruction, or death and resurrection. Like a shaman, Brundle (initially) becomes 'superhuman' as a result of this experience, incredibly strong and energetic. He says, "I'm beginning to think that the sheer process of being taken apart atom by atom and being put back together again... Why, it's like coffee being put through a filter — it's somehow a purifying process."
- An almost certainly unintentional, but amusing hint sneaks into the script. After seeing Brundle go through the teleporter, a woman he's just picked up gasps, "Are you some sort of magician?"
- The shamanic initiation is reversed in the film. Brundle gets taken apart and put back together, *then* experiences an 'initiatory sickness'. "I seem to be stricken by a disease with a purpose," Brundle quips, as any proto-shaman might.

You may object that what eventually happens to Brundle puts across a very negative message about the bizarre, rapid cancer he develops as he becomes more and more fly-like. And yes, we should always bear in mind while making the above connections that Cronenberg's films are essentially *morality plays* — they show where the wrong paths may lead, as warnings. I feel that the tragic conclusion of *The Fly* is due to two main factors. First, there is the law of repression = excitation. Brundle's initial repression of his animal nature, his relationship to his flesh, seems to be too rapidly torn away. His moment of realization in bed with Veronica is merely a conceptual lesson. His animality is yet to be unleashed through the teleportation 'accident', and his body, the canvas of the unconscious, reveals not only *what* he has repressed, but *how much* he has repressed it. (In a way, Brundle doesn't escape being turned inside-out like the first baboon). Secondly, there is the incomprehension and revulsion of others, represented here by Veronica. "I know what the disease wants," says Brundle. "It wants to turn me into something else. That's not too terrible, is it? Most people would give anything to be turned into something else." "Turned into *what*?" Veronica asks. Although understandable, to me this attitude seems to resonate with our culture's general fear of change, especially when it involves disturbing aspects (which it usually does). Even though *The Fly* manages to echo the shamanic roots of the idea of transformative illness, the impulse remains strangled by Cronenberg's acute awareness of the dangerous stagnancy of Western society.

I mentioned at the start of this essay that I believe Cronenberg may have recently been moving towards some answers to his cinematic explorations. His (probably) unconscious connection with ancient

mind/body/disease awareness is one of these tentative 'answers'. The other came as the result of his fusion with his literary idol William S. Burroughs, in his film version of the novel *Naked Lunch*.

I do not have space to delve deeply into the fascinating relationship between Cronenberg's previous treatment of disease and the 'sickness' of junk addiction in this film.¹⁹ My main focus is on how Cronenberg utilized Burroughs' 'Talking Asshole' routine, the story of how a guy teaches his asshole to talk — and eventually gets his mouth sealed by the mutinous asshole. Though the routine appears verbally in the film, its visual influence is most interesting. The insectile typewriter that Bill Lee uses, and is given instructions by, has a 'talking asshole' through which it speaks. On one level, it functions as an alien intelligence using Lee as an agent; on another level, it is Lee's unconscious mind guiding his actions. The Talking Asshole is Burroughs himself, in the sense that it's the part of you that you don't want to listen to, that's saying things that are unspeakable, that are too basic, too true, too primordial and too uncivilized and tasteless to be listened to... but are there, nonetheless. So in a sense, the mind/asshole schism, the head/mouth versus the asshole, is maybe more of a Freudian schism — the asshole's really the unconscious and the head's the superego. More than it being a true mind/body schism, it's a sort of mind/mind split, I think.

David Cronenberg, *Naked Making Lunch*

So — for the first time, Cronenberg arrives at the previously described re-modelling of the Cartesian split. The somewhat gentler tone of his recent work may indicate a level of resolution in his mind/body dilemmas; for his own work, the visceral extremities of *Videodrome* and *The Fly* may no longer be necessary as stimuli to achieve consciousness of the body. The body is no longer separate from the mind — it is merely the physical aspect of the mind's hidden depths. The gulf to be bridged is no longer that unfathomable metaphysical abyss between spirit and matter — these are already united. What now needs to be achieved is the dissolution of culturally sanctioned ego boundaries that make us all such fragile and illusory islands in the ocean of Self.

Whether Cronenberg is able to achieve the cinematic New Flesh he fell short of in *Videodrome*, and whether our culture can develop respect for our bodies' intimate relationship to the deepest levels of our Selves, remains to be seen.

POSTSCRIPT: *Crash!*

When I was writing *Crash* I did a fair amount of research, particularly from this book called *Crash Injuries*, a medical textbook full of the most gruesome photographs as well as a lot of extraordinary material . . . Upon viewing the photographs in *Crash Injuries* taken immediately after violent car crashes — all one's pity goes out to these tragically mutilated people. After all, any of us who drive a motorcar may end up like them 5 minutes after starting the engine . . . But at the same time, one cannot help one's imagination being touched by these people who, if at enormous price, have nonetheless broken through the skin of reality and convention around us . . . and who have in a sense achieved — become — mythological beings in a way that is only attainable through these brutal and violent acts. One can transcend the self, sadly, in ways which are in themselves rather to be avoided — say, extreme illnesses, car crashes, extreme states of being. J.G. Ballard, *Re/Search* #8/9

After the commonplaces of everyday life, with their muffled dramas, all my organic expertise for dealing with physical injury had long been blunted or forgotten. The crash was the only real experience I had been through for years. For the first time I was in physical confrontation with my own body...

James Ballard, *Crash*

Seeing *Crash* (after aeons of waiting for the media-hounded censors to stop sitting on it) made me think of two things I had written two years before in *Psychoplasmics*. My tentative conclusion that Cronenberg's work may become "gentler in tone", avoiding the "visceral extremities" of earlier films, turns out to be — thankfully! — a bit premature to say the least. While there's no sign of a return to gloom, *Crash* is undoubtedly one of his most intense and provocative films — and easily one the most uniquely disturbing film ever to make it onto the 'mainstream' cinema circuit.

The second part that struck me was my use of the driver/car analogy to look at mind/body dualism. My assertion that, in dualist thinking, the body has as little to do with our self-identity as a car does, is both revealing and flawed.

Firstly, by equating 'body' with 'car', it opens up the connection between the body and the environment. After the demise of classical physics, awareness of our physical manifestation in this world can no longer be seen in terms of strict separation. Our bodies are ultimately no more self-contained and isolated, no more in need of abstracted 'spirit' or 'mind' to transcend boundaries, than atomic particles are.

The *flaw* in my analogy is my failure to recognize that, even in a dualist, *logos*-dominated and *bios*-denying culture, there will still be very strong bonds between self-identity and body/environment. The fact that the interdependence of these things is not consciously dealt with results in the dynamics of the relationship being driven by neurotic and destructive elements in our psyches. Eating disorders, fitness-fanaticism, brand-name fetishism, fashion, all these things are signs of how deeply body-image (body consciousness) and objects in the environment are embedded into our sense of our selves. *Crash* is the pathological conclusion of the neurotic body-environment relationship, and hints at the initiation of a new relationship. Just as Process-Oriented therapy seeks to intensify bodily symptoms to force their unconscious meaning into consciousness, *Crash* pushes our culture's deviant eroticism and obsession with vehicles (bodies or cars) into a place where they may be transformed, and true body-environment consciousness — where no fixed divisions hold inside and outside apart — may be reborn. "The deformed body of the crippled young woman, like the deformed bodies of the crashed automobiles, revealed the possibilities of an entirely new sexuality. Vaughan had articulated my needs for some positive response to my crash." (James Ballard, *Crash*)

The experience of seeing the film made many threads of connection between car crashes and eroticism more tangible to me than reading the book did, however vivid and striking Ballard's prose is. One instance was when several characters were watching a video of test crashes while rubbing each other's crotches. The slow-motion footage of cars hurtling into each other, their windows exploding out as they shatter, brought to my mind Wilhelm Reich's focus on the idea or feeling of *bursting* in his patients. Many patients felt the therapeutic attack on their bodily armour, their rigidified energy structures, as a threat to their self, their entire *being*. In conjunction with this element of the psyche, which identifies with the body's armour, and fears its downfall, there are also elements that *desire* the dissolution of these muscular cramps, longing for the free flow of bio-energies. The patient simultaneously wishes for and dreads the very same thing. Through exploring one patient's fantasies and experiences of armour-dissolution, Reich came to this conclusion: "*The destruction of the armor, the penetration into the patient's unconscious secrets, is unconsciously felt to be a process of being pricked open or being made to burst.*"¹⁹ He goes on to make clear the connections between armour-dissolution and orgasm, and between the breakdown of the sense of 'self' in orgasm and the dissolving of identity in the process of dying.

To the extent that we base our identity, our conception of our selves, on the tense stiffness that our bodies have developed in this body-negative society, a threat to this hardness will be sensed as a threat to *us*. Yet it will also be, somewhere, our greatest desire. The bursting of energetic tension in the body becomes our gravest fear, often associated with death and dying; and at the same time it will be an erotic, life-affirming fantasy. One need only note the tendency of most people to invest personal energy in their possessions, to bestow upon exterior objects (especially houses and cars) an underlying quality of "me-ness", a symbiosis with our personal essence, and the formula for the psychic logic behind *Crash* is self-evident — not the wild alien pathology many have seen it as.

The car has been the 20th century's dominant 'image of self' provided by technology, though this dominance seems quite mute and tacit. Much has been written about the computer as a self-image (or more precisely as an image of the mind or brain), perhaps because the emergence of this technology coincided with the popularization of psychology. Cars, however, seem to have slipped into our everyday lives, and thus into the deepest levels of our psyches, without overt recognition of the extent to which we identify with them, or allow them to mediate our experience of the environment. Their hard metal shells make them perfect totems of the armoured body, the petrified self. Their mutilation, destruction and deformation in

violent crashes is thus the perfect exterior analogy for the melting, bursting and dissolution of hardened bio-energies, and their release in explosive eroticism.

On the same weekend that I saw *Crash* there was a brilliant documentary on Channel 5(!) called *Damage*. It looked at the increasing number of women and girls who cut or burn themselves. This is often associated with eating disorders like bulimia, and like such disorders it's more common in females than males (one psychiatrist astutely observed that men with similar impulses and motives often harm their bodies in less obvious ways like getting into fights and playing violent sports). Most of the girls and women interviewed had seriously scarred arms. They cut themselves whenever they felt a seething rage or unbearably intense depression overwhelming them. And most of them said that the feeling they got from the experience was one of utter release — some were blissfully nostalgic about the experiences. Of course, they suffered too. Self-recrimination for harming themselves, recrimination from loved ones for harming themselves, even medical staff scolding them for 'trying to get attention'.

What was clear, though, was that these were *not* suicide attempts, not half-hearted flirtations with death with which to guilt-trip others. These people were (in my eyes) responding *positively* to a very negative situation. I admired some of these teenagers immensely, for staying true to their survival instincts amidst vast negative forces, however strange their method seemed. Yet the clinic featured in the programme, which specialized in self-harming, was "radical" for taking the step of *not reprimanding patients* for cutting themselves. For most people, all they see in someone cutting their skin is negativity and self-destructiveness. Perhaps if more people were educated about the long history of life-affirmative self-mutilation practices (the American Indian Sun Dance being a famous example), these people's spontaneous rediscovery of them wouldn't get caught up in the knotted tangles of guilt, shame and fear that our culture wraps around nearly every intense, direct confrontation with our bodies.

This isn't to suggest that scarification is some cure-all for mental distress! For my purposes here, I'm just trying to get a slightly closer understanding of the obsession with wounds and scars that runs through *Crash*. Our identification with the environment, at present, is usually unconscious, and often neurotic. Cars are often status symbols, emblems of power or (supposed) desirability. The characters in *Crash* are seeking to merge with their environment in a more urgent, erotic, bodily way. Aside from the immediate experience of physical mutilation (which, depending on whether you want it or not, can be liberating or catastrophic — sometimes both) these people are erotically fascinated by the way scars describe a history of the body's interaction with the environment. This is conveyed explicitly in the novel. In the film, there are many scenes where people tenderly kiss and caress each other's scars, fleshy relics of a time when the barrier between the body and the environment was literally shattered — a violent parallel to sexual union. For a while, violence destroyed the burden of being cut off from the outside, caged in a sealed shell of defences. So as well as being an exterior image of the armoured body, the car is also the place where these people try to merge with their environment. The perverse extremity of their chosen means to try and fuse with their surroundings is dictated by the extremity of their alienation from it (just as the natural sweet melting of bodily tension may evolve into a violent sensation of explosion in the chronically tense). The sad fact that their environment is overwhelmed by these metal boxes is also a factor.

A scar is at the centre of an astounding scene where Ballard fucks Gabrielle, a paraplegic crash victim. Instead of taking the usual route, he becomes transfixed by a huge gash in her thigh, and enters her here. It's astounding in its sheer perversity, and in the fact that it wasn't cut out; but it's also the first time, I think, that there has been a literal equation of vagina and wound in a film (beyond degrading verbal remarks, and that slightly less obvious scene in *Videodrome*). For the Freudian, this equation is due to castration anxiety: boy sees that women have no cock, assumes it's been hacked off, and fears the worst for himself. Many books have been written about horror films, particularly 'slasher' films like *Halloween*, where cuts are seen in this symbolic light.

A more solidly grounded link in the vagina/wound equation is menstruation. Penelope Shuttle and Peter Redgrove look at a few horror films as 'fear of menstrual power' films in their excellent book *The Wise Wound*. Whichever side you take, the dream-logic association of female genitalia and bleeding wounds seems to be one of the roots of the fear, excitement and attraction generated by bodily mutilation in horror films. The *literal* demonstration of this equation in a film, and the fact that erotic liberation and pleasure

results from this odd union, is quite something. Cronenberg has already defined his own sub-genre within horror. With *Crash*, he makes explicit something that only psychoanalysts could dig out of other horror films, and transcends the genre completely.

As a final note, I should say that I agree with the censors on one point: *Crash* will make you commit irresponsible acts! As a direct result of seeing it (no, I didn't go and cause a pile-up) I did something I had had the impulse to do many times before, but had kept in the 'Er... Not Yet' box in my mind. I went up on to a very beautiful, but very spooky moor near Leeds, and spent the night alone in the open. I experienced a lot of fear, but pushed through it and experienced a glorious sunrise as I chanted over a stone, soaking in the light and five minutes of rain that created a beautiful rainbow behind me.

If I had to pin it down, I would say the scene that inspired me most was where Ballard, Catherine and Vaughan encounter a car crash site. The whole sequence creates an utterly bizarre and compelling sensation that mixes fear, revulsion, excitement and fascination in a very powerful way. Our society's secret morbidity is brought to the surface by encounters with crashes — truckers have a name for people who slow down on motorways to look at an accident on the other carriageway, 'rubber-neckers'. This scene pushes that morbidity into the open, and transforms it into a strangely magical feeling of boundary-crossing. It may seem odd that I was inspired to spend a night on a moor by seeing some people hang out at a car crash. I would call it an *imaginative* response. And this is essentially what *Crash* is about — reacting creatively to extreme or negative situations. That it even shows signs of catalyzing the *capacity* for imaginative response in its audience makes it almost unique in cinemas today.

Bibliography

- *Cronenberg on Cronenberg*, edited by Chris Rodley
- 'The Wrong Body' by Amy Taubin & 'Interview with David Cronenberg' by Mark Kermode, in *Sight & Sound*, March 1992
- *Exterminate All Rational Thought*, edited by Damon Wise (magazine accompanying Cronenberg/Burroughs season at the Scala Cinema, King's Cross, London, 1992)
- *Everything is Permitted: The Making of Naked Lunch*, edited by Ira Silverberg
- *Illness as Metaphor*, by Susan Sontag
- *Working with the Dreaming Body*, by Arnold Mindell
- *Angel Tech: A Modern Shaman's Guide to Reality Selection*, by Antero Alli
- 'Who Programs You? The Science Fiction of the Spectacle' by Scott Bukatman, in *Alien Zone: Cultural Theory and Contemporary Science Fiction Cinema*, edited by Annette Kuhn
- ['The Individual as Man/World' by Alan Watts](#), in *The Psychedelic Reader*, edited by Timothy Leary, Ralph Metzner and Gunter M. Weil
- *Echoes From The Void*, by Nevill Drury
- *Naked Making Lunch* (documentary), directed by Chris Rodley
- *Crash* by J.G. Ballard
- *Re/Search #8/9: J.G. Ballard*, edited by V. Vale & Andrea Juno
- *Character Analysis* by Wilhelm Reich
- *The Wise Wound* by Penelope Shuttle & Peter Redgrove

Questing & Chaos

by Jack Gale

I suppose it may seem naive, but there are occasions when I am still puzzled by the amount of flak which psychic questing receives from some quarters of the pagan community. When one questions the personages from whom derisive comments issue, one frequently finds that they have never actually sat down and read a book on psychic questing all the way through and/or have never been involved in this activity themselves. Such folk are frequently laden with misconceptions with regard to what the term really means, often under the impression that to be a quester one MUST live in Essex and invest huge amounts of time and energy in running around the country battling black magicians. They are often surprised, therefore, when one informs them that there is a wee bit more to it than that and that this particular pursuit goes back somewhat further than the late 70s, quoting questers Wellesley Tudor Pole and Frederick Bligh Bond in passing.

Fair enough, but what exactly IS psychic questing? The term itself was coined by Andrew Collins in order to give a name to an activity which, while not a religion (in common with Chaos Magick) can easily become a way of life. Andrew was largely responsible for the evolution of a new form of questing in the later 70s and the 80s and, together with his colleagues from Essex and other places and fellow writers such as Graham Philips and Martin Keatman, brought the activity to public awareness via books, talks and the annual Psychic Questing Conference in London. Two different questers may not necessarily provide an identical definition of the activity and this article represents the purely personal viewpoint of one participant who has no particular desire to act as some sort of questing spokesman. Personally, I see psychic questing as the investigation of historical and sacred landscape mysteries via the combination of archival research and magical and psychical techniques. The similarity of this to a pragmatic approach to magick such as Chaos or rune work will become apparent quite quickly, for both are concerned with results. The Chaoist may temporarily adopt a paradigm/belief system, whatever, feeding energy and acquired belief into it until able to successfully work with it on a magical level. The quester may end up doing much the same thing, depending on the circumstances in hand: sometimes being plunged into working with the Qabalah and at other times being propelled into an involvement with, say, alchemical systems, or runes, geomancy, etc.

The one essential qualification for a quester is a willingness to 'go with the flow' and maintain an open mind. Questing has little room for and even less to offer folk suffering from self-imposed pillarbox vision and the human urge to slot themselves into secure pigeon holes. ("I can't get involved with stuff like that; it's not Wiccan and my HP wouldn't like it. But that's not really Druidic, is it? Can't mess about with that I'm not interested in the runes"? etc.)

The questing life is not for everyone. It offers little in the way of security in contrast, say, to a well-established coven or lodge in which one may work through a recognized, tried and tested grade system. The endless thirst for yet more information actually has quite an Odinic feel to it. If security is to be found anywhere in this strange pursuit, then it is surely in the gradual acquisition of a set of learned and practised skills and techniques, a priceless asset to quester and magician alike. Such techniques, while involving magick, psychism, divination, etc., also include archival research methodology: an absolutely vital tool of the questing trade. Without such back-up research, one is presenting merely another batch of channelled material, of which there is plenty around these days. Apart from obvious credibility advancement when presenting results, such hard graft, unglamorous work, also grounds the quester, keeping his feet firmly anchored to terra firma, which can be quite helpful on occasions.

The reader may wonder what the 'going with the flow', to which I referred earlier, actually means in practical terms, so a few brief examples may be helpful here. One sunny morning in late March, 1995, I was conducting a lone meditation on the summit of Glastonbury's Wearyall Hill whilst caught up in a still ongoing quest, the first 'leg' of which has been written up and is now being typeset (at the time of writing this article) in readiness for a re-release in book form some time in 1997. Out of the 'blue' as it were, and in dazzling clarity, I was abruptly shown a Thelemic, Unicursal Hexagram: 'the Hexagram of the Beast'. Not being a Thelemite, I confess to an ignorance of this symbol. As is so typical of questing work, a split-second vision can result in hours of follow-up research which was true in this instance. Discussing possible implications with Thelemic magicians of my acquaintance and digging into works by Crowley, Duquette etc., I found the reason as to WHY I had been shown a Unicursal Hexagram which I subsequently found echoed in Kenneth Grant's book *The Magical Revival* (space does not permit elucidation here). Similarly, on the way to Kensington's Maria Assumpta Centre one evening in July 1995, looking forward to another London Earth Mysteries Circle meeting, I was suddenly shown a particular Anglo-Saxon rune. Again, with great clarity. Subsequently being shown this rune about eight hundred times, I deduced that someone was trying to tell me something, which he was. Other selected Anglo-Saxon runes then followed. More familiar with the Elder Futhark, my knowledge of Anglo-Saxon runes was slight, but I was willing (and keen) to learn. What I eventually discovered was that a bunch of covert occultists whose order was ruthlessly eliminated in 1539 but whose activities had continued on the 'inner planes' were using the runes as information microchips on a sort of astral computer basis, which I considered to be a neat move on their part. (It should not be assumed from the episodes outlined above that all of my psychically-received input comes through myself, as it does not work in this way. I have been honoured to work with a number of exceptionally gifted psychic colleagues over the years.)

A possible parallel to the Chaoist's adoption of a given belief system may be seen in veteran quester Paul Weston's 1990 experiences in the Glastonbury Zodiac, available and recounted in detail in his taped lecture *Avalonian Aeon*, which can be bought from the Isle of Avalon Foundation. The questing group to which Paul then belonged had decided to tackle the great Terrestrial Zodiac as if it were what Andrew Collins once intriguingly described as "a psychic assault course". They planned to access it using an intensive, three-day 'vision quest' shamanic format, covering much ground with little, if any, sleep. (Yes, questing CAN be hectic!) It was planned to culminate this physical and spiritual journey with a powerful meditation at Butleigh, the circle's centre. In preparation Paul read all that he could find about the Zodiac, discovering that the actual existence of this vast planispherical diagram imprinted upon the landscape went totally against the grain of common-sense from the viewpoints of the academic, archaeologist or normal' thinking person. He CHOSE, therefore, to believe in it and work with it magically just as a Chaoist might choose to work with a fictional mythos and, for example, invoke Cthulhu. In doing so, I believe, he accessed a massively powerful thought-form with a strong etheric existence. The results were magical to say the least, with several aspects of Paul's life experiencing profound changes which strongly affected the future as far as he was concerned.

"Synchronicity" looms large for the quester. Here, maybe, we have another similarity with Chaos, given the importance of the Goddess Eris. Many of the synchronous events experienced certainly give one a buzz and it goes far beyond things happening such as books falling off shelves and dropping open at a pertinent place in the text, etc. (Although this can be helpful.) A personal example may help to illustrate the point. One cold, windy March evening, I found myself standing in the middle of the road leading to Shepton Mallet at Edgarley, in the shadow of Glastonbury Tor. Having calibrated and programmed my pendulum, I was endeavouring to dowse the location of a particular landmark which I knew to be hidden somewhere in the neighbouring fields using the co-ordinates method. I was pretty well satisfied that I had pinpointed it when I saw a lone figure approaching. Sleet was now falling and I wondered what the elderly man coming down the road towards me made of the manic-looking figure in baseball cap and imitation Barbour coat, standing in the road in the gathering gloom holding a wildly-gyrating pendulum. (This WAS Glastonbury, of course, so I probably struck him as hardly out of the ordinary!) "Let's go for it", I thought, and when the man drew level with me I asked him if he had any knowledge of the landmark which I sought. Not only did he know it, but he was actually on his way to the field in which it was located! Confirming my dowsed diagnosis of its position, he invited me to join him. Alone in that gloomy, chilly, inhospitable landscape, the odds against meeting a person with such knowledge and contacts seemed somewhat high. Such events make the hair at the back of the neck stand up a little and help to remind one of WHY one is a quester; perhaps a thrill comparable to that experienced when first linking with a site guardian and establishing some sort of working relationship. This meeting was, in a sense, made even more magical due to the fact that prior to leaving London, I had cast a sigil aimed at helping me to find the landmark in question.

Crowley once said something to the effect that if one behaves as if certain things are 'real' (whether they are or not being irrelevant) magick will happen. Perhaps this would put off those who like to keep things a bit safe and sanitized via resorting to the "They're all just archetypes my dear" line. (Perish the thought that they could actually be 'real'!) A practising Pagan known to me once listened to the tale of my meeting a guardian in the wind and rain one morning when alone at a sacred site. The person remarked, "If that happened to me I'd freak out!" Such common comments lead one to wonder why some Pagans spend so much time invoking different deities, entities etc., if they do not really WANT them to turn up. Such a person is probably best staying well away from questing, for to be confronted with what one (loosely speaking) conjures for can be a traumatic experience.

Questing experiences can be quite unpredictable. In August 1993 I visited a certain pagan Saxon burial ground with a highly-respected, long-standing psychic colleague of mine. Via her, I learned of the overseeing presence at the site of the ancient Germanic Goddess Holda; a deity of whom, at that time, I had never heard and about whom I knew absolutely nothing. (She left us to find out her name, but provided us with a liberal helping of clues.) In retrospect, this seemingly minor event two questers visiting a sacred site on a hot, late summer afternoon-became a good example of the often-discussed magical aspect of the butterfly effect. A few months later, interestingly, the Royal Commission on Historical Monuments carried out a geographical survey of the site, the results of which safeguarded it from any future development under the terms of the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act. During the following two years,

I connected directly with this Goddess, researched her appearances in the annals of Germanic folklore, gave talks on the subject and wrote a magazine article and a small booklet *Rituals to greet her rising from the underworld* were conducted at the site at dawn on the Winter Solstices of 1993 and 1994.

The results of the activities described above were further reaching than I would have expected. It seemed that this very 'up-front' deity had returned from comparative obscurity (the Farrars. *The Witches' Goddess* affords her about three lines, but Gerald Gardner did a bit better in *The Meaning of Witchcraft*) with a bang. People began to contact me who had experienced forceful encounters with this Goddess without even knowing her identity or having initially read any of my written work on the subject, while others were repeatedly shown her runic symbol (the six-rayed Norse Hagall rune) without knowing why or even, for that matter, what it was. One shaken person who had visited the Holda site with me went into her office one morning (having told her colleagues nothing about her experience) to find an immense Hagall rune drawn on a piece of paper and stuck to the wall above her desk. (Her workmates were as baffled as she was as to how it got there!) Two Pagan artists in Essex who knew nothing of her suddenly found themselves painting a view of her stomping ground (or one of them) in Greenwich a place which they had not, at that time, visited - littered with her symbols. A song entitled *Reaper Girl* dedicated to the Goddess has recently been recorded by an ambient/trance music performer and writer and is being included on a CD which also features a photograph of the Pagan Saxon cemetery at Greenwich among the sleeve notes. The site was also featured by Live TV on the 1996 Summer Solstice when I was briefly interviewed there; the tumuli visually contrasted with distant Canary Wharf. Since then some other artists have been inspired by Holda, producing new representations of her and so it goes butterflying on. Questing may be insecure, unpredictable and occasionally, very weird, but it is certainly never dull! The trouble is, one never quite knows what one is starting.

This essay was first published in Chaos International magazine, issue 22

An Interview with Ramsey Dukes from *Head* magazine

How would you characterise your writing (i.e. what is your dominant interest in writing - political, philosophical, occult, scientific...)?

I like the phrase Cornelius Agrippa used - 'occult philosophy. I think if I just called myself a philosopher that would be a little bit pretentious, but 'occult' is a nice frowned-on word. I am, however, more interested in the philosophy behind it than in describing a list of practices and things for people to do.

Could you briefly outline your occult background (i.e. association with various organisations and how you became involved with the occult). Did you ever get the girl next door?

As far as I can remember I was always interested in the arcane. When I was a little kid there was a friend of my father's who was described to me as a Magician and I remember being very intrigued and asking him about his magic. It was only many years later that I discovered he was a disciple of Crowley's. People say that that was perhaps an influence on me: I think that I have just always been interested. Probably the most significant thing in the long term was when I was about eleven. I was at prep school and I read a review of the book of 'Abramelin the Mage' which Watkins had just reprinted. I ordered it from Gloucester Library and read it. Having always been interested in magic, but not sure if there was anything in it, this was the first book which seemed to me a really serious book telling you how to do magic. Of course it described a system that one had to be 'grown up' to do but I was sure that as soon as I had grown up I would be able to do this. Now in fact I didn't get round to doing it until 1977, many years later. Although I had been doing quite a bit of magic - sitting at home meditating and experimenting - the Abramelin practice was in a way the first formal magical discipline that I did. I hadn't joined any magical groups, not because I didn't want to, but more because I had been living in the deep country and it was not easy to get to join them. They were all a bit far away, and it wasn't until some years after the Abramelin that friends (I was living in North London) initiated me into a magical group which was sort of experimental and yet formal. Then later, through contacts at the Society, which was Gerald Suster's essay club, almost, I met David Rietti and became involved with the O.T.O.

Initially I was the Secretary and then more recently, because of going to Lockenhaus, I was initiated into the IOT. I am comparatively senior in the OTO but in the IOT I am sort of a Neophyte and I rather like that. You also ask did I get the girl next door, an obvious reference to the article 'Blast Your Way to Megabuck\$'. The trouble with successes in magic is that you can look back and describe some things that happened and they are so amazing when that when you tell them to people they think you must be the world's greatest Magician if you could do things like that. But you know that actually they didn't happen in the way magic ought to - 'I just want this to happen and I make it happen'. Very little have I managed to achieve in that way, life has a habit of springing surprises however hard you try to direct it. Some of those surprises are uncannily close to what you asked for, and yet they have a way of occurring which is not what you expected. I am very much aware of what is happening to me and it's a sort of theme which occurs in fairy stories; the wish is granted but it doesn't work out the way it was meant to. I think it must be a cosmic law that that should happen.

Are you still involved in the occult for the same reasons or have they changed?

That's a difficult one. I can't give a tidy answer to that. It's very much my nature to be involved in the occult and that hasn't changed. Involvement carries a certain momentum - the friends one has made, the practices I am performing and so on, all that adds up to a reason to stay with the occult. Yet I realise I am looking for different things now than I was earlier on. But those reasons are fairly superficial. It really is just curiosity about life and that is the strongest motive and that, in a sense, has not been changed.

How do you stand in the relationship between occult theory and practice?

Right from the beginning of my writing I would have said that I was very much a theoretician. In fact I would have felt a bit ashamed of that because I was very touched by people who saw my work as practical; so I've thought about it and I realise that, although I'm not describing practices - telling people what to do, how to make robes, where to stand in ritual and all that practical stuff - I am giving ideas and ways to look at the world. Now the thing about an idea is that you can put it into practice straight away. If I say, 'have you ever considered looking at the world in this different way' that in a sense is a very practical thing as long as I put it clearly. I think I do write clearly and so in a sense I have given people a lot of practical mental tools which they can use. They are just mental tools but they can still be practical because they are ways of thinking that people can apply straight away.

What do you think of other occult celebrities other than yourself (e.g. Dee, Crowley, Spare, Bardon, La Vey, Hakim Bey, Carroll, etc.) and which have been most influential on you?

Well, I have a mind like a compost heap. I hear things, I pick up things. I read things - papers or even just book covers and things like that. A lot of it goes in and is apparently forgotten, yet re-emerges, like from a compost heap, in some new shape. It's not very easy to say where my ideas come from in many cases. In fact that is one of the factors of me tending to write under a pseudonym, because I'm wary of too strong a claim that 'this was my idea' and getting defensive about it and saying someone has pinched my idea and all that. I realise that there's this great slop of ideas that fly around like radio waves and that I'm tuning into certain ones and expressing them. On the other hand I have been very aware of two influences because I can see them very clearly. One is Crowley and the other is Spare. What I got from Crowley, I think, is a method. A lot of writers have written about things like the astral plane or the astral light in terms where they said there is this 'luminiferous ether' or something or other. Crowley didn't make the mistake of trying to explain how a thing worked. He would say 'I performed these actions and I noticed these results'. He described things in a very experimental way, and that's what appealed to me about Crowley and that is what I think I have continued. What I did not get from Crowley was a theory, because he was an explorer of ideas. On the other hand Spare, when I read his work I saw a theory of magic. The idea that we, our beliefs, shape the world we observe - a basic simple theory. I got that from Spare. I feel that I got an intellectual method from Crowley and a simple basic theory from Spare. Then there are a whole lot of other things that I got from other people that are not so easily traced. Also, I think that when it is my contemporaries, it's really nice to find people who are saying things that are in accord with your own ideas. It's also rather scary because you think 'god, perhaps that person is saying it better' and 'am I really necessary?' but it fits in with my general feeling of the way that ideas are flitting around in the ether and

you pick them up like radio waves. Different people tune into different things, different people get a clearer reception and so on. That's when people think I'm joking and 'channelling' Ramsey Dukes. In a sense I think I do because I pick up these ideas. Sometimes they surprise me. Among the names listed I see those where I say 'Hey, yes, I hear you. I know what you are talking about, I feel an affinity with you.' With past people like Dee, the same thing really. It's very exciting to find someone who centuries before, said something which just 'zing!' hits you like brand new, something which you've just been thinking about or haven't even thought of yet. I like that.

Why do you think that people are still drawn to mysticism and the occult when the terrain is so obviously dominated by frauds, wastrels and knaves?

Now that's a bit like saying why are people still interested in sex when obviously the sex industry is so full of corruption and sleaze. I think for some people there is actually a fascination in the sleaze, fraudery and trickery, which actually adds to the subject - sex is actually more intriguing because of the aura of sleaze about it. I'm not sure if that is so for me, but I think the occult too is something which you can be put off by the sleaze of it or actually you can find that as a rather intriguing element in it. One of the ideas I was putting forward in 'The Charlatan and the Magus' (in 'Blast...') was that maybe existence itself is sleazy, and that mankind's instinct always attempts to eliminate sleaze, which is as misguided as swallowing a load of antibiotics, which although they may kill the germ, they kill off certain other things in your gut which then has to recover; or as misguided as trying to make a clean compost heap by putting a lot of disinfectant on it which actually would stop the composting process. In other words, sleaze is itself inherent. The universe itself has a strong element of sleaze in it and it's part of the nourishment of life. We need to work on our own exaggerated concepts of hygiene.

'Thundersqueak', as well as being a particularly fine introduction to the practical side of the occult could also be regarded as one of the ur-texts of Kaos, if not the one that set the Kaos-sphere rolling. What were your intentions when writing 'Thundersqueak'?

I was most aware of quite personal things: it was like writers in me that I wanted to express. I had written SSOTBME, which was quite a cool, clear-cut look at concepts of magic and I felt there was something a little more confused that I wanted to express, that I couldn't quite nail down in the same way. I got round to expressing it by seeing it as a dialogue between two characters - Angerford and Lea. There's a bit of that in the book, I know where to look for it and I can see these two forces that were really just something I had to express. It was on my mind for quite a few years. Originally there was much more bitterness in it, but when I got round to writing it that had mellowed.

What is your relationship to the kaos elite, considering your participation in the [UKAOS] kaos conference? I don't have a close relationship with the chaos elite, as much because of geography as other things. I'm not very good at joining a movement and carrying it through. I don't know why. I'm aware of geographical separation being a problem. I don't like thrashing across the country to join things, to take part and then having to drive back again. At present I'm looking for something much more local. These are people that I like to consider as friends. I enjoy their company when I am with them. The reason I am not more closely involved has nothing to do with inner feelings, or that I am critical of them; it just seems to have happened that way.

How do you think Kaodoxy is likely to develop over the next few years?

This is a question that foxes me. Possibly its too close to home. I see a problem arising because we have moved into a time of public fascination with religion, which in a sense is the antithesis of the kaos spirit. I think there will be a call for something like ... 'a kaos religion' might be too blatant a way of putting it, but people will be wanting something crystallised, something solid to take the place of a religion - a kaos nation or something. I think this could be a bit of a crisis for the movement. I don't know quite how it would be handled. The presentation that I gave at the UKAOS conference was to do with this very problem. I did it by pushing in the same direction and saying, look here is a kaos religious service, can we learn from this? Can we learn to recognise the dangers and also see certain possibilities? Can we walk down this razor edge and survive?

There seems to be a tendency for Chaos to abandon the lengthy and rigorous training methodologies of Golden Dawn, OTO, shamanism etc. in favour of what are virtually just disposable slogans - which is fine for people like your good self who have already done the necessary work to justify such a philosophical standpoint but what about the newcomer who has no background experience or training? Doesn't this make the philosophy very attractive for the lazy, but possibly leave its bravado more than a little hollow in the long term?

I very much agree with the spirit of this question because - although my best contribution to the occult is liberation, liberating people's ideas, and things like that - I do, myself, recognise the need but actually enjoy the times when I get my nose down to a bit of really regular practical ritual or occult practice. Almost the best summer of my life was the summer of Abramelin the Mage - to be so focused on what was apparently quite a simple set of practices. One of the most rewarding magical experiences of my life was the slow and painstaking making of the magical implements - the disc, the sword, the cup and the wand, which was very difficult for me. It took a lot of concentration. I took about a year over each one from the beginning of the thinking about it - how I was going to do it - to actually making the thing in the end, but I found that really really satisfying and very rewarding. I think the reason that I joined the OTO... I realised that in a sense it was so formal it was quite the opposite of my own informal ways and yet that was the very reason to join it because I thought 'here I have got these freedom-loving ideas, if they can't survive in a formal structure then in a sense they don't deserve to survive. How far can I go into a structure and keep my own integrity?' What I learnt from the OTO was some very useful solid practice, that I would not have learned if I had not joined something as formal as that, something very down to earth. It was quite wholesome for me, for other people it could be just what they don't need. They might need to be liberated from rigid ideas. For me it was actually quite good to hang my own ideas on a rather rigid framework and see whether they could survive that experience.

Why do you think Chaos magic is more about making things happen than other forms of magic?

I was very much aware that when Pete's (Peter J. Carroll) book first came out, the previous current of magic was W.E. Butler inspired, where there was a lot of emphasis on psychological justification. It was possible to be into the occult, be into magic and really be practising a form of advanced psychotherapy on yourself. You believed in the gods as inner archetypes and so on and so forth. Now that was a very wholesome movement in a way, because it allowed magic to seep into the very materialistic world of the fifties where there was no room for magic. Psychology was the ground that it could survive on, but the danger of that tendency was that magic became 'nothing but' psychology - that the ritual you were doing was simply to activate your archetypes. People lost that outer thing that maybe we can really change the world because they had seen it so much in psychological terms. In a sense in SSOTBME I was trying to turn that tide by saying 'look: our beliefs actually shape this world' - Austin Osman Spare's point. What might seem to be mere psychology actually could be real magic. I feel that Pete really took this up by turning the thing back to an area that had almost been discredited and that was 'let's try and do spells chaps, and make things happen'. That theme came back in a big way with chaos magic and I thought that was a healthy thing.

Results Mysticism by Steve Wilson

There has always been a dislike within Chaos Magic for the very word 'Mysticism'; it's almost as verboten as the word 'Religion'. Historically this makes a lot of sense. When Results Magic, as the Chaos variety was originally known, made its debut in the late '70s, most of what was masquerading as Magic was really Mysticism in disguise. Our founding fathers, blessed be their names, realised that this was bad Magic and developed the new systems accordingly. It's worth noting that this is also very bad Mysticism.

The problem with the pre-Chaotic systems was that they had no clear result in mind, and those existing members of the Jurassic tendency still carry out their tedious rites, getting awfully excited at the fact that they feel slightly different after an hour and a half of chanting and striding about in rooms filled with incense. Large numbers of them consider that contact with deities consists of closing your eyes, imagining

the deities are talking to you and then telling everyone that you are 'properly contacted' and that the hideous Chaos Magicians are 'tampering with forces they don't understand'.

True Mysticism is very different. There are two different things that classify as Mysticism proper, but one can be dismissed immediately. This is the volumes and volumes of outpourings by people who have had Mystical experiences and who rattle on about the wonders of nature or God or Goddess. Their experiences may well have been genuine, but reading this stuff is as boring as listening to other people's dreams or acid trips. Of course, it often IS other people's dreams or acid trips. Or mushrooms. In extreme cases this stuff is often squeezed into things masquerading as poetry by pagans who seem unaware that their material may yet inspire the return of the death penalty.

Pre-Chaotic traditions will often stress that Mysticism should be practiced for its own sake, but this is nonsense. Mysticism involves a simultaneous removal of everyday, human consciousness and contact with a deity. The fact that this is often defined as 'removing the Ego' scares a lot of real Mach Chaos Magicians, who seem to identify their Ego with their Selves. It is the passive Mysticism of the past that causes such fears, when deities of the Father God paradigm would be invited into the minds of monks and nuns who had been whipped and gashed into endorphin stupors. Nevertheless, even then this was what they wanted to do. The union that they achieved was their result, it was no more for its own sake than the ecstasies of Sufism or Tantra.

In modern terms, it is possible to gauge the results of mystical practice just as with Magic. The enjoyment itself is a result, but now that we have rid ourselves of the uniform monotheistic paradigms we can and should expect results in our everyday lives to stem from Mystical work. take, for example, the Goddess Hathor. Associated with her are love and prosperity, derived from the milk that she gives to her young and the association of cattle with wealth in most ancient cultures. In Results Mystical work, the ordinary personality is disintegrated by aussalting it from beneath. The part of you that is hungry for Hathor should not be the intellect, but the primal instincts for sex and wealth that are normally diverted into conventional thinking about chat-up lines and interview tactics. Successful blending with Hathor will produce good results in everyday life, improved finances and sex-life, but much to the annoyance of those magicians addicted to pain and work ethics the actual process itself is highly enjoyable. When inner, deep urges are met by an onrush of extra-human intelligence the meld is as joyful as any orgasm, and can continue for hours with weeks of afterglow.

It follows that the act of devotion in Results Mysticism is anything but gentle. You should howl for your deity, weep, scream, tear at your hair. Let unrequited desire rip through the straight-jacket of everyday normal behaviour. Do not restrict your demands, a God of Wisdom should give you all wisdom, a Goddess of Love all possible satisfaction. If the trance is too deep and the contact strong, watch for the results afterwards, and if they fail to materialise do not abandon the deity. Demand its return, curse and berate, threaten never to repeat the work. This is a fairly good attitude, if a Lord Thy God can be a Jealous God, he can at least have the decency to shower presents on his lover.

When contact is successful and results good, enter into a deep personal relationship. Build a shrine separate from any area for working Magic, decorate it with images and idols of the deity. Choose good incenses and luxuriant cloth. Above all, perform Puja. This all encompassing Sanskrit term refer to any act at all that reaffirms the link between yourself and a deity. Bow, yes bow, as you pass the shrine, light incense sticks even if you're off to watch the telly. When any incident that you are involved in or witness is relevant to that deity, whisper his/her name and remember the image. Shout out that name at the point of orgasm, and leave it until later to explain to your partner. If there was a partner. if your partner is less than happy, inform your deity that you will in future invoke with the phrase "God you're huge" or "Take it all, you divine sex-slut", and there will be no more complaints.

Possibly.

This doesn't mean becoming monotheistic, a Love Goddess can no more complain at your working with a Money God than an earthly lover can complain about you having a job. Especially if you shower her with presents on wages day. And sexy underwear. if you haven't enough room for a lot of shrines, use just one and keep relevant cloth, images, etc, assigning particular days or times of day for each deity.

Such Mystical contact is deeply personal. A good relationship with various deities is enormously rewarding on many levels. It will fill you with joy, zest and laughter, but please, don't write me any poems about it.

Rips to the Edge

by Phil Hine

1981... walk forwards onto a knife-point and a voice in my ear says "Better that you should fall onto this blade than have doubt"... and in the background, the clash of gongs. The next day. A cold voice on the telephone "we've made a mistake. The Elders say that you should never have been initiated. You shouldn't be doing magic at all. It'll drive you mad if you don't stop."

So I ran away to collect myself. A pause for breath whilst I figured out what my life was for.

1982 ...then came the loudest, longest CLICK in the world. Then silence, shattered by Avrim's crazy laugh "You're lucky, English. You got a dud shell in the chamber." Carefully, I placed the revolver, a 1913 Webley, on the floor. I reached across miles of table and tasted my first sip of beer. Israeli Nesher beer. Gaseous, it burst across my tongue and I felt each bubble pop like it went on forever.

Much has been written over the last few years or so concerning the initiatory death/rebirth experience. From anthropology to New Age Shamans to Rebirthing to Stanislav Grof. Crowley unwound his mystic visions into purple prose, the Beats documented their trips to the edge, and Joseph Campbell plotted the Heroes' Journey. But does it always help, I wonder, this weight of information about other people's descents into darkness? It's good to know that there are archetypes, present in the Fool's Journey in the Tarot or Coppola's *Apocalypse Now!* But the pattern is too clear, seen through the eyes of another. What they don't tell you is that the hand of Chaos is only a breath away.

Dictionary definitions of initiation allude to the act of beginning, or setting in motion, or entry into something. One way to explain initiation is to say that it is a threshold of change which we may experience at different times in our lives, as we grow and develop. The key to initiation is recognising that we have reached such a turning point, and are aware of being in a period of transition between our past and our future. The conscious awareness of entering a transitional state allows us to, perhaps, discard behavioural/emotional patterns which will be no longer valid for the 'new' circumstances, and consciously take up new ones. What books often fail to emphasise is that initiation is a *process*. It doesn't happen just once, but can occur many times throughout an individual's life, and that it has peaks (initiatory crises), troughs (black depression or the 'dark night of the soul') and plateaus (where nothing much seems to be going on). Becoming aware of your own cycles of change, and how to weather them, is a core part of any developmental process or approach to magical practice.

In 'shamanic' societies the first stage of the initiation process is often marked by a period of personal crisis and a 'call' towards starting the shamanic journey. Most of us are quite happy to remain within the conceptual and philosophical boundaries of 'Consensus Reality' (the everyday world). For an individual beginning on the initiatory journey, the crisis may come as a powerful vision, dreams, or a deep (and often disturbing) feeling to find out what is beyond the limits of normal life. It can often come as a result of a powerful spiritual, religious or political experience, or as a growing existential discontent with life. Our sense of being a stable self is reinforced by the "walls" of the social world in which we participate—yet our sense of uniqueness resides in the cracks of those same walls. Initiation is a process which takes us "over the wall" into the unexplored territories of the possibilities which we have only half-glimpsed. All it takes is one rent in the fabric for pandemonium to sluice through.
William Burroughs, 'Apocalypse'

This first crisis is often an unpleasant experience, as we begin to question and become dissatisfied with all that we have previously held dear—work, relationships, ethical values, family life can all be disrupted as the individual becomes increasingly consumed by the desire to 'journey'. The internal summons may be consciously quashed or resisted, and it is not unknown for individuals in tribal societies to refuse 'the call' to shamanic training—no small thing, as it may lead to further crises and even death.

One very common experience of people who feel the summons in our society is an overpowering sense of urgency to either become 'enlightened' or to change the world in accordance with emerging visions. This

can lead to people becoming 'addicted' to spiritual paths, wherein the energy that may have been formerly channelled into work or relationships is directed towards taking up spiritual practices and becoming immersed in 'spiritual' belief systems. The 'newly awakened' individual can be (unintentionally) as boring and tiresome as anyone who has seized on a messianic belief system, whether it be politics, religion, or spirituality. It is often difficult, at this stage in the cycle, to understand the reaction of family, friends and others who may not be sympathetic to one's new-found direction or changes in lifestyle. Often, some of the more dubious cults such as the Moonies take advantage of this stage by convincing young converts that "true friends" etc., would not hinder them in taking up their new life, and that anyone who does not approve, is therefore not a 'true friend'. There are a wide variety of cults which do well in terms of converts from young people who are in a period of transition (such as when leaving home for the first time) and who are attracted to a belief/value system that assuages their uncertainties about the world.

Another of the problems often experienced by those feeling the summons to journey is a terrible sense of isolation or alienation from one's fellows—the inevitable result of moving to the edge of one's culture. Thus excitement at the adventure is often tinged with regret and loss of stability or unconscious participation with one's former world. Once you have begun the process of disentanglement from the everyday world, it is hard not to feel a certain nostalgia for the lost former life in which everything was (seemingly) clear-cut and stable, with no ambiguities or uncertainties.

A common response to the summons to departure is the journey into the wilderness—of moving away from one's fellows and the stability of consensus reality. A proto-shaman is likely to physically journey into the wilderness, away from the security of tribal reality, and though this is possible for some Westerners, the constraints of modern living usually mean that for us, this wandering in the waste is enacted on the plane of ideas, values and beliefs, wherein we look deeply within and around ourselves and question everything, perhaps drawing away from social relations as well. Deliberate isolation from one's fellows is a powerful way of loosening the sense of having fixed values and beliefs, and social deprivation mechanisms turn up in a wide variety of magical cultures.

The Initiatory Sickness

In shamanic cultures, the summons to journey is often heralded by a so-called 'initiatory sickness', which can either come upon an individual suddenly, or creep slowly upon them as a progressive behavioural change. Western observers have labelled this state as a form of 'divine madness', or evidence of psychopathology. In the past, anthropologists & psychologists have labelled shamans as schizophrenic, psychotic, or epileptic. More recently, western enthusiasts of shamanism (and anti-psychiatry) have reversed this process of labelling and asserted that people labelled as schizophrenic, psychotic or epileptic are proto-shamans. Current trends in the study of shamanism now recognise the former position to be ethnocentric—the researchers have been judging shamanic behaviour by western standards. The onset of initiatory sickness in tribal culture is recognised as a difficult, but potentially useful developmental process. Part of the problem here is that western philosophy has developed the idea of 'ordinary consciousness', of which anything beyond this range is pathological, be it shamanic, mystical or drug-induced. Fortunately for us, this narrow view is being rapidly undermined.

Individuals undergoing the initiatory sickness do sometimes appear to suffer from fits and 'strange' behaviour, but there is an increasing recognition that it is a mistake to sweepingly attach western psychiatric labels onto them (so that they can be explained away). Shamans may go through a period of readjustment, but research shows that they tend to become the most healthy people in their tribes, functioning very well as leaders and healers.

Transitional states showing similar features to the initiatory sickness have been identified in other cultures' mystical and magical practices, which western researchers are beginning to study, as practices from other cultures gain popularity in the west.

Now for the 'Confrontation' phase of the Initiation Process, which is characterised by mythic themes such as the descent into the Underworld, battles with monsters, and the whale's belly. This is the stage of psychic dismemberment which culminates in the experience of ego-death and, in some cases, the real possibility of physical death.

Many world myths feature the descent into the Underworld as a central theme for transformation and the quest for power & mastery of self. The recognition of the necessity of 'rites of passage' is played out both in tribal societies where the death of childhood and the rebirth into adulthood is marked by a rite of passing, and in Western magical and religious societies where 'followers' are reborn into a new self.

Death by dismemberment is a strongly recurrent theme in shamanic cultures, where proto-shamans are stripped of their flesh and torn apart by spirits, only to be remade anew, usually with some additional part, such as an extra bone, organ, or crystal as an indication that they are now something 'more' than previously. In some cultures (such as in the Tibetan Tantric Chöd ritual), the dismemberment experience is a voluntary meditation, whereas in others, it is an involuntary (though understood) experience. This kind of transition is not uncommon in Western approaches to magical development, both as a willed technique and as a (seemingly) spontaneous experience that results from working within a particular belief-system. I have, for example, been burnt alive in the pyre of Kali, and more recently, had an eye ripped out by the Morrigan. Periodic descents into the Underworld are a necessary phase in the cycle of personal development, and are also associated with depth psychotherapy.

According to the Western Esoteric Tradition, one of the key stages of initiatory confrontation is the encounter with 'The Dweller on the Threshold'. Less prosaically, this phrase refers to the experience of our understanding of the gulf between the ego's fiction of itself and our selves as we truly are. This necessitates acceptance of our short-comings, blind spots and personal weaknesses as aspects of ourselves that we must take responsibility for. The recognition that we are, ultimately, responsible for all aspects of ourselves, especially those bits which we are loath to admit to ourselves, is a step that must be taken if the initiatory journey is to proceed. It is not uncommon for people to remain at this stage for years, or to come back to it, time and time again. Such ordeals must be worked through, or they will return to 'haunt' us until they are tackled, else they will become 'obsessional complexes' (demons) that will grow until they have power over us. There are a myriad of techniques—both magical exercises and psychotherapeutic tools—which can be actively used to examine these complexes, but the core of this ordeal is the beginnings of seeing yourself. In shamanic cultures, physical isolation from the tribe is often reinforced by physical ordeals such as fasting, sleep deprivation, and exposure to rigours of heat or cold—all powerful techniques for producing altered states of consciousness.

The initiatory cycle can be likened to a snake sloughing off its skin. So too, we must be prepared to slough off old patterns of thought, belief (about ourselves and the world) and behaviour that are no longer appropriate for the new phase of our development. As we reach the initiatory stage of descent into the underworld, so we are descending into the Deep Mind, learning to rely on our own intuition about what is right for us, rather than what we have been told is correct. As the initiatory process becomes more and more intense, we reach a point where we have (to varying degrees) isolated ourselves from the Social World, (physically or mentally), and begun to dismember the layers of our Personal World, so that the Mythic World becomes paramount in our consciousness, perhaps in an intensely 'real' way that it has not been beforehand. When we open up the floodgates of the Mythic World, we may find that our Deep Mind 'speaks' to us using what psychologists call 'autosymbolic images'; that is, symbols which reflect the churning within us. These may well be entities or spirits from magical or religious belief systems that we have consciously assimilated, or they may arise 'spontaneously' from the Deep Mind.

These 'entities' (whatever their source) may become the first of our 'allies' or guides through the inner worlds that we have descended into. Accounts of shamanic initiation often recount the neo-shaman being 'tested' in various ways by spirit guides and helpers, and, if she or he pass the testing, they become allies that the shaman can call upon, on returning from the underworld. Not all spirits met whilst undergoing the underworld experience will be automatically helpful or benign, and some will try and mislead or misdirect you with their information. In this kind of instance you will need to rely even more on your own 'truthsense' or discrimination. Ghosts are notoriously capricious, and an 'elder brother' once told me to 'be wary of spirits which herald a false dawn under the dark moon'. Particular 'misguides' to watch out for are the spirits who will tell you that you are 'mystically illuminated' beyond a point that anyone else has reached—they are 'parts' of the ego attempting to save itself from destruction. You may have to 'overcome' some of these spirits—not so much by defeating them in astral combat, but by recognising that they have no power over you—that you understand their seductions and will not be swayed by them. The danger here hearkens back

to the necessity of attempting to shed light on as many of your buried complexes as possible—'misguide' spirits will attempt to seduce you into feeding those complexes so that you become caught up in them. Spirit guides and helpers usually come in a variety of form and shape. Their messages may not always be obvious, and may only become clear with hindsight—but then you cannot expect everything to be handed to you on a plate. It is not unknown for spirit guides to put the initiate through a pretty rough time, again to test their 'strength', as it were. Powerful spirits don't tend to 'like' shamans who won't take chances or face difficulties and overcome them. This is a hard time to get through, but if you keep your wits about you and hang on in there, then the rewards are worth it. Guides will often show you 'secret routes' through the underworld, and 'places of power' there which you can access at a later point. Some Amerind shamanic traditions involve the shaman descending into the underworld periodically to learn the names of spirits which, when brought out again, can be placed in masks or other ritual objects.

Another benefit of the 'ordeals' stage is Innerworld Mapping—obtaining (or verifying) a symbolic plan of the connecting worlds that form the universe. Western occulture gives us conscious access to a wide variety of universal route maps, the Tree of Life that appears in many esoteric systems being just one well-known example. Western-derived maps seem to have a tendency to become very complicated very quickly—perhaps this reflects a cultural tendency to try and label everything neatly away. The interesting (and intriguing) thing about using innerworld maps is that you can metaprogram your Deep Mind to accept a number of different maps, and images & symbols will arise accordingly. Our 'tradition' for receiving innerworld maps (and indeed, any other esoteric teaching) is largely through the written word, rather than oral teaching or the psychoactively-inspired communion with the tribal meme-pool which are the most common routes for shamans. But it is worth remembering that all the different innerworld maps had to come from somewhere, and the most likely source would seem to be the initiatory ordeals of very early shamans, which eventually became condensed into very definite structures.

Death and Rebirth

The 'peak' of the initiation experience is that of death/rebirth, and subsequent 'illumination'. That such an experience is common to all mystery religions, magical systems and many secular movements indicates that it may well be one of the essential manifestations of the process of change within the human psyche. Illumination is the much-desired goal for which many thousands of people world-wide have employed different psychotechnologies, and developed their own psychocosms. Illumination has also been linked with the use of LSD & similar drugs, and perhaps most mysteriously of all, it can occur seemingly spontaneously, to people who have no knowledge or expectation of it.

What characterises an experience of illumination? Nona Coxhead, a researcher into "Bliss states" lists some of the prevalent factors as:

1. unity—a fading of the self-other divide
2. transcendence of space & time as barriers to experience
3. positive sensations
4. a sense of the numinous
5. a sense of certitude—the "realness" of the experience
6. paradoxical insights
7. transience—the experience does not last
8. resultant change in attitude and behaviour

In neurological terms, such experiences represent a reorganising of activity in the brain as a whole system. The loss of ego boundary and involvement of all senses suggests that the Reticular Formation is being influenced so that the brain processes which normally convey a sense of being rooted in spacetime are momentarily inhibited. The "floating" sensation often associated with astral projection and other such phenomena suggest that the Limbic system of the brain (which processes proprioceptive information about the body's location in space) is also acting in an unusual mode.

What are the fruits of this experience—the insights, perceptions and messages brought back down to earth by the illuminee? Evolution of consciousness, by such means, could well be an important survival program—a way of going beyond the information given—a way of learning how to modify the human biosystem via the environment. Ilya Prigogine's theory of "dissipative structures" shows how the very

instability of open systems allows them to be self-transforming. The basis of this idea is that the movement of energy through a system causes fluctuations within it. These fluctuations, if they reach a critical level (i.e. a catastrophe cusp point) develop novel interactions, until a new whole is produced. The system then reorganises itself into a new "higher order" which is more integrated than the previous system, and requires a greater amount of energy to maintain itself, and is further disposed to future transformation. This can equally apply to neurological evolution, using a psychotechnology (ancient or modern) as the tool for change. The core stages of the process appear to be:

1. Change
2. Crisis
3. Transcendence
4. Transformation
5. predisposition to further change

Also, the term 'illumination' is itself significant. Visions of light that suddenly burst forth upon the individual are well documented from a wide variety of sources, from shamanic travellers to St. Paul; acid trippers to people who seemingly have the experience spontaneously.

Likewise, the experience of being 'born-again' is central to shamanism, religions and magical systems. One's old self dies, and a new one is reborn from the shattered patterns and perceptions. This is well understood in cultures where there is a single predominant Mythic reality. Death-rebirth is the key to shamanic development, and many shamanic cultures interpret the experience quite literally, rather than metaphorically.

Western psychologists are only just beginning to understand the benefits of such an experience. What is clear, is that for many people who undergo it, the experience is unsettling and disturbing, especially when there is no dominant cultural backdrop with which to explain or understand the process. A good example to look at (which always raises hackles in some quarters) is the LSD death-rebirth experience. Some western 'authorities' on spiritual practice hold that drug-induced experiences are somehow not as valid as one triggered by 'spiritual' practices. Fortunately, this somewhat blinkered view is receding as more information about the role played by psychoactive substances in shamanic training is brought to light. The positive benefits of LSD have been widely proclaimed by people as diverse as Aldous Huxley, Timothy Leary, and Stanislav Grof, all of whom stressed that acid should be used in 'controlled conditions', rather than, as is so often the case today, indiscriminately.

What must be borne in mind about LSD (like other psychoactives) is that its actions and effects are highly dependent on individual beliefs and expectations, and social conditioning. Dropping acid can lead to lasting change and transformation in a positive sense; equally, it can lead to individuals uncritically accepting a set of beliefs and patterns that effectively wall them off from further transformations—witness the number of burnt-out acidheads who become 'Born -Again' evangelicals, for instance. It's not so much the experience itself, but how individuals assimilate it in terms of cultural expectations.

As an example of how this process operates, contrast a proto-shaman against a member of a post-modern, industrial culture such as our own. The proto-shaman undergoes death-rebirth, and, following illumination, is reborn into the role of the practising shaman, with all its subsequent status affiliations and expectations. Would that it were that simple for Westerners! Ours is a much more complex set of social relations than the tribal environment. Though one might be tempted to think of oneself as a shaman-in-the-making, it's a safe bet that not everyone else is going to accede that role to you. It's tempting, and entirely understandable, to think: "Right, that's it. I'm 'illuminated' now—I've been there, done it, etc.", and sit back on one's laurels, as it were. While for some of us, one death-rebirth experience alone is enough to jolt us into a new stage of development, it's more often the case that what we do afterwards is critically important. Zero states of having 'made it' are very seductive, but our conditioning patterns are insidious—creeping back into the psyche whilst our minds are occupied elsewhere. The price of transformation is eternal vigilance. Vigilance against being lulled back into conditioned beliefs and emotional/mental patterns that we think we have 'overcome'. Illumination may well be a 'peak' in our development, but it isn't the end point by any means. Those undergoing the initiation cycle in the West tend to find that many periodic death-rebirth experiences are necessary, as we reshuffle different 'bits' of the psyche with each occurrence. Yet the death-rebirth experience can bring about lasting benefits, including alleviation of a wide variety of emotional, interpersonal, and psychosomatic problems that hitherto have resisted orthodox treatment regimes. I would

postulate that the death-rebirth experience is an essential form of adaptive learning, as it is a powerful process of widening our perspectives on life, our perceptions of the world, and of each other. The illuminatory insight moves us toward a Holotropic perspective (i.e. of moving towards a whole) whereby new insight about self in relation to the universe, and how ideas and concepts synthesize together, can be startlingly perceived. At this kind of turning point in our lives, we can go beyond what we already know and begin to manifest new concepts and constructs. We are all capable of the vision—what we do to realise that vision is equally, in our hands.

Rites that go wrong

by Phil Hine

I am indebted to the indomitable Reg for suggesting the subject of tonight's talk. Magicians are all too eager to hold forth about the rituals that work - the superb invocations, the powerful evocations and the money-working spell after which you find a tenner lying in the street. But what about the rituals that don't come off as planned - the invocations when the deity doesn't manifest, the Results Magick that doesn't come up with the goods, and the workings which leave you with a sense of 'was that it?' Tonight I'll be looking at some of the magical 'wobbles' that I've experienced, and discussing how they changed my life - or perhaps didn't, and some 'wrongs' that have occurred to colleagues. On rereading, it looks like yet another Hine excuse for multiple anecdotes, but what the hell, eh?

Why Rituals don't Work

Reading Pete Carroll's mathematical exegesis of magic, I sometimes get the impression that if a ritual goes wrong, it's because someone got a decimal point wrong somewhere. The explanations that we often use to describe how magick works - you know, morphic fields, Butterflies flapping their wings, and so forth, are all very well, but reading them, I often get the impression that magick shouldn't, all things considered, miss the mark. In some circles, occultists fall back on the argument of 'ah well, the tides were against that particular working' or 'it wasn't my Karma for that spell to work' - spot the cop-out clause? Under these arguments - if your rite works, then its 'ego-stroking-time', if it didn't, then it's the fault of some cosmic agency.

And anyway, what do I mean when I say 'Rites that go Wrong'? In the case of Results Magick (Sorcery) this would refer to spells to bring about a specific condition that haven't manifested yet. In which case I might argue my way out of that one and say that 'the Universe is still working to manifest that one' - i.e. The cheque's in the post. For Invocations, 'going wrong' might be when the deity being summoned fails to turn up. Well, I'll go into that one in a while. Of course, a lot of magick doesn't require hardcore results - subtle stuff like personal development & so forth, where you can only judge the 'results' over time.

Results Magick

Results Magick or Sorcery is concerned with bringing about specific changes in your conditions. One of the simplest approaches to Sorcery is using Sigils. The important thing about Sigils, I would stress, is getting your intent as precise as possible - vague 'wishing' tends to give rise to vague results, in my experience. However, there are other factors to bear in mind as well.

Right then.

Sex.

Hands up everyone who's ever done a sigil to get laid.
Me too.

Works doesn't it? Well, most of the time.

A while ago, I did a TOPY sigil with the intended result of bringing about a much-desired sexual fantasy, and no, I'm not telling you the details. Needless to say, it hasn't worked ... yet. And for what it's worth, I'll treat you to my own reasoning behind this. A core part of the sigilisation process is allowing the desire to become latent - that is, you don't allow it to resurface into consciousness. Seeing as the sigil was for an extremely powerful desire - an obsession, even. I'm probably too bound up with that particular scenario to let it become 'latent' and so manifest. To do so, I'd probably have to rework some of my lust-complexes. If I did, and then the opportunity arose to 'manifest' the result. I might no longer be interested. Then again...

A 'traditional' magical line is that you shouldn't place too much strain on the Universe. There is the old adage of a magician who does a spell for money and waits for the multiverse (like Santa) to provide. He doesn't do anything to 'help' the desire manifest, and so his result manifests by him getting insurance compensation after tripping over a loose stair carpet in the dole office and breaking both legs. A successful result, but not in the way he expected it. Which if nothing else shows that the Multiverse has a slappy sense of humour.

Invocations

I've often been at group rituals where the deity being called upon descends, not into the chosen priestess or priest, but into someone else. This can be embarrassing for all concerned, especially as in most of the rites where I've seen this occur, the whole thing as gone ahead as normal, whilst one of the celebrants is standing/sitting there totally zapped. Only afterwards do you get the mutters of 'Kali was in me, not so-and-so', etc. The other point to mention is that after an invocation, not all entities will obligingly go away. Some refuse point-blank, and have to be cajoled, threatened, or plied with alcohol. This isn't so much 'failure' though, as an unexpected level of success. Magicians should beware the unexpected. A friend of mine once did some conjurations of 'Dark Gods' in his flat. Good Chaos Magician that he was, he banished with laughter. However, 'something' was still around and whatever it was, it literally kicked him out of bed....Laugh that one off.

York, 1985 and I was performing an invocation of Baphomet with the High Priestess of the coven I was then half-in. Again, 'something' in the room objected. Whatever it was pulled a heavy poster off the wall - it didn't just slide off, oh no, it looked for all the world like someone was peeling it back from the wall, at a right angle. After that went, my stereo speaker plinth started rocking. We took the hint, banished, and went down the pub.

Group Magic

I don't like working magic with people who I have nagging doubts about - or simply don't like them for very clear reasons. Why I've set this rule up goes back to an incident in 1986. I was in a group, and a big meeting was planned - lotsa people coming in that were 'invited' specially because of the 'importance' of this working. Two of the people who came down for the do spent the whole time bickering with each other, and generally bringing a bad vibe (man) to the whole thing. I was pissed off, and would have much preferred not to have taken part. Couldn't back out tho', as I was playing a key role in the ritual. So I went ahead with it. I forget what other people thought but I came out of that temple thinking 'yecch' and just wanting to get out of the place. Since it was 3am, I was stuck there, so I went into a spare bedroom, laid me down, and decided to go for a bit of an astral wander. Like you do.

Whilst I was happily floating round the Tree of Life, 'somebody' else came in and decided that I was under astral attack by demons, as well you might if you come across someone lying peacefully on the floor. If you've ever been forcibly dragged out of a deep trance to find a large person sitting on you, wielding an athame and shouting 'out vile spirit', you'll know what it was like for me. Not a happy pixie. I declined to take part in the next day's working and departed, thinking "never again". Wait for it though. Here's the best bit. As British Rail whisked me back to the relative sanity of York, the people I'd been working with were en route to their next working. Somebody got a flash message from the astral guardians and, while I'm sitting on the train drinking Newcastle Brown and thinking of taking out a subscription to New Scientist, my astral body is under attack (again!) and the group have pulled over onto the hard shoulder, linked hands, and are battling for my soul. On returning home, I sought the advice of an elder colleague, who agreed that the whole thing had been a cock-up and that my best route was to steer clear of "daft buggers" in future. Advice which I have, with one or two exceptions, mostly followed. The result of this particular shebang was that I left that particular group and soon after, joined another one, with an accordant change of magical direction. And a conviction never to do any serious kind of magick with people I didn't trust.

Sometimes, I have thought that a ritual had gone wrong, when in fact it hadn't. Two illustrations spring to mind here. The first is when a colleague and I attempted to get through to the wizard Amalantrah - one of A.C.'s inner-plane contacts. We were setting up a new magical group at the time (Dark Star), and, flying in the face of discussions in the 'zines about HGA's etc, decided to have an 'inner-planes adept' or two heading

the Order. I recall the rite fondly, as a circle of fairy lights and a chocolate easter egg were part of the temple props. To cut a long story short, we got through to old whatzis-face, but he wasn't interested in sponsoring our temple, as it were.

Second one is an invocation of Thoth. Again, during an attack of Thelema. The whole thing went smoothly, except Thoth didn't manifest in any discernable way - no 'inner voices', no visions, nowt. What a let down etc. Except the next night, I was asked to do a tarot reading using the Thoth deck. It went on and on - for about five hours, and I realised that I had a lot of realisations about the cards etc. Again - the unexpected. Talking about 'unexpected results' there's Er is to consider. She's got one helluva an odd sense of humour. We did a working once on behalf of someone with Eris as the powering current. The rite worked for that person, only they got a whole heap of shit with their result to work through as well. As for me; the following day, I locked myself out of my top-floor flat - necessitating a climb over the roof (it was raining) to get back in; my computer monitor suddenly 'died' on me, and a condom split, necessitating a few days of anxiety for myself and the other person concerned. Hail Eris!

Nowadays I tend to more-or-less hold the belief that if I do a working, it's going-to-bloody-well-work! Having said that, I'm careful to only attempt things which have a good chance of coming off - not straining the fabric of the wosname too much.

I can recall, many years ago, doing a pentagram ritual and thinking "oh shit - I just did all the pentagrams wrong - and, like, nothing noticed." And if they did, I haven't been stitched up by something nasty - yet. In the first proper group I was in, I was brought up to believe that if you crossed a ritual circle once it was set up, then it gave you a nasty turn. Consequently I was somewhat taken aback when I was visiting another group one time, and they were in and out of the circle like yo-yos. Still, I suppose it was good practice in disciplining people to do their wee-wees before the ritual and not halfway through the invocations ... mind you, for some people that is their idea of ritual.

But this isn't answering the question of why do Rites Go Wrong? I think Group Dynamics, or perhaps, the lack of awareness of, can explain some occult gaffs. A typical example is the instance where no one really knows what they're doing but is either too nervous to voice this, nor to they wish to look a prat in front of their colleagues. To maintain magi-cred, it's not usually considered good form to say "er, I don't understand why we're doing this bit". Mind you, if it turns out that nobody else does, then this could mean trouble all round.

Not Having the Right Attitude

Not having the rite attitude is probably responsible for a few gaffs. There was this time we did a Mercury ritual. Tricky bastard, Mercury is. (Mind you, aren't they all?) There was this couple - not taking it seriously - probably still hoping that after this ritual there would be an orgy after all. Everyone else got their desire manifested. They got their house broken into. So what's the 'right attitude?' Difficult to define, but I think playful seriousness probably sums it up for me. Get too serious and you tend to get pompous. Get too playful and you'll get on other people's nerves - possibly including the entities you're working with.

Not Bothering to Banish

Not bothering to Banish is always good for a few sticky moments. Okay, there are times when you don't have to banish anyway, but you need to develop a sense for this, and I have met numerous people who have started off by saying that they 'never bother with banishing' and have gone off their heads. One acquaintance burnt all his magical books, cut a pentagram into his chest and was last seen being held down by burly nurses.

This is a good point to mention Loonies. Yes, we've probably all met magical Loonies. The scene is full of them. The 'Maguses', reincarnations of Aleister Crowley, people who have astral battles with imaginary black lodges, and the ones who think they're gods. In my book, going Loony is a magical mistake. Well, it's supposed to make you a better person, isn't it? So if you end up boring people stupid then you've done a whoopsy somewhere. Simple guideline: if you go Loony and pull out of it, then it was an 'initiation'. If you stay a Loony then it was a mistake. You might think that you've crossed the abyss, kicked the crap out of Satan and discovered a whole new set of initiation titles for yourself, but if everyone else thinks you're a prat, then its tough shit. It's easy to do your head in with magick. If you consistently invoke the same deity, it's quite likely that you'll end up obsessed by that deity. Sure, invoke often, but variety please. One of the

Leeds magia a few years ago did too many invocations of Pan and was last heard of wandering around Newcastle city centre displaying a proud erection and declaiming himself to be the personification of the male principle and where was his Priestess? What he did get was a manifestation of spirits clad in blue..

Over-Confidence

With magick, it pays to have a certain amount of confidence - if you're not sure what you're doing, I think that this can sometimes lead to a working going awry. But with confidence, you can have too much of a good thing. If you're totally confident about how something's going to work out, then you're less likely to adapt quickly if something doesn't happen as you think it should.

1981 and I am part of a group watching a Priestess go into trance. Lie still, relax, mumble mumble. Fine. Nothing we didn't expect. Suddenly she starts twisting and groaning and generally doing things that we thought weren't supposed to happen. So somebody sprinkles holy water on her. Someone else draws a pentagram over her - she gets worse. By this time people are panicking and who's going to volunteer to go out and ring an ambulance? General consternation, what do we do etc and eventually she comes back and is not pleased. Didn't we know that she was fighting a demon and our well-meaning efforts were getting in the way? minus 10 million points of karma and stand in the corner of the temple 'til you've memorised all of the laws of Witchcraft.

Likewise, what do you do when someone won't come out of trance? Leave them to it? Call their name gently? Tickle their feet? Throw a bucket of water over them or slap 'em round the chops? Books on how-to-do magick don't tend to mention this sort of occurrence - you give the license to depart and off goes the entity back to wherever-it-was they manifested from. You hope.

Sometimes rituals go wrong because something that sounded okay during the planning didn't actually come out right when being done. Some friends of mine planned to do an Odinic working. I forget the details, but it involved hanging someone in a tree. The arrangement of ropes did something horrible to the volunteers's circulation and he had to be taken down. That particular rite was aborted.

Similarly, the problem with becoming over-reliant on other people's ritual scripts is that it's hard to improvise if you're not used to it. One group I was in was on one occasion doing that old Wiccan favourite 'The Descent of the Goddess into the High Priestess'. After which the Priestess would declaim the Charge of the Goddess - that was the plan anyway. However, after stumbling over the first two lines, the next thing we heard was "oh shit, I've forgotten the rest" followed by a fit of giggles. Okay, we all forget our 'lines' now and again, but if you can't improvise in such moments, then it can lead to a sudden 'deflation' of any ritual atmosphere that's been carefully built up.

Being Wet

I think a key point about doing ritual is that if you're going to do it, do it with a bit of jazz - style. Imagine you're an actor on stage and put a bit of life into. You may not believe that the Gods you're invoking are real - but you were up on some lofty spiritual plane, would you bother dragging yourself all the way down to the lower astral for some drip who erred, ummed, and declared the invocation with about as much enthusiasm as Robert Maxwell answering back to the tax inspector? And call those pentagrams...? Magick works very much on the principle of nothing in, nothing out. If you can at least act as though you're summoning up powerful forces from beyond space and time, you might get somewhere. If you're into ritual at all then it's quite likely that, somewhere amongst your legion of selves, there's a drama queen screaming for recognition. So be flamboyant. Put on a good show and the gods will reward you, give good reviews, come back for more and tell their friends about you.

And this brings up something else. Asking gods to do things for you. This can be tricky. Asking Kali to blat the guy in the next flat who plays his stereo too loud when you're trying to meditate is a bit like using a tac-nuke to swat a fly with. It is said by some that gods have a different sense of time than we do and our sense of 'now' is a lot different to theirs. I got the impression, when doing some work with Isis a few years ago, that she wouldn't actually get round to doing anything for a few thousand years at least. Elementals are easier by far. Though again, they can be tricky. I blame all this magical psychology. It lessens the impact of all the entities and let's face it, if someone came up to you and said "you're only a subpersonality of me, so do this sharpish mate" would you go for it? No, you'd punch them in the face (hopefully) and half the time I think that entities feel the same way about all these jumped-up magicians saying "do this, do that" without so much of a please, thank you or a decent sacrifice.

If, at gatherings of the occult hoi-polloi, you actually admit to a working going wrong. Some clever dick is bound to point out a flaw in your research. Like, "oh you didn't invoke the wosname through the right portals, nor did you have the right colours on the temple banners and you did the dance widdershins" and that kind of thing. After discussing our abortive Amalantrah working with a member of a certain O.T.O faction I was given the clue - "well, you see, the inner-plane adepts are in a period of silence at the moment" which presumably meant they were all 'out to lunch' or having a quick nap. Ergo, it followed, the entity who we got through to who claimed it was Amalantrah wasn't - it was something else posing as an inner-plane adept. ...It was the chocolate easter egg that screwed thing up, I know it. Needless to say, I pointed out that we had gone through all the usual tricks to test the validity of the entity. Did the fact that we had done it without a Scarlet Woman zonked on ether make a difference? End of conversation. I'm not a great fan of this kind of explanation. Most 'systems' seem to have whopping great contradictions in them. For example, no one has ever been able to give me a good explanation of why the sphere of Hod in the Qabalah is given the elemental association of water. I never spotted it until we did a series of Hod workings last year, and no one has come up with a satisfactory explanation since. Still, I digress. Nevertheless, there do seem to be some ground rules in certain types of magical operation. Take Goetia. Oer, yes, summoning demons. A couple of years ago we did a whole series of evocations from the Lesser Key of Solomon. For the first working, we thought "why bother with all this circle & triangle on the floor stuff - we'll just visualise 'em instead." The main result of that was that we both suffered nausea and a 'drained' feeling for a couple of days afterwards - a sort of dark hangover of the soul, I suppose. And the demon didn't come through very clearly. It turned out that Goetic demons have fairly 'traditional' ideas about how they liked to be invoked. None of this trendy stuff for them. Either we did it properly or we'd have a strike on our hands.

Dreamweaving

This is a nice trendy-sounding name for what often amounts to little more than intense fantasising so that you continue to dream about what you were thinking about before you drop off to sleep. What often happens is that you drop off to sleep anyway. This can happen with pathworkings too. You're leading a pathworking, with the whole group laid out in front of you, you're using your best 'pathworking' voice and then suddenly, there it is ... snoring. I recall dropping off in a pathworking once. Everyone else had wonderful visions to report. Then it was my turn. "Well, actually I was so knackered from the drive down here I just fell asleep." Cue look of faint disgust/superiority from everyone else present. I used to worry about my tendency to drop off to sleep whilst practicing 'astral' banishings in bed. No problem, as it turned out.

It seems to be a part of magical learning. Whilst you class yourself as a neophyte, you sort of 'expect' things to go wrong, and are continually over-stating the consequences of what 'orrible thing might appear if you do something wrong. Once you've knocked around for a bit, you're more confident about what you're doing and when something does go wacky, you're often less prepared for it. These days I try and go for a mix which is: if I do this working then something will happen, but I'm not 100% sure what. Magick involves taking risks. If nothing else, getting into a sticky situation will give you a new perspective on things. 1979. I'm doing Psychology at Poly. Doing some work with Tattva cards & elementals. Magick is just an extension of psychology is what I'm thinking. Ha bloody Ha. I wake up one night. There's a red mist in the room and it feels like someone has dumped a suitcase full of concrete on top of me. ...oh shit. I can't move. I can't speak. What the fuck do I do. Heavy. Eventually I projected a banishing pentagram outwards. The feeling of weight vanished, as did the mist, and I promptly went into gibber mode. For about two days. Okay, so I had one of those experiences of when you think you're awake but you're not that Keith Herne was going on about at Squawking Prick a few weeks back. At the time though, it really threw a scare into me, and it gave me a deeper respect for magick. So that was okay, in the end. Ah the days of youthful folly.

Not long later I did my first attempt at evoking Yog-Sothoth. You know, one of the most 'orrible of the 'orrible Great Old Ones. Being on the edge of the Peak District, I had some good mountains to choose from and chose one of the highest in the district. It was snowing too. I took a torch with me, and remember the eyes of sheep reflecting red in its beam. Spooky. I don't quite remember the details, but I do recall seeing a beam of light coming down from space onto the stones I was sitting on. The next thing I can recall is getting the hell out of there in a blind panic and turning up at a friends house. More gibbering. I don't know

whether that was a failure or a success, but once again, I managed to scare the shit out of myself. Perhaps at the time, it's what I needed.

It may be that we learn far more about magick and ourselves when things don't quite go according to plan. If magick was as easy as some people make it out to be, we'd probably find it too pedestrian and we'd be a secret cabal of Christians plotting the downfall of the Pagan Aeon or something. No. Magick, like life, is wacky, weird and wonderful. It's never ceased to amaze me that by standing in a room, waving your arms about, and spouting awful verse, you can change the atmosphere, how you feel, and possibly set off a stochastic process that will result (more or less) in what you want to happen, happening. We can theorise, argue, and waffle pedantically all we like, but the core of the mystery I don't think will ever be pinned down.

I think it's extremely difficult to judge magical results entirely in terms of success and failure. My experiences with doing magical sigils for example, have shown me that quite often, the results don't manifest until I've thought "well bugger this, that was a waste of time" - and then they pop up. Some magical approaches do in fact recommend that you work occasionally for a negative result - and the opposite will come along in due course. Any magical act should be instructive, especially when it doesn't go the way you planned.

Let me finish then, with some magical axioms to bear in mind

1. Invoke Often
2. Banish Often
3. Do it with Style
4. Keep a sense of perspective
5. When caught out - Improvise!

Seiðr Magic

by Ed Richardson

Of all the reconstructed systems of archaic magickal practice, *Seiðr* seems to be one of the most misunderstood. This is partly because of its sinister reputation, and partly because of sexist notions that only women ever practised divination. All too often *Seiðr* is mistaken for the craft of the Volva, where in reality (if such a notion is useful) the Volvas were only part of a far wider practice. In order to make sense of the collection of beliefs and practices which make up *Seiðr*, some definitions shall be considered, followed by a look at some of the practices involved and their implications. This whole essay shall illustrate examples found in the myths of Northern Europe.

Seiðr literally means 'seething' or 'boiling' and has much in common with shamanism and other forms of primitive magick. Indeed it is highly likely that *Seiðr* is an adaptation of shamanic practices to suit the culture and times, when primitive society evolved discovering religion, agriculture and metallurgy. However, *Seiðr* is not a religious practice; it is a magickal practice which is where some of its sinister reputation originates. Jan Fries explains that the *Seiðr* magickians would sell their craft, which makes them something akin to occult mercenaries. Its use is always pragmatic and is reflected as such in the myths. The myths play a vital role in understanding Northern magick as they show how the Aesir, Vanir, Giants and Humanity used magick to deal with problems, hinting at techniques that may be useful today.

So, what was the magick of the *Seiðr* magickian? Much has been said on the Volva, that conducted seances, often to the exclusion of other *Seiðr* magickians. This has provided much of the distortion about what *Seiðr* is and is somewhat like saying 'magick is witchcraft' even though it may (or may not in some Wiccan circles) be true that 'witchcraft is magick'. Nigel Pennick and Jan Fries list a number of types of *Seiðr* magick including the following:

- **Dulr** (Anglo Saxon 'Thyle') the shamanically inspired poet, orator and sage, which may have similarities with the Celtic bard;
- **Warlock** the Scottish, Teutonic magickian who practices binding magick to either ward off or bind spirits to a given task;
- **Volva** who carries out public seances to give divined advice on such issues as weather and harvest;

- **berserker** who wears a bear skin shirt into battle, shape shifting into a bear for superhuman strength, and imperviousness to injury whilst fighting - they fought in units;
- **Ulfhednar** who wore wolf skins and practised shape shifting for individual and guerilla warfare;
- **Svinfylking** warriors who shape shifted into boars as elite troops, known for their powers of disguise, escapology and super-human strength;
- **Hagzissa** or 'hedge sitter' who bridged the world of village life with the world of ghosts, demons and Gods;
- **Seiðrkona/Seiðrmaðr** the magickian in general (female and male respectively) who used the *Seiðr* trance.

No doubt others could be added to the list. The magick of *Seiðr* as described by Edred Thorsson and Freya Aswynn, includes divination, soul travel, shape shifting, necromancy and cursing. I should like to add sigil magick (as a modern adaptation) and healing, and shall explain why later. First, the other magics shall be given due attention.

In *Eink's Saga*, divination is carried out by the Spakona (clairvoyant prophetess) using elaborate costumery and props. Music was used to help achieve trance during which soul travel is carried out to find answers for the divination. The Volva used these methods too although the Spakona sometimes also consulted runes while seething. Mircea Eliade suggests that Volvas principally carried out divination to find out about weather and fertility issues. However, Eliade also says that Odin used *Seiðr* to foresee important events, and his concerns were more with battle. It seems likely, therefore, that *Seiðr* practised by other than Volvas may have been used in warfare.

Soul travel is related to divination so shall now be considered in more detail. Shamanic traditions work on the basis of different levels of reality: the consensual, everyday reality and the other world/s. The World Tree appears in most shamanic cultures and acts as the axis-mundi, or centre of the universe, connecting the different worlds and realities. In the Northern Tradition, the horse has related symbolic meaning, representing a means of transport to the other world (the shaman being the rider). Similarly the world tree is called 'Yggdrasil', or Odin's steed. More shall be said on the horse and *Seiðr* later. Returning to *Seiðr* itself, when in an altered state, or 'seething', the magickian can travel up, down or along Yggdrasil to access the other worlds. As mentioned before soul travel was used by the Volva/Spakona as a form of divinatory astral projection. *Seiðr* soul travel also appears in myth, when Hermod rides to Helheim to petition the Goddess Hella to release Baldur, whose untimely death was caused by Loki. Thorsson suggests that this is one of the main forms of *Seiðr*. Some soul travel may include shape shifting.

Thorsson and Eliade associate *Seiðr* with shape shifting. Perhaps its most famous use is by the berserkers and other warrior-magickians to gain superhuman powers in combat. Such abilities were based around strength, pain resistance and evasion. These greatly feared warriors were seen as an elite. Shape shifting has also been associated with malevolent magick with some Volvas (according to Freya Aswynn) sending out 'nightmares'. Certainly shape shifting features in the myths and is hinted at in descriptions of *Seiðr* magickians' associations with animals. Kaledon Naddair suggests that the Church associated shamanism with evil animals. He and others hint at the connections between horses and shamanism. Nigel Pennick describes how a rapport with animals would be developed which is similar to the shaman's rapport with totems.

Certain Gods and Goddesses have animal totems although it is unlikely that any one animal is absolutely fixed to a Deity. However, Freya is associated with cats, Odin with wolves and ravens, etc. The myths show the Aesir and Vanir shape shifting and are the richest source on the subject for modern magickians. Odin uses disguise and shape shifts to serpent and eagle forms to recover the mead of inspiration after it has been stolen by the Giants. The Giant Thiazzi shape shifts into an eagle in the theft of the apples of immortality from the Goddess Idun and then Loki borrows Freya's 'falcon skin' to get them back. Loki also changes into a flea, stinging insects, a horse and a salmon at various points in the stories. The Gods also run into trouble when accidentally killing the mortal, human Freidmar's son who was in the form of an otter at the time.

Shape shifting, when done in pathworkings is merely an interesting form of visualisation. However, by using seething techniques (as detailed later) it can potentially become a full blown possession. Possession

here is a form of letting go, and allowing another personality or entity to work through. Jan Fries wrote about this in his excellent book *Helrunar* and it can be compared with Voudoun/Santeria techniques. Shape shifting may be used with animal or other spirits such as Gods, Demons, Giants and Totems but the closer allies are the most recommended. Soul travel to establish a rapport with the entities is sensible before trying out possession. Once established, personal totems make amongst the most valuable spirits to invoke as they have your interest in mind and you are more likely to make sense of the experience later.

Necromancy has its place in *Seiðr* as the realm of the dead, Helheim may be visited in soul travel in the same way as realms of the living. Volvas often carried out the *Seiðr* seance and the Hagzissa dealt with ghosts. Warlocks kept unwanted spirits of the dead away. Perhaps possession could be carried out working with ghosts and I would welcome any feedback on this. Myth has its examples of necromancy. Odin raised the ghost of a Volva to find out why Baldur was troubled in his sleep and his death was foretold. Also, Hermod journeyed to Helheim as mentioned earlier. Odin and Freya both have a psychopomp role and share the souls of the brave, amassing armies to fight the forces of darkness at Ragnarok.

Cursing has been described as a *Seiðr* practice by Jan Fries and Freya Aswynn. However there is little evidence of this in myth or sagas in terms of any word weaving or charms during *Seiðr* practice. Certainly malevolent magick is described, but for the *Seiðr* magickian this is more associated with shape shifting, or casting out the fetch. However the modern magickian could easily adapt curses to *Seiðr* making the curse when the appropriate altered state has been reached. This is true also of sigil magick and spell casting in general. The magickian would prepare his sigil/rune/spell in the usual way and focus on it during *Seiðr* obsession, allowing the trance to carry the magick deep into the void.

Healing has been disputed as a genuine *Seiðr* practice, but mainly by those who only understand *Seiðr* in terms of the Volva. In the definitions of *Seiðr* we encounter the concept of boiling and concocting in the *Seiðr* cauldron. Whilst no doubt trance-inducing sacraments are produced in this way, it seems likely that remedies are implied too. From personal experience, the *Seiðr* trance can be used to identify malevolent spirits causing disease in patients. Once identified the illness demon can be drawn into a spirit trap such as a crystal, labyrinth or chaosphere. This is illustrated very well in the novel *The Way of Wyrð* by Brian Bates. Jan Fries also suggests that healing can be associated with *Seiðr*.

The key to *Seiðr* is the altered state. Seething may be a term used to describe the state of the practitioner during a working, as trembling often occurs. Jan Fries quite correctly points out that the body's shaking may or may not be within the magician's control and refers to 'pseudo epilepsy'. To this I should like to add that no amount of trembling your body is enough, it is ultimately the mind which must boil. From my own experience, fits of shaking sometimes occur from orgasm or otherwise from prolonged exposure to alternative extremes of heat and cold after fasting. Shamanic practices, to which *Seiðr* is similar, have often been associated with epilepsy. However, most chaosists will be familiar with a variety of different gnoses, particularly those achieved through (as described by a certain regular writer for Chaos International) "sex and drugs and rock 'n' roll".

Orgasm is useful in *Seiðr* magic and sexuality has often been associated with it in history. The Church accused shamanism and *Seiðr* of indulging in sexual deviance (so what are we waiting for?!) and spoke of *ergi* which means filth. Sexual fluids and menstrual blood can be used in binding magic, linking objects with the sorcerer. Sex induced trances (which are generally best achieved in a slow, relaxed way) are excellent for scrying and soul travel. Myth generally describes the Vanir teaching *Seiðr* to the Aesir (although some accounts say that Odin invented it). The people of the Vanir are described by history and archaeology as being pacifist (i.e., crap at fighting) and using primitive weapons if they had to fight (as I said...). Hence they were defeated by the Aesir people who migrated into their area and absorbed much of their culture. So, what has this got to do with sex? The Vaniric people had a set of Gods and Goddesses who represented nature and fertility and whose worship involved ecstatic and sexual rites. This sexual emphasis was personified to the people by the Goddess Freya. She it was who taught *Seiðr* to Odin. Freya is described in myth as using her sexuality in magical contexts, just as she can also shape shift. Freya used her sexuality to obtain the Necklace of the Brisings which could be interpreted as her gaining magickal inspiration through sexual ritual.

Now, about drugs... Odin is rather partial to mead so may be invoked when blind drunk. However this doesn't make recollection of the event any easier! The berserkers, or 'bear shirts' would make use of the fly agaric mushroom to achieve altered states before shape shifting. Alby Stone even suggests that the world tree, Yggdrasil, is a fly agaric mushroom. However, Yggdrasil is definitely described as a tree and although the white bark of the tree is like an agaric stem, so also is the bark of a silver birch tree and fly agaric is normally found on the ground near these trees. Although there is little account of its being used in rituals in Northern Europe, it seems reasonable to suggest that psilocybin mushrooms such as the liberty cap and the false chanterelle would be useful. *Seiðr* magic as boiling could equally be brewing ales or toadstool soup. Music and dance are useful for achieving altered states. Shamanistic animal dancing, as described by Gordon MacLellan and Michael Harner may be used to assist possession by animal spirits. Dancing to achieve exhaustion may also be employed. Music is described in *Egil's Saga* as an aid to the Volvas to achieve an altered state, chanting being used. Glossolalia or *galdr* (chanting runes) may be especially useful here along with 'power songs', singing the practitioner into gnosis. According to Mircea Eliade, drumming has long been associated with shamanic practice but should not be confused with the random cacophony of beats to the pseudo-evangelical "we all come from the Goddess" chant that lasts for bursts of up to ten minutes at some Pagan campfires. Persistent, rhythmic beats are needed and the longer the drumming, the more the mind seethes. I have found that working with about two or three people in a totally darkened chamber using a rattle and a couple of drums can produce the most fascinating visions after only twenty to thirty minutes. Perhaps the ultimate experience is the rave, where MDMA and loud music (remember that taking drugs is illegal and naughty, kids!), combined with frenzied dancing can make for a perfect opportunity for practical sorcery. Ozric Tentacles live certainly work!

No doubt the intelligent magician will find a whole range of other techniques to get the altered state, but without it *Seiðr* magic is not possible.

Before looking at the horse in relation to *Seiðr* an account of Odin's magic shall be given as a final example of seething. The following passage is an excerpt from the Havamal and demonstrates Odin's use of pain, starvation and thirst to achieve an altered state whereby he discovers the runes:

"I know how I hung
From the windswept tree
For nine long nights
Pierced by the spear
Given to Odin
Myself to myself
From the branch of the tree
Of which nobody knows
From which root it has grown
They offered me neither Bread nor drink
Then I bent over
Took up the runes
Took them up screaming
And fell to the ground..."

The horse frequently figures as a symbol related to the practice of *Seiðr*. horse cults have often had strong sexual overtones. Kaledon Naddair writes of hobby horse use in fertility rituals, the horse here being a big cock. H.R. Ellis Davidson writes of Church reports claiming that volvas had sexual liaisons with horses. This probably indicates a Vaniric interest in horse worship and the horse was also venerated by later people of the Aesir. It is for this reason that in Germanic/Scandinavian countries the eating of horse meat is still taboo.

Odin's horse, Sleipnir, is interesting in the context of *Seiðr*. It is a magical beast with eight legs and the ability to fly through the air. Could Sleipnir be a mythological representation of Yggdrasil (which means 'Odin's steed'), the world tree and shamanistic practices to visit the other worlds?

This also connects with the valknut. Much has been said about this symbol, but some of the real secrets are still to be understood. The valknut is not simply a symbol of Odin, but is more associated with the processes he undertakes. Effectively it can symbolise the *Seiðr* magician. Its knot of nine angles made by

three interlocking triangles has been called the knot of the slain. As a symbol of the dead it is also a symbol of the altered state (these two concepts are intimately linked throughout the world). The slain are also those who accept their lot and are thus liberated to act their will. Odin achieved this through an initiatory working which climaxed in his ordeal on the tree. The three triangles can be said to represent the three Nornir: Urda, Werdandi and Skuld, the goddesses determining past, present and...wait for it...that which is necessitated by the present (European Heathens did not have any concept of future beyond this). The three Nornir map out Wyrð and the magician knows his place (or limits/background) and works freely in accordance with it, possibly transcending it to some degree. The magician as well as master of time is also a master of space. The nine points represent the nine worlds which the *Seiðr* sorcerer is at liberty to visit. Thus the valknut symbolises the process of transcendental *Seiðr* magic in its most pragmatic sense. Odin rides through the universe on his magical horse taking part in this process, hence his association with this symbol. Returning to Odin and horses, it seems that the big O has some horsey names. These include Jalkr, which means gelding' (this name has led to speculation that Odin was a eunuch or practised unmanly pursuits [whatever that means even though there are no accounts of Odin that support this), and *Volsi* or 'horse's pizzle' (which can also be translated as 'Holy Man').

Having looked at these aspects of *Seiðr* we should now consider why it has had rough treatment by rune using occultists. Largely sexism and Christianity are at fault and occultists have believed everything they have read or heard. Some *Seiðr* practices, such as those of the volva were described as unmanly. This is probably because in a warrior society it would be unwise for the sorcerer to let himself become vulnerable by going into trance. However, the bulk of *Seiðr* practitioners were not volvas. The general name for the female practitioner was the *Seiðrkonar*; and for the male, the *Seiðrmdr*. The berserkers whilst seething were boiling with rage and were exclusively male. Men practising *Seiðr* were described as carrying *ergi* or 'filth', but these descriptions were given by a patriarchal church that believed that women had no soul and were beyond saving, and that men needed to be warned of the dangers of carnal pleasures and sorcery. Sexual perversion has been used as an accusation throughout history whenever one group has dominated and persecuted another. Whether *Seiðr* magicians took it up the arse or not, the real 'sinister' 'perverted' behaviour that threatened the christian world was that *Seiðr* magicians were seething with and for ecstasy.

READING

Nigel Aldcroft-Jackson - Call of the Horned Piper [Capall Bann]

Freya Asynn - Leaves of Yggdrasil[Weiser]; Seiðr Magic as found in Talking Stick magazine, No. 7

Neville Drury - Elements of Shamanism [Element]

Kevin Crossley-Holland - The Norse Myths

Mireca Eliade - Shamanism

Jan Fries - Visual Magick and Helrunar [Mandrake]

Nicholas Hall - Chaos and Sorcery

Michael Harner - Way of the Shaman

Gordon McLellan - Practical Totems as found in Talking Stick No.11

Nigel Pennick - Practical Magic in the Northern Tradition

Alby Stone - A Root of Yggdrasil as found in Talking Stick No.12; The second Merseburg Charm as found in Talking Stick No.11; Seiðr as found in Talking Stick No.10

Snorri Sturlusson - Edda

Edred Thorsson - Futhark and Runelore

This article was first published in Chaos International magazine, issue 20.

Touching Earth: Shamanism in Modern Britain

by Gordon MacLellan

No. We have no direct, inherited tradition.

No. We do not belong to a single, identifiable community.

No. We are not necessarily Celtic.

No. We do not even have elders and definite ancestor connections.

Yes. We live in the land called Albion we are inspired by its Dream and we work with the people that live in these islands now.

It can all begin to sound like a litany of defiance: a sort of anarchic dismissal of tradition. But it is not.

Who "we" are, where we come from, the path we follow into the future is a celebration.

I write as a "shaman" working in Britain with spirits who belong to this land and to the fusion of human and spirit world that have grown up over the thousands of years that humans have lived here. I live in a society where its shamanic past is either long gone or well forgotten and even the richness of its folklore is often denied and scorned. But here we have communities who still care for the places they live in and who try to find ways of celebrating the bonds between people and landscape.

For me, the shaman bridges the distance between community and world: helping people listen to the world they are part of and smoothing the ripples of human impact upon that world. The shaman's world is one populated by spirits: of ancestors, of food plants and animals, of the other living beings who share the physical world and the awarenesses of landscape, habitat and environment who in Britain we might call Faerie. Through trance, the shaman journeys into the spirit worlds and returns, communicating needs and desires in both directions: walking between the worlds. In general, I think this coincides with established views of shamanism: communicating with spirits through ecstatic trance, but in modern western societies how that is achieved may now differ from traditional forms.

I have discussed elsewhere the roles and techniques that I see modern shamans using and that discussion is not the purpose of this article.¹ Suffice to say, I feel that western societies still need that mediator between human and non-human worlds but without recognising either the role or the traditional methods of working, modern shamans have to find new ways of engaging humans with the living world that surrounds them. We rarely live in communities that will gather and support, observe or listen to a dancing, tranced, animal-masked shaman.

In this article. I would like to pick up ideas on the inspirational sources of a shamanic practice that is growing - from new seeding or old roots it is difficult to say, here in Britain.

That image of the shaman as being, or crossing, a bridge between the worlds. is a useful one to hold onto. In established shamanic cultures, that bridge is built by the shaman with her own blood and bone in trance and is supported by the strength of the culture she lives in. Here, the shaman may act as the protector of tradition as that is an important tool in keeping the bridge open. In a society, however, where that bridge is not recognised, the culture the shaman works in rarely supports her work and everyday concepts and behaviours might work to block the bridge if it could ever be built in the first place. The physical support that comes with a community that will drum or sing with the shaman on her travels, or who will gather and with their very presence help the journey to the Otherworld. is lacking. To speak in public of communication with spirits who are our ancestors or the character of a place taken form and voice is usually to be mocked and ignored. Without recognising a world that lives and breathes and has its own sentient vitality, there has been little recognition of any need to relate to that world in anything other than a purely material basis. So here, modern shamans often seem to be agents of change: in their eyes, working always to open communication between the worlds. This is where the anarchism comes in - a willingness to walk through anything, challenge convention, to break, avoid, unsettle anything that "blocks the bridge". The need for communication is there, the road must be opened and as subtle ants. creeping ivy or charging elephants, the shamans of the western world must face the walls that hinder them.

The shaman moves between human and non-human worlds and owes an allegiance to both. We are not in a world where the human community is living on the obvious edge of survival as we might have known in the past. Our lifestyles may set us in peril in a longer term as we hasten the deterioration of our

environment, but that edge of starvation, drought or death through exposure is not immediately evident. Now the spirit worlds are also looking with some despair at our impact on physical and non-physical worlds and are making their own demands upon shamans for explanations and support. We are expected to explain the what and why of our society's action and it is to the spirits' credit that their perception and expectations in relations with humans are changing. The sources of that awareness are quite simple. The spirits tell us. The shaman's responsibility lies in both directions: human and spirit and part of a shaman's success lies in being accepted by the spirits. The paths into the Otherworld are not defined: we all use different routes: some drum and sing or wait in stillness or dance until in their dance they move in all the worlds at once. The results, however, are common: we meet spirits. Spirits who are definite presences, who speak to us with their own characters and their own perspectives on the worlds we all live in and their concerns about the futures that are unfolding around us.

Shamans working in a western society where there is no clear surviving tradition to tap into must find new ways of building those bridges between the worlds. We may find threads of connection to our past, links to our ancestors, and traces of ideas that we can pick up and use, but we act *now* for the people who are around us *now*, not in some long-gone *then* or some hoped for *still to come*. We belong to the moment whose air we breathe as we work. And if that action draws on an old tradition so be it, but it is just as likely to call for a change in that older pattern or for the shaping of a new one. The task awaits completion and the shaman's job is to complete it.

Without an inherited strand of teaching and culture, purists may cast doubt upon the authenticity of a modern shamanic practice. But I believe the truth of a shaman lies in her work: she is defined not by external verification but by her role and actions within the human and spirit communities she works with. And if that is in new ways and in new situations then so be it. It may make for a patchier pattern of work and a more precarious path as so much has to be discovered as we go along, but where does a new shamanic practice come from? When does it become a "valid path"? We are not looking for sociological vindication. We are becoming what we will be: the proof of the working will be in the relationships between communities, land and spirits, not in pages in a book.

This is Britain and this can be a strange land to live in. Magically it remembers being "the Islands of the Mighty", training ground for Druids, home of Bran and Arthur and Avalon and a thorn in Rotuan flesh for years. The hills are still dreaming of the Wild Wood and given half a chance would grow it anew. People come and go, their impact may be great at the time but to the hills and the long slow dream of those lives we are of little moment. The root of the magic here is that ancient rolling presence of a land dreaming of what might be and while we may flicker across those dreams like flies we are still a part of them. In one of those irritating contradictions of magic, we have a land that measures time in eons and changes slowly. barely noticing us, it seems, but where we belong in those dreams and where our lives and our living are important as the fine details, giving precision and colour to the passing moments. We are both nothing and valuable at the same time.

The human history, of Britain may be measured in waves of invaders. of settlers, of war and unease and continuing prejudice. But to the land, whoever is here becomes a part of it all: where you live is where you are. You may hunger for other places and feel exiled. estranged. alien, but here you are. Your breath changes this place. Your feet touch this earth here. It is this land that feels your presence and those who live in this land see you.

And so we are absorbed. in time, all those colonists - invaders. migrants or pilgrims, become incorporated into the Dream the land dreams and their stories and their gods slide into the Otherworld and there the shamans find them. Over the generations, new people mix with older, some barriers fall and leave an increasingly diverse society: a colourful tapestry of communities. And these are the communities where the shamans work. We do not live in a single shamanic culture where people recognise the role and know we have a job to do. We are bound to the land and the people who live on it, working with a potentially huge tangle of cultural groups with apparently different needs and perceptions and different traditional ways of relating to themselves and to the environment. If this is the human world the shaman works in, then there is the spirit world. For me, the spirit realm of Britain is the Otherworld:

"The Otherworld is the abode of spirits: there we meet the talking foxes and watch the shapes of the stone people unfold from the rocks on a hillside... This is the shaman's world. She moves through an Otherworld that may correspond exactly with the territory she calls home but here is midnight and a world frosted with energy like ice on every leaf where the mist at dawn is a swirling, pouring cloud of spirals, spilling out of damp hollows. And the "Other" is not 'other' at all, but this world, the mundane physical world."²

I call it "the Otherworld" out of my own background, using a mixture of Celtic perceptions of the land of the dead and the realm of Faerie. It is an "over there" that is "over there" as an idea and as an easier way of soiling out experiences than as a definite separation of one world from another. The Otherworld is always just "over there", "round the corner", "waiting". The end result, however, is not a particularly Celtic world. It is simply itself and everything that is around us now, or that the land in its dreaming remembers, lives on there. There we encounter the accumulated residents of this land. There I meet with spirits who "technically" arrived with the Vikings in their longships, or find Saxon Wayland in his smithy or meet the Faeries who pick and choose and have used human stories to shape themselves over all the long years of human presence here. There are distinctly Celtic presences and even older people who say they have always been here, stones taking shape and voice and watching all of us living and dying... And the wolves we lost from the everyday world a couple of hundred years ago, they are still hunting in the wood of the Otherworld for the land still remembers them.

When we as humans: shamans, magician, Christian, Pagan or whatever, start to explore our spiritual heritage, things do get turned round and it can become all too easy to dismiss what has come lately. Easier to avoid most of the last two thousand years. If we look far enough back we can detour round worrying dilemmas of historical accuracy in traditions and confusions over the precedence of spirits - are Celtic demigods more important than Saxon forest spirits? - because it all becomes speculative. Go far enough back and we can always be right and everyone else can have missed a vital clue. Curse the Christians - and the Normans - and the Vikings - and those loutish Saxons, militaristic Romans, Hanoverian kings, Scottish Presbyterians, industrial revolutions, occasional Spaniards... Denying whatever you like and harking back to a Celtic Golden Age seems to be a useful escape from addressing the blend of all that is of Britain. Call to our remote ancestors and forget the generations that lie between. But beware of the earlier ancestors, the ones the Celts displaced, those heroic, majestic and very bloody Celts. Watch for the little dark people who think very different thoughts of our famed Celts.

But to live and breathe now is to be offered access to that rich, erratic heritage. With its long layers of history, crowded into these small islands, the Otherworld of Britain unfolds into a wonderful array of forms and there the shaman may meet people who hail from Saxon, Nordic, general "English" ancient Celtic or other less definable roots.

There is a heritage of folk tradition in the ordinary world too. From everyday domestic customs around shoes, may blossom, yellow butterflies and the magic of snails to full-scale community ceremonies there are relics of a magical past. Some celebrations are famous: Padstow's 'Obby 'Oss and the Abbott's Bromley Horn Dance are well known while others, like individual mumming and pace-egging plays have survived on a purely local scale. Some are ancient, some might be recent revivals or complete inventions. That is not the point. Historical precedence is not everything: if a ceremony evolves because on some level it is needed, then it is there and its power should be recognised and respected. Even in a rowdy pub or village hall, a mumming play can command attention with its own bawdy irreverence and in its clowning still reach out a finger to touch the heart. A whisper of a different awareness.

I would not claim that such events are shamanic or evidence of a shamanic past: they lack the directed ecstasy and spirit communication of a shamanic ceremony. They may be powerful celebrations or the last throes of dying traditions, but they chart the ways communities relate to their local environment. They are signposts for community workers (shamanic or otherwise) to find the paths that encourage people to relate to the world they live in again and often provide inspiration for more spontaneous new work. It is interesting, for instance, that in this land of horses, racing and horse-goddesses, the horse's magical role is still celebrated. Some creatures, like Padstow's two horses, survive while other hobby horses fall apart (literally, in some plays³) and still new ones are appearing as Hobby Horses return in modern mumming plays and as chaotic elements in street theatre and environmental protests. For a modern shaman who works

with horse spirits dancing the Hobby horse opens whole avenues of the Otherworld with associations unfolding back to that Celtic past but which are still active and moving within living communities. That folk tradition of ceremony and celebration is also a living thing: it grows and changes all the time. While our folk tradition is largely rural, most of our population is now urban and it is here that a lot of growth takes place. People still want to make connections: with themselves, with each other and to mark the changing world around them. Old customs survive, or are revived or whole new ones arrive or evolve. On a national scale, Tree Dressing Day and Apple Day initiatives of recent years have brought tree-centred celebrations to all parts of the country. Inspired by the work of the London-based environment/community/arts group Common Ground, Tree Dressing Day happens in the first week-end in December:

"The purpose of the day is to encourage people to create our first cross cultural festival celebrating the trees in their streets, parks, front gardens or locality by decorating them - socially and publicly. The idea is to draw attention to the trees which we take for granted and no longer notice, to highlight the importance of long-term tree care and to motivate people into looking after their local trees."⁴ It is more than just that. Tree Dressing has provided a focus and incentive for a wide range of exciting and inventive arts projects involving people of all ages and experiences in activities that celebrate both the trees and the human communities that live around them. Now, with hundreds of events across the country, it is becoming well-established in the calendar of celebrations. Apple Day in October is another Common Ground concept "celebrating and demonstrating that variety and richness matter to your locality and that it is possible to affect change in your place"⁵ - highlighting the loss of and encouraging the conservation of individual apple varieties. The wider implications of this draw people into planting new orchards, using local resources and recognising the value of "local distinctiveness".

Other things happen individually with small, regular public events that mark the turning of the year, changing seasons in a city park or town square or are spectacular celebrations of human creativity with inner city carnivals or the fire festivals that were a feature of life in Manchester until the last couple of years. Here, Viking longships, flying dinosaurs and spectacular bonfires were centrepieces in wild but choreographed events involving hundreds of local residents while runes ran in fire across the walls of apartment blocks.

Some of the most exciting ceremonies have grown with grassroots environmental action. Whole rituals take shape through the need of people to draw upon their own energy, to recognise their strength and to acknowledge the land and their feelings for it that bring them to battle on its behalf. Ragged and half-formed at times, these are thrilling events for all they represent: growth that breaks traditions, bridging class, belief and age distinctions, bursting with energy through those walls of convention that dismiss the strength of the individual and the importance of a sense of place: new rituals that leave people empowered and ready to act.

This is the world of the modern shaman: in touch with an Otherworld that brims with its own vitality and with the opportunity to meet a human population that is changing: recognising its need for a sense of connection slowly and expressing this in both old and new ways. We do not claim that what is happening around us is shamanic but perhaps that we relate to these events in a shamanic way and our contribution to them is a shamanic one: part of our role is to bring the presence of the spirits back into this human world and to explain to the spirits what it is they meet around them in this world now.

We do not tap into an extant tradition, but most of the other shamans I know, myself included, find we tend to work with a particular strand within all the layers of the Otherworld: drawing strength and inspiration from that particular root - maybe a Nordic/English or a Welsh Celtic one for example. These are not exclusive, I would describe my 'route' as basically a Celtic/Scottish one but the spirits I work with are described from relatively recent "British" folklore - that mixed bag of witch, Faerie, boggart and hobgoblin worlds that we meet through folk-tales - as well as older Scottish sources and occasional presences from high Celtic myth. The spirits come and a "family" forms - a group of associated beings, with the shaman as the physical presence within the group. They come as themselves: identifying spirits through stories is a useful convention: we can both agree to a shape and size that seems to coincide with the character of that

spirit but to assume that because this spirit here is being a hobgoblin does not mean that it is a hobgoblin out of a Middle England farm and to assume that it will go on behaving the way the stories tell us it should can be downright dangerous for the shaman and insulting for the spirit. Again, perhaps in an established shamanic culture such relationships are more settled and are maintained by the ongoing exchange between spirits and humans but here we have new patterns being formed and there is a sense of wild adventure and excitement in the whole process - for both shamans and the spirits themselves.

It is difficult describe relationships with spirits. My "family" and I work as a cooperative: the bonds that hold us are based on mutual respect and love and maintained by our work and our celebrations. It is perhaps easiest to look at it all as a set of friendships: we are together and like good friendships we have our times when we work well together and times we do not but, overall, we are "the family", we stay together, we help, protect and empower each other and the collective is stronger than any of its individual components.

A shaman working in modern Britain, then, may form bonds with spirits out of a range of traditions, draw upon a variety of mythologies and enjoy contact with the diversity of this culture, but the heart of the shaman's role is to serve. That service works in both directions - from human to Otherworld and from Other to human worlds.

The former is often the harder these days: we are expected, by the spirits, to draw people into a clear relationship with their world, but we do not live in a society where we can turn round and say "we need to do this, because the spirits want it of us", and expect to be listened to. We have to find ways of involving people in the world that they will respond to and that will offer them new understanding and help them make their own decisions about the world we all share. The days of the shaman as the outspoken spiritual guide have gone and expectations have changed, on both sides of the bridge. Our human communities may feel confused at times and uncertain but people are claiming the right to make their own choices and now this seems to offer a powerful path into a human community with a strong connection to the land. A lot of our role these days whether we are individual healers or "bridge-builders" for whole groups lies in empowering people. We work across faiths, trying to be open to whoever looks for new ways of looking at their world, at the celebrations of life.

And the spirits are still there, watching, listening and realising that their relationship with the human world is changing, too. But here the shaman's link between spirit and human worlds becomes almost split. While in the past the ceremonies that spoke from one world into the other were there in the public awareness and maybe took place in public, now we find the shaman's human work in one place and time and the connection with spirit happening somewhere else at a different time. The link may seem tenuous but the strength of the bond remains: the shaman still travels between the worlds, it is just that the bridge has stretched a bit.

In relationship to environmental and personal spiritual matters, people are becoming much more aware and informed and prepared to reach their own decisions and act upon these. And the spirits see and feel a new opening for a strong world within these changes: Their relationship with humans has changed and they have had to accept that people do not recognise them as they might once have done, but a population of humans with the strength to think and see and act out of their own awareness is changing our Otherworld. Love and respect for the land protects the spirits. The spirits I work with, both as "family" and in more occasional contacts, on the whole are finding that they do not particularly want or need a world that recognises them and pays them respect as individuals but they do expect a world that respects the land and people who respect themselves. Like a spiritual or magical reflection of an ecological process, as one area changes others are affected. That respect for both ourselves and our environment leaves us, humans, stronger and a readiness to behave in a more respectful way towards the land echoes through the Otherworld and strengthens that world in turn. And then it returns: a land that renews its strength through the spirits who walk across it is a more nourishing land, more inspiring to live as part of and so humans are touched, their own actions coming right round again. Regardless of human beliefs, the spirits that are the living world awake and watching, celebrate the strength both of humans and of their home. That is the goal they set their shaman intermediaries.

All of this is part of a modern shaman's work - often unseen, unguessed. interfering busybodies, maybe. but working always to keep the bridges open. Passage over those bridges may be less obvious than in other cultures, but the connections are renewed so spirit can listen to human, human can listen to human, human can listen to his own heart and somewhere can feel the touch of warmth that opens their eyes to the world they live in.

Shamans now are working there among communities, drawing inspiration from the Otherworld, and, through this, working in a wider context with the people around them. I work with the mixed communities of Britain's cities: I feel the land and its awareness and the people who live here and find ways for the two to listen to each other. It may not look particularly Celtic, or of any distinct historical type. but its inspiration derives from the variety of our past and from the stilt-legged stalking spirits who are taking shape among the tall buildings of our cities. It may not sound shamanic, in the traditional sense. but it is about listening and looking. about being open and healing, and the spirits walk with me. I work with groups in environmental celebration and performance. while others work with individuals in healing and still others work among small groups of people. Those damn shamans get everywhere.

No, we are not organised.

No, we do not meet up and sort ourselves out into any sort of coherent movement.

Individual, independent. bloody-minded and pervasive and harder to pin down than mist. we work with anyone we can to celebrate the love that lies between earth and people. We are still the go-betweens between human and spirit worlds, but the boundaries have changed a lot. Instead of being clear guides and communicators between those worlds, we have a new role now: to open people up to a sense of wonder in their world and in themselves. There lies the strength that supports all the living worlds. The wing of joy.

-
1. Harvey, G & Hardman C eds. "Paganism Today", Thorsons, London & San Francisco 1996: chapter "Dancing On the Edge"
 2. ibid
 3. Alford, V "The Hobby horse And Other Animal Masks", Merlin Press. London, 1978: "he is always very old, can hardly stand. yet is for sale, shakes himself to pieces..." of the Wild horse with the Cheshire Soul-cakers' plays
 4. "Common Ground" general leaflet: Common Ground. Seven Dials Warehouse 44 Farlham Street, London, WC2H 9LA. UK

