

**Modernity, Selfhood, and the Demonic:  
Anthropological Perspectives on “Chaos Magick”  
in the United Kingdom**

**Justin Woodman**

**Thesis submitted for the degree of PhD in Social Anthropology  
Goldsmiths College, University of London**

**Thesis Title: Modernity, Selfhood, and the Demonic: Anthropological Perspectives on “Chaos Magick” in the United Kingdom.**

**Abstract**

The thesis is based upon fieldwork conducted in London (between 1997 - 2001) amongst the practitioners of “Chaos magick” - a form of magical practice which appeared in United Kingdom during the late 1970’s as part of the wider neo-pagan and magical subculture.

Chaos magicians utilise trance states as means of attaining an unmediated experience of the inchoate and indeterministic ground of being known as “Chaos”. Within trance, Chaos magicians believe that they are able to transform both their perception and the substance of the world by magically reshaping the Chaos force in accordance with their own desires. Merged with the therapeutics of spirit possession, such practices also aim to render visible and subject to control the “demons” of the psyche - conceived of as the socially-inculcated fears, desires and patterns of behaviour which “possess” the magician’s persona.

I show that, for Chaos magicians, the demonic represents a highly ambivalent category through which the equally ambivalent and uncertain experience of modernity is mirrored and made explicable. Possession by alien and demonic powers may also be positively valued as a source of "creativity" and self-empowerment, allowing practitioners to construct contextual and contingent narratives of the self - narratives commensurable with the uncertainties and insecurities of their daily lives. I also demonstrate that the broadly therapeutic goals of Chaos magick are indented within a set of discursive practices that shape practitioners’ sense of selfhood to the social, economic and ideological requirements of late modernity.

As a consequence, the thesis challenges prior anthropological conceptions of the contemporary magical subculture as a subaltern discourse engaged in resisting the rationalising and alienating effects of modern consumer capitalism; in doing so, the thesis demonstrates that this subculture is neither “irrational” nor “pre-modern”, but does in fact recapitulate many of the core values and assumptions of modernity.

# **Contents**

<b><u>Abstract</u></b>	2
<b><u>List of Illustrations</u></b>	9
<b><u>Acknowledgements</u></b>	10
<b><u>Chapter 1 - Chaos Magick and the Modernity of the Contemporary Magical Subculture</u></b>	12
<b>Part 1 - Defining the “Problem” of Chaos Magick</b>	12
<b>Introduction</b>	12
<b>Chaos Magick - An Overview</b>	14
<b>Theorising the Contemporary Magical Subculture</b>	16
<b>Between Black Magick and The Left-Hand Path</b>	21
<b>Chaos Magick and Modernity</b>	23
<b>Part 2 - The Historical and Cultural Context</b>	27
<b>The Magical Subculture in the United Kingdom</b>	27
<b>Crowley, Spare, and Grant: The “Founding Figures” of Chaos     Magick</b>	32
<b>Countercultural and Literary Influences</b>	37
<b>Other Sources: Psychoanalysis, Surrealism, and Situationism</b>	40
<b>The Origins of Chaos Magick</b>	42
<b>Part 3 - The Sociological Context</b>	44
<b>The Sociological Context of Chaos Magick</b>	44
<b>Chaos Magick, NRMs, and the Gnostic Sensibility: Chaos     Magicians as Gnostic Modernists</b>	48

<b>Part 4 - Methodology and Ethics</b>	<b>53</b>
<b>Identifying Practitioners: Chaos Magick as a Category</b>	<b>53</b>
<b>Locating the Site of Research</b>	<b>54</b>
<b>The Chaos Magical Subculture: Gaining Access</b>	<b>57</b>
<b>Research Methodology</b>	<b>59</b>
<b>Ethical Considerations</b>	<b>67</b>
<b>The Structure of the Thesis</b>	<b>70</b>
<b><u>Chapter 2 - Through the Portals of Inbetweeness:</u></b>	<b>72</b>
<b><u>Conceptions of the Demonic within Chaos Magick</u></b>	
<b>Part 1 - Entering the Realm of Chaos</b>	<b>72</b>
<b>Introduction</b>	<b>72</b>
<b>Through the Portals of Inbetweeness</b>	<b>74</b>
<b>Ordinariness and the Exoticisation of Magick</b>	<b>79</b>
<b>Part 2 - A Genealogy of the Demonic</b>	<b>84</b>
<b>Satan as External Evil</b>	<b>84</b>
<b>Satan as Other</b>	<b>87</b>
<b>Satan as Self</b>	<b>88</b>
<b>The Devil, Wildness, and Power</b>	<b>95</b>
<b>Part 3 - Chaos Magick and the Modernity of the Demonic</b>	<b>98</b>
<b>The Black Mass: Resistance to Modernity?</b>	<b>98</b>
<b>The Black Magician: Supporting Modernity</b>	<b>101</b>
<b>Ambivalence and the Modernity of the Demonic</b>	<b>110</b>



<b><u>Chapter 3 - Ride the Shark of Your Desire”: The Sorcerer’s Becoming</u></b>	<b>122</b>
<b>Part 1 - Chaos Magick in Theory and Practice</b>	<b>122</b>
Introduction	122
A System of Techniques	123
Sources of Magickal Knowledge	127
Core Practices: “Liber MMM”	130
Recording Practice: The Magical Diary	132
Magical Training and the Structure of the IOT	134
<b>Part 2 - Becoming a Sorcerer: Experiencing Chaos</b>	<b>149</b>
<b>Magick</b>	
Learning to Experience Chaos Magick	149
Meeting the Temple	143
Symbolism and Collective Meanings	148
<b>Part 3: Sorcery and the Magical Will</b>	<b>149</b>
Sorcery and Sigilisation	149
Sorcery and Moral Ambivalence	156
<b><u>Chapter 4 - Sorcerer-Scientists, Postmodern Shamans, and Gnostic Rebels: The Meaning and Significance of Practice</u></b>	<b>163</b>
<b>Part 1: Structuring Chaos: The Theoretical Dimensions of Sorcery</b>	<b>163</b>
Introduction	163

The Chaos Magician as “Sorcerer-Scientist”	163
Chaos Magick and Post-Newtonian Science	170
<b>Part 2 - The Practitioners’ Experience: Sorcery, Selfhood, and the Demonic</b>	<b>174</b>
Sorcery and Self-Analysis	174
Mark: “Working with Demons”	176
Mat: Demons and “Working on the Self”	178
Ramsey Dukes: Personifying Demons	179
Rob and Damien: The (Non-) Reality of Spirits	182
Sorcery and Metamorphosis	184
<b>Part 3 - Chaos, Postmodernity, and Wholeness</b>	<b>187</b>
Chaos Magick as “Postmodern Shamanism”	187
“The Tao of Chaos”: Chaos as Ontological Signifier	196
Gnosis, Kia, and Wholeness	200
<b><u>Chapter 5 - Embodying Chaos: Possession, Power, and Selfhood</u></b>	<b>206</b>
	206
<b>Part 1 - Demonic Possession: Structuring the Disorderly</b>	
Introduction	206
Blood on the Temple Floor	207
Embodying Chaos: Possession and the Transference of Magical Authority	209
The Aftermath of Possession: Structuring Disorder and Legitimising Power	214
The Ambivalence of the Demonic	218

<b>Part 2 - Possession and Ideology</b>	<b>221</b>
<b>Possession as a Conduit of Magical Power</b>	<b>221</b>
<b>Gender, Possession, and the Demonic</b>	<b>226</b>
<b>Sexual Transgression and Power</b>	<b>230</b>
<b>Trance as a Space of Transgression</b>	<b>233</b>
<b>Part 3 - The Context and Meaning of Possession</b>	<b>236</b>
<b>The Psycho-Social Context of Trance</b>	<b>236</b>
<b>Altered States of Consciousness and the Production of Selfhood</b>	<b>240</b>
<b><u>Chapter 6 - “Alien Selves”: Late Modernity, Otherness</u></b>	<b>248</b>
<b><u>and Uncertainty</u></b>	
<b>Part 1 - Chaos Magick and the “Lovecraftian” Milieu</b>	<b>248</b>
<b>Introduction</b>	<b>248</b>
<b>Role-playing, Science Fiction, and the Imagination in</b>	<b>249</b>
<b>Contemporary Occultism</b>	
<b>H. P. Lovecraft and the Cthulhu Mythos</b>	<b>251</b>
<b>Lovecraftian Magick within the Occult Subculture</b>	<b>254</b>
<b>Part 2 - Forging the Lovecraftian Paradigm</b>	<b>259</b>
<b>Making the Old Ones Manifest</b>	<b>259</b>
<b>The Black Goat Appears</b>	<b>267</b>
<b>Alien Selves - Becoming Hybrid</b>	<b>273</b>
<b>Killing The Magickal Child: Transgression, Morality, and</b>	<b>277</b>
<b>Belief</b>	
<b>Part 3 - Interpreting the Lovecraftian Universe</b>	<b>285</b>

Imagination, Selfhood, and Otherness	285
“Not in the Spaces We Know, But Between Them”	288
Selfhood and Uncertainty	291
<b><u>Chapter 7 - Conclusion: Wholeness, Magic, and Late</u></b>	<b>297</b>
<b><u>Modernity</u></b>	
Introduction	297
Magic and Modernity	298
Selfhood and Late Modernity	300
Chaos Magick and “Ontological Insecurity”	302
Chaos Magick, Science, and Instrumentality	307
Magic, Knowledge and Uncertainty	310
Magick and Sorcery as an Existential Orientation	313
Why Chaos Magick?	315
Concluding Remarks	316
<b><u>Appendices</u></b>	
Appendix 1 - “Origins: The IOT Story So Far”	321
Appendix 2 - Neophyte (4 <sup>o</sup> ) Initiation Ritual of the IOT	324
Appendix 3 - Opening Ritual of The Haunters of The Dark	326
Appendix 4 - Transcript of On-line Discussion (Haunters of the Dark)	328
<b><u>Bibliography</u></b>	<b>332</b>



## **List of Illustrations**

<b>Fig. 1</b>	<b>A genealogy of Chaos magick.</b>	<b>30</b>
<b>Fig. 2</b>	<b>The Kabbalistic Tree of Life.</b>	<b>31</b>
<b>Fig. 3</b>	<b>Aleister Crowley.</b>	<b>36</b>
<b>Fig. 4</b>	<b>Austin Osman Spare (self portrait).</b>	<b>37</b>
<b>Fig. 5</b>	<b>Chronology of fieldwork.</b>	<b>58-59</b>
<b>Fig. 6</b>	<b>The Tunnels of Set.</b>	<b>78</b>
<b>Fig. 7</b>	<b>The Chaosphere.</b>	<b>83</b>
<b>Fig. 8</b>	<b>Anton LaVey</b>	<b>89</b>
<b>Fig. 9</b>	<b>The symbol of the Church of Satan.</b>	<b>92</b>
<b>Fig. 10</b>	<b>The pentagram (with elemental correspondences).</b>	<b>92</b>
<b>Fig. 11</b>	<b>The inverted pentagram.</b>	<b>92</b>
<b>Fig. 12</b>	<b>Baphomet.</b>	<b>94</b>
<b>Fig. 13</b>	<b>The Thurisaz rune.</b>	<b>104</b>
<b>Fig. 14</b>	<b>The symbols of the twenty two demonic guardians of the Tunnels of Set.</b>	<b>113</b>
<b>Fig. 15</b>	<b>Satirical view of a “typical” Chaos magician.</b>	<b>144</b>
<b>Fig. 16</b>	<b>The construction of a sigil.</b>	<b>155</b>
<b>Fig. 17</b>	<b>The Chaos magician as “sorcerer scientist”.</b>	<b>171</b>
<b>Fig. 18</b>	<b>A “phallogentric” illustration of the “androgynous” Baphomet.</b>	<b>227</b>
<b>Fig. 19</b>	<b>Howard Philips Lovecraft.</b>	<b>252</b>
<b>Fig. 20</b>	<b>The Great Old One Cthulhu.</b>	<b>253</b>
<b>Fig. 21</b>	<b>Some of Rick’s designs for a set of “Lovecraftian” tarot cards.</b>	<b>261</b>
<b>Fig. 22</b>	<b>The symbol of the Haunters of the Dark.</b>	<b>263</b>
<b>Fig. 23</b>	<b>Jason’s computer-designed illustration of the HOD symbol.</b>	<b>264</b>
<b>Fig. 24</b>	<b>The Deep Ones.</b>	<b>276</b>

## Acknowledgements

I would like to thank my supervisors, Professor Brian Morris and Doctor Stephen Nugent, for their help, advice, and guidance throughout the course of this project. I would also like to thank: the members of my postgraduate committee, Professor Olivia Harris and Professor Nick Thomas; Doctor Mark Leopold, who kindly read and commented on the penultimate draft of the thesis; and Doctor Susan Greenwood, who encouraged me to undertake this project in the first place.

For enlightening discussions and their support in the field, I would like to say thank you to: fellow “psychonaut” and researcher Bill Redwood of University College, London; Doctor Dave Green of Bristol University; and Helen Cornish of Goldsmiths College. A special acknowledgment must also go to Bonnie Vandersteeg of Goldsmiths College, who (unknowingly, I think) helped to clarify some of the central concerns of the thesis. I would also like to thank: Doctor Sophie Day, Doctor Chris Shore, Sian Lazar, Daphne Chang, Saul Goode, Joy Miles, Max Carrochi, John Curran, Gill Barber and everyone else involved in the postgraduate writing-up group for their insightful comments and suggestions concerning my work; and Jenny Gault, Sheila Robinson, Lucy Taylor, Catherine, and Anna for the excellent and always-friendly administrative support over the years.

Thanks must also go to all those pagans and magicians who participated in the research project - I would like to take the opportunity to thank especially those otherwise nameless inhabitants of the Ghooric Zone, the Haunters of the Dark:

“We shall swim out to that brooding reef in the sea and dive down through black abysses to Cyclopean and many-columned Y’ha-nthlei, and in that lair of the Deep Ones we shall dwell amidst wonder and glory forever”.

A debt of gratitude must also go to my parents Phillip and Mary Woodman for reasons too numerous to list here, but which include computer support and giving me a home and a place to work. I would also like to thank my sister Joanne Woodman for the cross-disciplinary discussions concerning our respective theses. Finally, and most importantly, thanks and love to Doctor Jillian Spindura for her love, support and endurance over the past seven years.

“You preached to me that all change is grotesque, that the very possibility of change is evil. Yet in the book you declare ‘transformation as the only truth’ - the only truth of the Tsalal, the one who is without law or reason. ‘There is no nature to things,’ you wrote in the book. ‘There are no faces except masks held tight against the pitching chaos behind them.’ You wrote that there is not true growth or evolution in the life of this world but only transformations of appearance, an incessant melting and molding of surfaces without underlying essence. Above all you pronounced that there is no salvation of any being because no being exists as such, nothing exists to be saved - everything, everyone exists only to be drawn into the slow and endless swirling of mutations that we may see every second of our lives if we simply gaze through the eyes of the Tsalal.”

Thomas Ligotti, “The Tsalal”.

“It is in the poetry of need that magick captures us.”

Damien, Chaos magician.



# Chapter 1

## Chaos Magick and the Modernity of the Contemporary Magical Subculture.

### Part 1 - Defining the “Problem” of Chaos Magick.

#### Introduction

This thesis is based upon fieldwork conducted in London (between 1997 - 2001) amongst a loose community of groups and individuals calling themselves “Chaos magicians”. Chaos magick<sup>1</sup> appeared in United Kingdom as part of the wider neo-pagan and magical subculture during the late 1970’s, and was the creation of Peter Carroll and Ray Sherwin (Sutcliffe 1995: 127; Hawkins 1996: 31-34) - two magicians who formed the Pact of the Illuminates of Thanateros (IOT). The IOT has since become one of the better-known magical groups - with an international membership - devoted to the practice of Chaos magick.

For Chaos magicians, magic is concerned with the attainment of *gnosis* or expanded awareness through altered states of consciousness, and is the means of awakening practitioners to an unmediated experience of “Chaos”: a term denoting the inchoate, indeterministic and amoral life-force which forms the ontological foundation of the cosmos. *Gnosis* also enables Chaos magicians to engage the “magical will”: the single-pointed focusing of one’s intentionality and imagination. This allows practitioners to shape the nascent *potentia* of Chaos, and in doing so to transform both the substance and their perception of the world.

The term “occult” pertains to knowledge of that which is hidden (Truzzi 1974a: 243): merged with the therapeutics of spirit possession, Chaos magical practices also aim to make visible the “demons” of the psyche. Such demons are conceived of as socially-inculcated and unconscious fears, desires and habits which shape practitioners’ personae, and are often personified and imbued with a degree of

---

<sup>1</sup> The reasons for using this archaic spelling are given later in the chapter.



agency by Chaos magicians. Practitioners also believe that they can negotiate with or master these demons; demons thus form the locus of the project of self-transformation, which is another central aim of magical practice.

Recent analyses within the social sciences have tended to treat the Western magical subculture as a “space of unreason” (Greenwood 1998: 102; 2000: 2) in which the rationalising and alienating effects of modern consumer capitalism are resisted. However, this thesis examines the magical subculture through the analytical lens of another body of theory concerned with the “modernity” of witchcraft beliefs in a postcolonial African context (Comaroff & Comaroff *et al* 1993; Geschiere 1997; Clough & Mitchell 2001 *et al*; Moore & Sanders 2001 *et al*). This literature offers an alternative to the polarising tendency in anthropology which has equated witchcraft and magic with the “traditional” and the “non-rational”, and defined such beliefs and practices in morally dichotomous terms. In the latter case, the “anti-modernity” of Chaos magick becomes problematic; for Chaos magicians, the demonic is a highly ambivalent category (both morally and ontologically) which represents a source of both alienation *and* (within the context of spirit possession practices) creativity. As such, I argue that encounters with the demonic aspects of the self enable practitioners to construct contextual and contingent narratives of selfhood - narratives which are *commensurable* with the uncertainties and insecurities inherent in the “condition” of modernity. As Paul Heelas (1996: 3) argues, “New Age” spirituality (in which he includes neo-pagan and magical subcultures) challenges certain aspects of modernity, but it also incorporates many of modernity’s core values and assumptions - those of responsibility and self-reliance (Heelas 1996: 168) which form part of the utilitarian and individualistic “enterprising self” of capitalist modernity (Heelas 1991b: 74, 78). Similarly Susan Greenwood (2000: 10) suggests that neo-paganism also forms part of the individualistic discourses of modernity in searching for an experience of an “authentic” or core self.

Importantly, the modernity of Chaos magick is also evident in its practices, which incorporate the “modern” discourses of self-discipline and self-surveillance (Foucault 1977). As a result, the broadly libertarian and therapeutic goals of Chaos

magick also constitute a set of discursive practices attuned to the social, economic and ideological requirements of “late modernity”, and to its characteristic ontological and moral uncertainties (Lash & Friedman 1992, Giddens 1991, Beck 1992). Thus the Chaos magician Phil Hine not only states that “being a “good” magician...is being effective and adaptive in as many areas of one’s life as possible” (Hine 1996a: 48), but he also claims that Chaos magick has emerged “out of the twists of contemporary culture, a reflection and reification of the current social landscape” (Hine 1995: 175 -176). As a consequence, I demonstrate how the practices of Chaos magick - in reifying the "current social landscape" - may involve the consumption of neatly-packaged experiences of exotic otherness, drawn from the profusion of signs, images and "lifestyle options" characteristic of "late modern" consumer capitalism.

The thesis examines the way in which the ambivalent and sometimes contradictory Chaos magical discourses of the demonic articulate, reflect and mediate practitioners’ own ambivalent experiences of a rapidly changing and technologised socio-cultural arena. In this respect, the aims of the thesis are twofold. Firstly, it constitutes a preliminary investigation of an area which remains under-researched - and as a consequence has yet to be adequately addressed - within existing scholarly literature surrounding neo-paganism and contemporary Western magic: namely, the significance of the “darker”, demonic, antinomian and transgressive aspects of belief and practice. Secondly, by examining how practitioners view and construct everyday experience through the lens of the demonic, the thesis offers a more satisfying analytical conception of contemporary Western magic as intrinsic to, and not in violation of, modernity.

### **Chaos Magick - An Overview**

“Put a brick through your television; explore sexualities which are unusual to you. Do something you feel to be utterly revolting. You are free to do anything, no matter how extreme, so long as it will not restrict your own or somebody else’s future freedom of action” (Carroll 1987: 47).



The above quote is expressive of the libertarian and antinomian ethos of Chaos magick. A popular maxim amongst Chaos magicians - who view themselves as “postmodern” magicians advocating a radical epistemological and moral relativism - is “Nothing is True, Everything is Permitted”. In the absence of absolutes, practitioners posit the necessity of adopting a Nietzschean attitude of self-affirmation and self-creation. Through *gnosis*, Chaos magicians thus attempt to bypass the conditioning and conventions imposed upon the individual by culture, society, and ideology. This is sometimes referred to as *illumination* - the experience of Chaos, unmediated by socially-constructed and sublimated beliefs, expectations and desires.

Chaos magicians do, however, display an ambivalence towards authoritative epistemological discourses: whilst rejecting “positivist” science, they have embraced popular exegeses of quantum theory and the science of “chaos” or “non-linear dynamics”. Such ideas are used to promote and legitimise the view that the apparent structure and order of observable reality is not only founded upon indeterministic, acausal, and non-teleological bases, but is also nothing more than the product of perception and belief.

Chaos magick embodies a highly individualistic ethos, but also incorporates poststructuralist critiques of the bounded, autonomous and transcendent subject. For practitioners, the permanence of self-identity is a veneer (generated by the need to define a coherent self as a locus of certainty in a rapidly changing world) resting upon a conglomerate of multiple selves. These selves emerge from Chaos, which is sometimes referred to as the life-force *kia*. Chaos exists beyond the scope of rational comprehension, and was described by one magician as the “quantum void” where subatomic particle “pop in and out of existence”; it is without mind or morality, and its only purpose is to manifest within the phenomenal cosmos in increasingly variegated forms. Chaos is also the holistic reality - albeit without shape, substance, or essence - underlying the phenomenal world; as aspects of the Chaos force, both human selfhood and the cosmos-at-large are impermanent and fluctuating - in a state of process and becoming rather than *being*.

The truths, values and meanings held by practitioners are thus seen to be contingent and subject to continual revision; through their practices, Chaos magicians attempt to wilfully abandon systems of belief as they become redundant in the face of change. New beliefs and truths are then adopted (sometimes arbitrarily) through the practice known as *paradigm shifting*. Although Chaos magicians utilise recognised cultural beliefs within this process, they also invent their own cosmologies and beliefs, or use fictional ones drawn from popular media (such as science-fiction film and literature); in doing so, practitioners claim to undermine the categorical distinctions which separate the real and the unreal. These notions are also linked to discourses of utility and pragmatism found within Chaos magick, where the results attained through magical practice are seen as dependent on the belief invested in a given magico-religious system, rather than upon the inherent truth value of that system.

Chaos magicians refer to the practical aspects of magic as “sorcery” or “results magic”: the intentional causation of material effects within practitioners’ environment and everyday lives - typically, to attract wealth, employment or a lover - through the application of various magical techniques. Although sorcery may also be used to cause harm, Chaos magician’s use of the term thus differs substantially from classic anthropological definitions, i.e. as the use of supernatural powers or medicines for malicious purposes (Evans-Pritchard 1976: 176; Fortune 1932: 150).

### **Theorising the Contemporary Magical Subculture.**

Aleister Crowley famously defined “magick” as “the Science and Art of causing Change to occur in conformity with Will” (Crowley 1973: 131). Crowley used the archaic spelling “magick” in order to distinguish the manipulation of supernatural forces (for self-transformational and practical ends) from stage magic, prestidigitation and sleight-of-hand. Throughout the thesis, I also use the term *Chaos magick* because it reflects the common usage of practitioners. In all other instances, the ordinary spelling “magic” is used to denote general anthropological



conceptions of the term, i.e. the power to manipulate the external environment through the use of occult forces.

Traditional anthropological and sociological exegeses of magic, witchcraft and sorcery have tended to extrapolate such practices along broadly socio-functional axes (Fortune 1932; Malinowski 1948; Mauss 1950; Marwick *et al* 1970); or in reference to their “rationality”: either as quasi-scientific theoretical systems built on false premises (Frazer 1922) or as rational systems of thought which are unreflective as to possibilities existing outside of their own idiom (Evans-Pritchard 1976, Horton 1967).

More recently, a number of studies have attempted to step “beyond instrumentality” (Boddy 1994), stressing the symbolic, expressive, embodied, aesthetic or otherwise “non-rational” dimensions of ritual, trance, magic, witchcraft and sorcery (Favret Saada 1980; Stoller & Olkes 1987; Turner & Bruner 1985; Goodman 1988, 1992; Jackson 1989; Glucklich 1991; Kapferer 1991, 1995; Greenwood 2000). This theoretical shift appears to have informed the criticisms levelled at Chaos magick by both academics and pagans - namely the emphasis it places on instrumentality. Nevill Drury (2000: 134), for example, criticises Chaos magicians’ pragmatic use of magical techniques as a self-gratifying “trivialisation” of the consciousness-raising aspects of magic. This assumption also forms the basis of a gendered account of neo-paganism (see for example Greenwood 1995, 1996a, 1996b, 1998), one which is laudable but which nevertheless continues to mark the boundaries of an “authentic” field of study. Greenwood (1995) views the elements of rational instrumentality found in both Chaos magick and Thelema (the magical philosophy of Aleister Crowley - see below) as stereotypically masculine and patriarchal - emphasising what the feminist witch Starhawk (1990: 1-14) calls *power over*: the deployment of magical power upon or against nature over and above more “legitimate” goals: namely, psychotherapeutic self-transformation, and relatedness with sacred nature.

Greenwood’s work has, however, been far more inclusive of Chaos magick than that of other scholars, situating it within a continuum of beliefs and moral orientations (Greenwood 1996b; 2000: 179-208). Her lucid analysis of the

subculture recognises that neo-pagans' experience of magic is ideologically-shaped, and she is also cognisant of the abuses of power which occur in all forms of contemporary magical practice (Greenwood 2000: 138-143). There is also a great deal of justification for the gendered distinctions that she makes between "patriarchal" Chaos magick, and contemporary feminist witchcraft<sup>2</sup>. However, Greenwood seems to imply that feminist witchcraft is the more "genuine" form of magic because it emphasises the stereotypical feminine traits of intuition, relatedness, and emotionality (Greenwood 1995: 201). This authenticating view of the subculture is founded upon "symbolist" suppositions derived from a Levy-Bruhlian reading of magic as a non-rational, participatory and expressive mode of thought (Levy Bruhl 1966). While this approach reflects neo-pagans' concern with the symbolic nature of their magical universe, it also undervalues the importance of the pragmatic and theoretical dimensions of magic.

Furthermore, Chaos magical sorcery practices invariably involve *gnosis*; as a consequence, the instrumentality of sorcery (to affect external transformations) overlaps with the existential modality of *gnosis* (to affect inner change). This reiterates the holism that is fundamental to neo-paganism, in which the boundaries of the human self are seen as permeable with those of the external world, and where transformations of one's external environment are isomorphic with inner transformations (and vice-versa). Thus, for Chaos magicians, the magical transformation the environment often involves practitioners in a process of self-analysis and self-construction, which also affirms their oneness with the cosmos-at-large. This may then lead Chaos magicians to accept of a set of moral responsibilities that effectively mediate their relationship with the divine cosmos.

In encompassing its poetic-expressive, rational-instrumental and theoretical uses, Crowley's definition of magic as both art and science does, perhaps, represent a useful trope for understanding the complexities of the category. The practice of Chaos magick openly stresses instrumental as well as symbolic, expressive, and performative dimensions. Chaos magick *is* a theory that delineates the underlying mechanics of causality (or more accurately, acausality); but it is also recognised as:

---

<sup>2</sup> See chapter five.



a form of symbolic action, a psychological tool, a body of shamanic-styled practices aimed at exploring and transforming the self, and the lived experience of a “non-rational” reality.

Recent studies of the Western magical subculture (Luhrmann 1989; York 1995; Heelas 1996; Lewis 1996; Harvey 1997; Hanegraaf 1998a; Greenwood 2000; see also collections by Harvey & Hardman 1995; Lewis 1996; Pearson, Roberts & Samuel 1998; Sutcliffe & Bowman 2000) have presented wide surveys of the field. In what constitutes an already marginal area of academic discourse, these studies have further marginalised Chaos magick or ignored it altogether. A notable example is Ronald Hutton’s (1999a) recent, exhaustive history of neo-paganism. While discussing many of the individuals who have figured prominently in the historical development of Chaos magick, Hutton’s book contains no reference to Chaos magick whatsoever. Although other scholars have recognised Chaos magick as one of many “traditions” or perspectives existing within the contemporary magical subculture, its validity as a “genuine” part of the phenomenon has been questioned. Graham Harvey (1997: 100), for example, implies that while other pagans are engaged in an authentic spiritual quest, Chaos magicians are more concerned with the superficial enactment of magical ideas and values. As I show later in the thesis, elements of “fantasy” and “play-acting” are present in Chaos magick (as they are in many forms of neo-paganism); however, I also argue that among Chaos magicians, a sense of “inner” transformation, “spirituality” or the sacred emerges tangentially from sorcery practices.

Tanya Luhrmann (1989) presents a fairly unambiguous and homogenous demographic of the “mainstream” magical subculture, presenting practitioners as uniformly white, university-educated, and middle-class (Luhrmann 1989: 7, 29, 99-111; see also Greenwood 2000: 3), often employed in the computer industry (Luhrmann 1989: 106-107). On the other hand, Luhrmann views Chaos magick as constituted through the aggressive and romantic imaginings of working class, unemployed adolescent males whose main interests are heavy-metal music and motorcycles (Luhrmann 1989: 29, 97). Elements of adolescent antinomianism were often powerfully present in a number of the Chaos magical rituals I witnessed, but

nonetheless Luhrmann's analysis is problematic in conflating one constituent part with the phenomenon in its entirety<sup>3</sup>. The elite status of "mainstream" neo-pagans is further defined in relation to their reading habits: the implicit assumption being that neo-pagans are middle class by virtue of the fact that they read widely<sup>4</sup>, and vice versa. Chaos magicians, Luhrmann tellingly adds, are only "interested enough in magic to buy some books" (Luhrmann 1989: 35, 97).

The social reality I encountered in the field was somewhat different. Certainly, many of the neo-pagans and Chaos magicians I met at various conferences, symposiums and "moots" came from lower middle-class or upper working class backgrounds. The social and economic status (and reading habits) of Chaos magicians did not, therefore, diverge in significant ways from those of other pagans: out of the fifty or so Chaos magicians I met, most were employed in mid-range clerical or administrative posts, but I knew of at least four individuals who were completing university degree courses, and others held professional positions (see section three of this chapter)<sup>5</sup>. The majority of Chaos magicians had also participated in other forms of magical practice formerly defined as falling within the purview of white middle class professionals - witchcraft in most cases - prior to their involvement in Chaos magick.

Recent analyses of neo-paganism thus appear to replicate an earlier set of essentialising anthropological discourses which located the authenticity of religious traditions within elite, textual and literary recensions. These discourses have since been problematised (see for example Southwold 1982) - insofar as they have uncritically reflected colonialist and evolutionary assumptions in subordinating the beliefs of a rural or uneducated underclass to those of a literate elite. The association of Chaos magick with members of the working class would seem, to some degree, to represent a similar attempt to colonise magic by those

---

<sup>3</sup>Jaq Hawkins claims that during its inception, the IOT was comprised mainly of university-qualified professionals (Hawkins 1996: 33). My own experiences within the field also indicated a different demographic picture to the generalised one painted by Luhrmann. See below (and chapter five) for a more detailed analysis of the practitioners' backgrounds.

<sup>4</sup> This is not always explicitly stated, but indicated in some of the analyses in question - see for example Luhrmann (1989: 119, 238-239) and Greenwood (2000: 11, 84).

<sup>5</sup> A small number of the university-educated Chaos magicians I knew were unemployed and lived in squats; conversely, other Chaos magicians hailing from working class backgrounds held professional



predominantly white, middle class scholars (in whose number I include myself) studying the field.

This categorisation-by-class has undoubtedly played a positive role in undermining the exoticism and sensationalism to which the magical subculture has been subjected: in representing neo-pagans as members of a “rational”, educated elite, the perceived “deviant” or “irrational” nature of magic is not only challenged, but magic becomes validated as a form of cultural practice. However (and somewhat paradoxically) the inference that magic is in some way reasonable or rational runs counter to a general assumption prevalent within the emergent anthropology of neo-paganism: that the subculture represents a non-rational space of resistance to the debilitating effects of the wider, rational culture (Greenwood 1998: , 2000: 2).

### **Between Black Magick and The Left-Hand Path**

Greenwood (2000: 9) notes that the New Age and the neo-pagan and magical subculture share both an holistic philosophy and similar ideals and thus form part of a continuum of alternative Western spiritualities<sup>6</sup>. Drawing on the work of Michael York (1995), she suggests that differences lie in the fact that

“the New Age tends to de-emphasize the material and emphasize the spiritual, while Neo-paganism is seen as ‘perhaps more balanced’; furthermore, the New Age stresses ‘White Light’, whereas Neo-paganism incorporates both the light and the dark (York 1995)” (Greenwood 2000: 10).

If the New Age represents the “light”, and neo-paganism the balancing of light and dark magical “energies”, movements such as Chaos magick, Satanism, and Thelema are - in emphasising materialism and the “darkside” of human nature - seen to represent the “darker” end of this continuum. In two historical overviews of this “darkside” of the Western magical tradition, Richard Cavendish (1967; 1975) thus suggests that “the Black Arts” represent a morally-problematic form of self-

---

posts in computing, publishing, and conference organising.

<sup>6</sup> Luhrmann (1989:30-31), Heelas (1996: 1) and Hanegraaf (1998: 79) similarly subsume neo-pagan

validation and deification: “a titanic attempt to exalt the stature of man, to put man in the place which religious thought reserves for God” (Cavendish 1975: 9). But as Richard Sutcliffe suggests, this identification of certain forms of magical practice as “Black magic” is “outmoded and value-laden” (Sutcliffe 1995: 110; see also Shual 1995: vi). Sutcliffe makes the important semantic point of redefining “black magical” practices as aspects of “the Left-Hand Path”: a term originating in Eastern Tantric practices (Grant 1972: 39; 1975b: 2). He argues that Left-Hand Path magic is not concerned with supernatural evil, but with an “attempt to engage in magical praxis which does not accept externally imposed limitations, but rather tries to celebrate the totality of human experience in all of its folly and grandeur” (Sutcliffe 1995: 131; see also Harvey 1997: 97).

As mentioned earlier, Greenwood has argued that the Nietzschean orientation of Left-Hand Path magic is intrinsically linked to egoic, patriarchal modes of rational instrumentality and the control of nature. However, many of the Left-Hand Path magicians I encountered claimed to be seeking an experience of the self as something that was *identical with* rather than standing in a *relationship to* the underlying divinity, “will”, or impetus of the cosmos. Within this view, the magician’s own agency and responsibility as a spiritual being is stressed over and above placing one’s faith in an external supernatural force for spiritual guidance. For example, in a talk given at Ananke (a magical symposium held during 1999 in central London), the Chaos magician Dave Lee outlined what appeared to be an autobiographical account (but delivered in the third person) of drug-related experiences which led to a magical awakening to the Left Hand Path:

“He knew what it meant to feel a living, sensuous part of everything, everything working out perfectly...And more than anything, 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”.

Importantly, the identification of the self with the divine powers of the cosmos is not the same as self-deification, or the exaltation of the ego to divine status. As

---

and magical subcultures under the rubric of the “New Age”.



Sutcliffe points out, the aim of Left-Hand Path magic is “to unite the microcosmic human with the macrocosmic Universe” (Sutcliffe 1995: 124). In this respect, forms of Left-Hand Path magick share with neo-paganism and the New Age an interest in the “spiritualised” or non-egoic self; together, these movements constitute a broad category of detraditionalised religiosity which Heelas calls “self-spirituality” (Heelas 1996: 2).

While Sutcliffe’s definition does represent a useful analytical tool for understanding the moral dimensions of movements such as Chaos magick, the general application of the term “Left-Hand Path” needs some qualification: while many of the magicians I knew embraced their identity as followers of the Left-Hand Path, others found the term problematic. In 1999, I interviewed Gerald Suster, a Thelemic magician and author (who died in 2001). During the interview, Gerald contested my assumption that he was a “Left Hand Path” magician - a term he associated with the “Black Brothers”: those magicians who selfishly sought power through deifying - rather than transcending - the human ego. Contemporary Satanism - the one aspect of the magical “darkside” which has attracted a degree of scholarly interest (see for example Moody 1974, 1993; Alfred 1976; Graham Scott 1983; Harvey 1995a; Lowney 1995; La Fontaine 1999)<sup>7</sup> - is also a case in point. Satanists often refer to themselves as followers of the Left-Hand Path, but form an exception to Sutcliffe’s use of the term insofar as their ideology often incorporates notions of self-deification<sup>8</sup>, and also stresses materialism over spiritual transcendence.

### **Chaos Magick and Modernity**

Academic studies of neo-paganism - the invented historicity of which is ably demonstrated in Hutton’s work (1991; 1996; 1998; 1999a; 1999b ) - tend to take

---

<sup>7</sup> Allegations of Satanic-abuse which emerged in America and Europe in the mid-1980s have also formed another important focus of study. The majority of academic studies of this phenomenon have, however, concluded that such allegations represents a socially-constructed mythology - one emerging from the increased public awareness of the existence child-abuse, and exacerbated in many cases by influential evangelical Christians echoing public concerns about social disorder and the disruption of the traditional nuclear family (Nathan 1991; Nathen & Snedeker 1995; Richardson, Best & Bromley *et.al.* 1991; Victor 1993; La Fontaine 1994, 1998).

<sup>8</sup> See chapter two for a more detailed discussion of contemporary Satanism.



notions of an imagined past as the reference point for understanding their subject. One of the consequences of this is tendency to overemphasise and even mythologise the “anti-modernity” of neo-paganism. Not only is this theoretical orientation “simplistic and incompatible with the evidence” (Hanegraaf 1998b: 25), but it bolsters a problematic association of magic with the “traditional”, and also romanticises the ethnographic “other” as the principle site of resistance to the alienating effects of modernity (Kahn 1997; Mitchell 2001b: 78-79). Furthermore, the modernity which paganism is seen to resist is treated in oversimplified terms as a kind of monolithic epoch singularly dominated by secular rationality.

In his study of the resurgence of witchcraft in Cameroon during the 1970’s, Peter Geschiere (1997) shows that witchcraft and magical beliefs are not only used to resist new inequalities of power that are the consequences of modernity, but they are also used in support of the very same process of modernisation. While offering important critiques of classical anthropological theories of magic, this recasting of the witchcraft debate suggests ways of applying modified versions of those theories in less problematic and non-ethnocentric ways. These arguments do, in fact, bear some similarities to earlier functionalist and psychological reconstructions of magic: in claiming that magical thought is operationalised at the limits of technical knowledge, Malinowski (1948: 30-31, 90) argued that magic has a psychological function in alleviating anxiety in the face of uncertainty. If witchcraft beliefs manage anxiety by “explaining” the invisible and occluded nature of a modern capitalist economy in Cameroon, here I suggest that the notion of the demonic operates in a similarly “modern” fashion for European Chaos magicians - functioning as a theoretical model of hidden causes couched in a personalised idiom (Horton 1967).

I also suggest that the contemporary Western magical subculture does in fact represent a “radicalized rendering” of certain values and assumptions of modernity (Heelas 1996: 115). In its rejection of both hierarchical clericalism and the external authority of religious revelation, Howard Eilberg-Schwartz (1985) argues that neo-paganism represents an extension of Enlightenment thought; he also suggests that the relativistic and postmodern aspects of neo-paganism represents a continuation

of modernity by turning the Enlightenment critique of religion against its own “cult of Reason” ( Eilberg-Schwartz 1985: 93). As Anthony Giddens also argues, “[m]odernity institutionalises the principle of radical doubt”, which is itself an intrinsic characteristic of Enlightenment critical reason (Giddens 1991: 3, 21 see also Giddens 1990: 39-40).

The issue of historicity and tradition informs studies of neo-paganism in other ways. That scholars such as Harvey and Greenwood - and to a lesser extent Hutton - closely identify with their subject invokes methodological issues concerning reflexivity. In identifying with or even sharing the beliefs of their subjects, they also appear to unconsciously appropriate some of neo-paganism’s assumptions concerning Chaos magick. In this respect, an admission of sharing the beliefs of one’s informants is often seen to be enough, and reflexivity is rarely used to unpick researchers’ own negative biases towards Satanism, Thelema and Chaos magick. Thus, some of these scholars also appear to uncritically accept or share informants’ claims that contemporary Satanism is a phenomenon historically unconnected to neo-paganism (Luhmann 1989: 81-85; York 1995: 182). However, when pressed on this point, I found that many pagans recognised both neo-paganism and contemporary Satanism as sharing common historical and intellectual roots: this appears to have been implicitly (but publicly) acknowledged on at least one occasion, when David Austin (the head of the UK section of a Satanist organisation known as the Temple of Set) was invited to speak at the annual conference of the Pagan Federation (a national umbrella organisation of British pagans) in October 2002.

This identification with and assimilation of ideas and beliefs has also generated a circularity which has obscured a deeper understanding of Chaos magick: these scholars not only assume but give academic legitimacy to the views of their subjects, and in doing so inadvertently reify areas of conflict between Chaos magicians and other pagans. This is further problematised by the fact that Chaos magicians *also* reiterate academic discourse in challenging the claims of neo-pagans: namely, the recognition that contemporary paganism is an “invented tradition” (Hobsbawn & Ranger 1983), not the continuation of an archaic, pan-



European and pre-Christian fertility religion<sup>9</sup>. Nevertheless, scholars of neo-paganism tend to define Chaos magick in obliquely judgmental terms, situating it within a hierarchy of practices - some of which are deemed to be somehow ideologically or historically more “authentic”.

Some clarification is required here as to how the concept of “modernity” is treated throughout the thesis. In one respect, Chaos magick is treated as modern in an almost tautological sense - in that it is a historically-recent innovation. I also treat the category of “modernity” as inclusive of the seemingly “postmodern” ways “in which we experience and relate to modern thought, modern conditions and modern ways of life” (Smart 1993: 39). A concern with the uncertain, the disorderly, the ambivalent is not, however, exclusive to what is often defined as “postmodernity”, but appear to be intrinsic to the aims and characteristics of modernity (Heelas 1996: 135-152; see also Hetherington 1997) as the project of rational progress. As Barry Smart suggests,

“[o]rder and disorder are inextricably connected, they are simultaneously constituted and spiral...around the axis of modernity. Hence the perpetual preoccupation with the elimination or reduction of disorder...in modern forms of life. A preoccupation which is regenerated and reconstituted through the realisation that ordering interventions seem to promote other disorders, to precipitate effects or ‘unintended consequences’ of disorder” (Smart 1993: 41-42).

In face of these uncertainties and new forms of risk (Beck 1992), the postmodern aspects of Chaos magick are intrinsic to modernity as “a way of living with the doubts, uncertainties and anxieties which seem increasingly to be a corollary of modernity” (Smart 1993: 12). Rather than treating postmodernity as an epochal break from modernity, I treat postmodernity as emerging consequentially from and in relation to, modernity. Rather than make the assumption that Chaos magick is “essentially” postmodern, I consider it to be an aspect of “late” or “reflexive” modernity.

---

<sup>9</sup> An argument first forwarded by Egyptologist Margaret Murray (1921) and used by Gerald Gardner to legitimise the view that modern witchcraft represented a continuation of this supposedly-historical tradition. Murray’s view has been heavily criticised by Thomas (1971: 614-615) and Cohn (1993b: 152-161), but also revived in a heavily modified form by Ginzburg (1991).



## **Part 2 - The Historical and Cultural Context**

### **The Magical Subculture in the United Kingdom**

This section presents a potted genealogy of the influences that have shaped Chaos magical beliefs and ideas. This genealogy (see fig. 1) is by no means comprehensive, and the significance of some of these historical and cultural sources is further elaborated in the appropriate sections of the thesis: I return to the topic of Satanism in chapter two, Taoism and shamanism are discussed in chapter four, whilst chapter six includes a detailed discussion of the sci-fi genre.

I begin the section with a brief overview of ceremonial magic and witchcraft, both of which have played a significant role in shaping the contours of the contemporary magical subculture in the UK (Greenwood 2000).

*Ceremonial or High magic.* Ceremonial or high magic is derived from early Hellenistic and Egyptian magic (Jones 1995: 32-37; Hutton 1996: 4), and formed part of the Hermetic tradition of Renaissance Europe. Platonism, Neo-Platonism, and Gnosticism - all of which emphasise a hierarchical cosmology in which matter is subordinate to spirit - have also exerted a profound influence upon ceremonial magic. In fact, a “Gnostic” sensibility permeates much New Age and Chaos magical thought; this is, however, more closely related to the sociological context of Chaos magick and so a discussion of historical Gnosticism occurs in part three of the chapter.

Ceremonial magic represents a system of evoking and controlling supernatural forces through often-complex rituals. For modern magicians, the control of these forces is seen as a way of externalising and developing the magician’s inner power along a route of spiritual development or evolution.

The contemporary origins of ceremonial magic lie within the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn, a magical order that appeared in England towards the end of the Nineteenth century. The magical practices of the Golden Dawn were founded upon the kabbalah - an Hebraic magico-mystical and numerological system. Central to the kabbalah is the Tree of Life (see fig.2) - a symbol representing the hierarchy of spiritual forces immanent in the cosmos, first manifesting from the divine Godhead at the uppermost *sephira* (plural, *sephiroth*) of *Kether* (“the Crown”) or the

fountainhead of pure spirit (Parfitt 1988: 170), continuing down through the twenty-two paths connecting the *sepiroth* to *Malkuth* (“the Kingdom”), or the realm of materiality, the body and the senses (Parfitt 1988: 38). The kabbalah constitutes a developing system of mystical and magical correspondences, wherein particular Tarot cards, astrological symbols, colours, gems, plants, elements, perfumes, animals, gods, angels and spirits are attributed to each of the sephiroth and the connecting pathways (see for example Crowley 1977). In effect, the Tree of Life represents an *absolute* cartography of the cosmos: every aspect of existence may be mapped onto it as manifestations of the spiritual energies which infuse the cosmos. As the magician David Ovason claims, these spiritual forces are present in even the most mundane aspects of daily life:

“the intention to make a cup of tea may not appear to be magical, yet, because it involves the unconscious evoking of elemental Spirits, it is in fact a magical act. One cannot warm water without the aid of the salamanders; the water itself is the proper domain of the undines; the cup, utensils and the leaves being boiled are in the realm of the gnomes, while the steam is the domain of the sylphs. Once the veil is rent, the true spiritual significance of even our most simple-seeming actions is revealed” (Ovason 1999: 480, n.67).

This view also invokes the key holistic principle of Western ceremonial magic (sometimes called the Western Mysteries tradition), expressed in the central dictum of Renaissance Hermeticism: *as above, so below*. As mentioned earlier, this principle is based upon the recognition of the permeability of magician’s consciousness (the microcosm) with the divine forces of the cosmos (the macrocosm).

Ceremonial magic delineates a cosmological process by which higher, spiritual emanations descend into matter. By utilising visualisations, meditations and rituals based around a complex system of symbolic correspondences, ceremonial magicians aim to “rise through the inner planes” of spiritual consciousness (represented by the *sephiroth*) until they attain union with their “higher self”, and ultimately with the Godhead. Much of what is identified as the contemporary occult or esoteric subculture thus incorporates Christianised notions



of a fall from grace (Greenwood 2000: 184), and the search for salvation via an “upward” spiritual evolution towards the recapitulation of a state of divine self-completion. Although Chaos magicians tend to reject notions of teleological progress, a variant of this project is, I argue, central to practitioners’ own particular quest for “wholeness”.

A number of contemporary ceremonial magic groups or “lodges” claim to trace their lineage to the Golden Dawn. As noted, ceremonial magic has recognisable moral and spiritual roots within the Judeo-Christian tradition, and some groups only accept practising Christians as members. However, exceptions to this are those ceremonial magicians following the work of Aleister Crowley - a one-time member of the Golden Dawn who developed an explicitly anti-Christian magical philosophy (see below).

*Witchcraft.* Contemporary witchcraft or Wicca appeared in England in the 1940s and was popularised in the work of Gerald Gardner, an ex-civil servant who claimed to have been initiated into a coven of witches in the New Forest in 1939 (Hutton 1999a: 206). Wicca is the worship of the Earth in feminine form, under the guise of various Goddess figures (Diana, Isis, Hecate and Artemis, for example), although it also recognises a masculine “Horned God”. Wicca celebrates female power, fertility and intuition, and Wiccan rituals mirror the “natural” cyclical process of birth, death and rebirth (also represented by the threefold concept of the goddess as virgin, mother and crone) - through four main seasonal rituals or sabbats which fall on the equinoxes and solstices. Through his association with Gardner, parts of the rituals found within modern witchcraft were also derived from Aleister Crowley’s writings (Hutton 1999a: 217); as a result, modern witchcraft appears to have emerged - at least partially - from within the Western Hermetic tradition of ceremonial magic (Greenwood 2000: 111).

Chaos magick stands on the interstices between witchcraft and ceremonial magic: Chaos magicians have drawn heavily on the ideas developed by Aleister Crowley, but reject what they see as the unnecessarily complex ritualism, rigid hierarchies, and overdetermined symbolism found in ceremonial magic. Many of the Chaos magicians I knew first became involved in paganism through Wicca, and



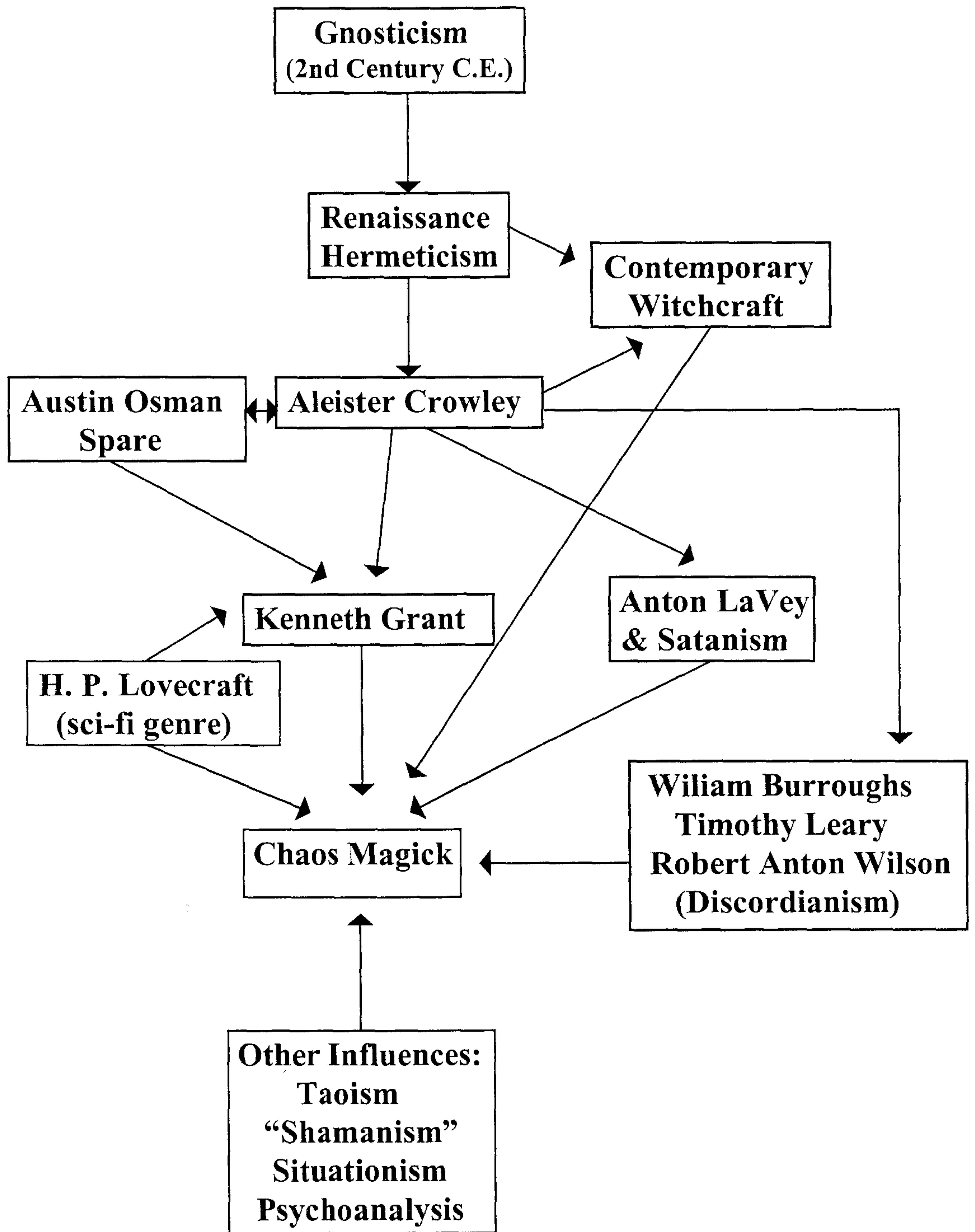


Fig. 1 - a genealogy of Chaos magick.

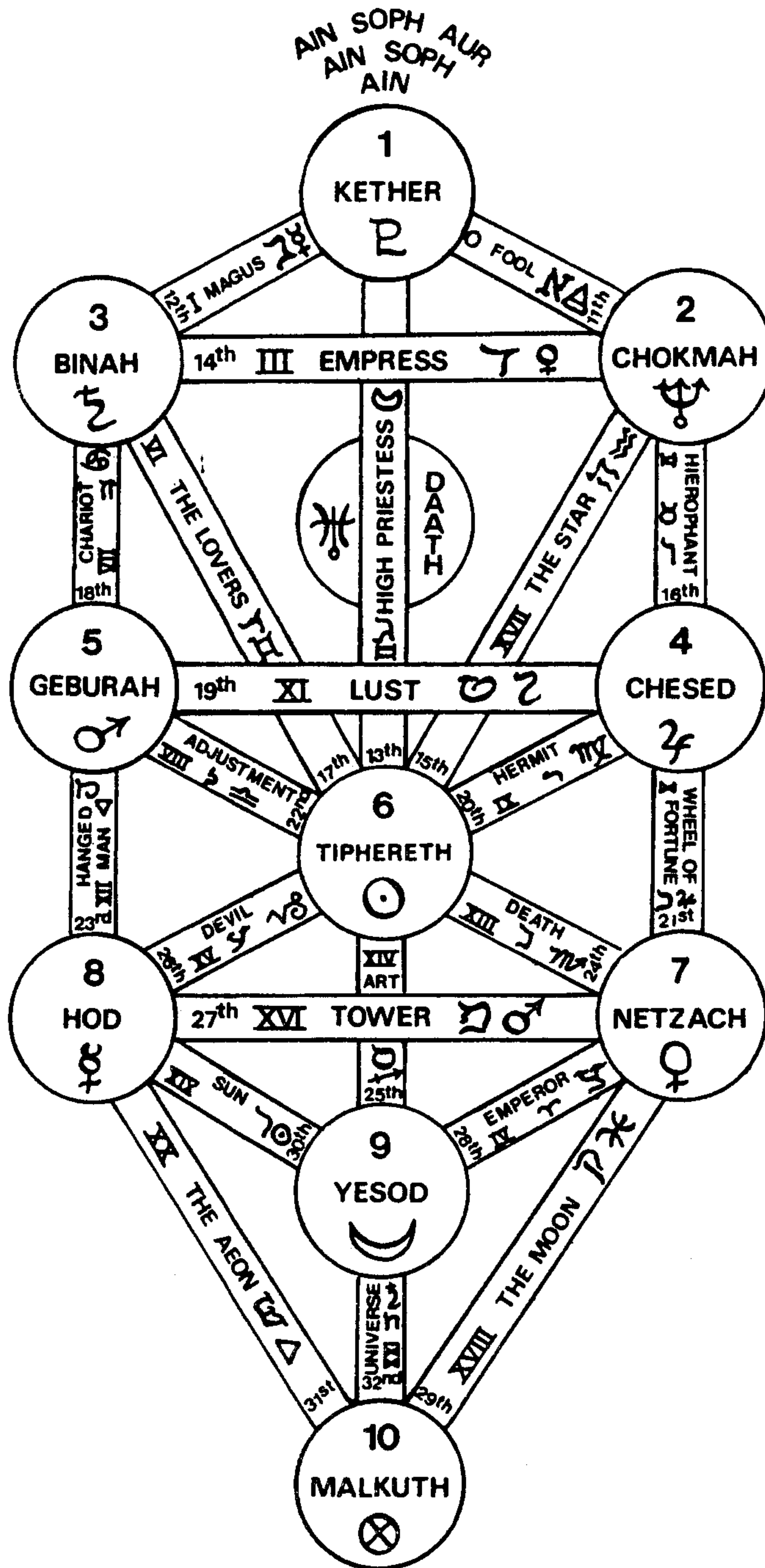


Fig. 2 - the kabbalistic Tree of Life.

preferred to utilise the more “shamanic” practices associated with Wiccan practice; “naturalistic” Wiccan elements are also incorporated in the symbolism of the “horned god” of Chaos magick, Baphomet. However, the figure of Baphomet as used in the context of Chaos magick can be traced back to Crowley<sup>10</sup>. Chaos magick is not, however, simply a partial synthesis of these two streams of contemporary neo-pagan and magical thought; its ethos draws inspiration from a number of sources, including (as indicated earlier) secular scientific thought. In the following sections, I outline some of the recent influences which have shaped the Chaos magickal ethos.

### **Crowley, Spare, and Grant: The “Founding Fathers” of Chaos Magick**

*Aleister Crowley and the Law of Thelema*: Aleister Crowley (1875-1947) is perhaps one of the most recognisable and influential figures within the Western magical subculture (see fig. 3). Crowley (1969) details his own spiritual development in a monumental and self-absorbed “autohagiography”, *The Confessions of Aleister Crowley*<sup>11</sup>. Although the book passed relatively unnoticed at the time of its initial publication, it has - along with Crowley’s (1973) other major work, *Magick* - since become something of a countercultural classic.

Whilst in Cairo in 1904, Crowley’s wife Rose Kelley spontaneously entered into a trance state and began channelling an entity calling itself “Aiwass” (Crowley 1969: 393-395, 397). Over a period of three days, Aiwass dictated - through Rose Kelly - a document known as *The Book of the Law*. Embodied in this text is an individualistic and millennialist philosophy, the central message of which is “do what thou wilt shall be the whole of the law”. Crowley interpreted this to mean that the practice of “magick” entailed the uncovering of one’s “true will” or authentic spiritual nature. This formed the basis of an anarchistic, Nietzschean and anti-Christian magical philosophy which Crowley called “Thelema” (the Greek for “will”), involving the rejection of “restrictive” beliefs and ideologies - Christianity being a particular target of Crowley’s millennial spleen. Crowley came to see

---

<sup>10</sup> See chapter two.

<sup>11</sup> Notable non-academic biographies of Crowley include those by Symonds (1989) and Regardie (1989)



himself as the herald of the “Aeon of Horus”<sup>12</sup>: an emergent, spiritual zeitgeist prophesied in *The Book of the Law*, and characterised by a new anti-Christian dispensation in which “[t]he word of Sin is Restriction” (Crowley 1938: 23).

Crowley’s burgeoning interest in the use of sex for altering consciousness (and freeing the self from Christian mores) led him into contact with the Ordo Templi Orientis (OTO): a magical order whose practices were based on Eastern Tantric principles, and founded by Karl Kellner in Germany during the early years of the Twentieth century (King 1971: 96). Crowley joined the OTO in 1912, and in 1922 was appointed leadership of the organisation (King 1989: 125). The OTO - now commonly known as the Caliphate OTO - continues to function as one of the principle carriers of Thelemic magical ideology in Europe and America.

Although Chaos magick rejects the Kantian notion of a transcendent core self implicit in Crowley’s concept of the “true will”, practitioners have nonetheless been profoundly influenced by Crowley’s claim that the final determinants of truth, convention and morality lay within the individual. More importantly, Crowley’s flamboyant lifestyle (including extensive drug-taking and sexual experimentation) is viewed by many Chaos magicians as a useful template for deconditioning the self from societal norms (Hine 1995: 16).

*Austin Spare*: the English artist and magician Austin Osman Spare (1888-1957)<sup>13</sup> is perhaps the most significant figure in the development of Chaos magick (see fig. 4), whose practitioners often refer to him as the “grandfather” of Chaos magick.

The basis of Chaos magick’s antinomian and indeterministic framework are indicated in Spare’s work - importantly, Spare’s rejection of late Nineteenth/early Twentieth century magical “orthodoxy” led him to originate a highly eclectic and individualistic psycho-magical system - outlined in *The Book of Pleasure* (Spare 1913).

According to Francis King, Spare

---

<sup>12</sup> Horus is the hawk-headed solar deity of ancient Egypt - the sun being an emblem of the realisation of one’s “true will” in Crowley’s system.

<sup>13</sup> For biographical details of Spare, see Wallace (1987a, 1987b) and the volume edited by Grant & Grant (1998).

“believed that any desire deeply felt in the inmost centre of human consciousness was capable of fulfilment, but he devised new techniques, altogether simpler than those of the magical tradition, for attaining the fulfilment of desire” (King 1989: 183-184).

One such technique outlined in *The Book of Pleasure* is the system of “sigilisation” which Chaos magicians have adopted as a standard sorcerous practice<sup>14</sup>. Like Crowley, Spare’s magical thought also elicits distinct Nietzschean influences, particularly in the emphasis placed on the “transvaluation of values” through psychological transformation (Wallace 1987a: 8). The notion of *kia* - a term used to denote the unadulterated potential of unmanifest, “universal” consciousness entrapped within everyday, dualistic consciousness - is another important magical concept developed by Spare which has since been utilised by Chaos magicians.

*Kenneth Grant*: the Thelemic magician Kenneth Grant was both a protégé of Aleister Crowley and a close friend of Spare<sup>15</sup>, and has (since the 1970’s) published numerous exegeses of both Crowley and Spare’s thought. Grant’s influence upon Chaos magick is significant - as such, more detailed expositions of his work appears at relevant points throughout the thesis. Grant currently heads the Typhonian OTO, an UK-based schismatic offshoot of the Caliphate OTO.

According to Grant (1972: 195; 1975a: 42-52), Spare’s principle magical “formula” was that of “atavistic resurgence”: within trance states, the magician is able to experience the undifferentiated life-force of *kia* in the atavistic, primordial levels of human consciousness. Grant thus reverses the trajectory utilised by other ceremonial magicians, who seek spiritual enlightenment by travelling “upwards” upon the Tree of Life. For Grant, spiritual evolution is facilitated by an exploration and understanding of the chthonic levels of the psyche, and much of his work (1972, 1973, 1975a, 1975b, 1977, 1980, 1992, 1994, 1999, 2002) is concerned with the “demonic” forces inhabiting the “Tunnels of Set” (which exist on the “flipside” of the Tree of Life). According to Grant, these powerful forces contain the potential to radically transform the magician’s consciousness, and propel it into an state which lies beyond both being and non-being. Grant admits that this is a highly

---

<sup>14</sup> See chapter three.

<sup>15</sup> Grant first met Spare in London during the 1940s (Grant & Grant 1998).



dangerous enterprise; but the inhabitants of the Tunnels of Set are not treated by Grant as fundamentally evil forces - it is simply the case that we perceive them as evil because they are so alien to everyday human consciousness. By embracing the demonic as an idiom of alien otherness, the self-other divide is collapsed, the magician is projected into the undifferentiated continuum of cosmic consciousness and, ultimately, toward an evolution into new, “extraterrestrial” or “extradimensional” modes of being. In this respect, Grant’s thought reverberates powerfully with a number of other countercultural discourses which have informed Chaos magick, and which are discussed in the next section.

### **Countercultural and Literary Influences**

Chaos magick represents a continuation and development of anti-authoritarian countercultural discourses which emerged in Europe and America during the 1960s; a number of iconic countercultural figures - including William Burroughs, Timothy Leary, and Robert Anton Wilson - have served as important sources of inspiration for Chaos magicians. In this section, I have also included a discussion of science-fiction literature and contemporary Satanism - aspects of the 1960s mystical counterculture which have also influenced Chaos magick.

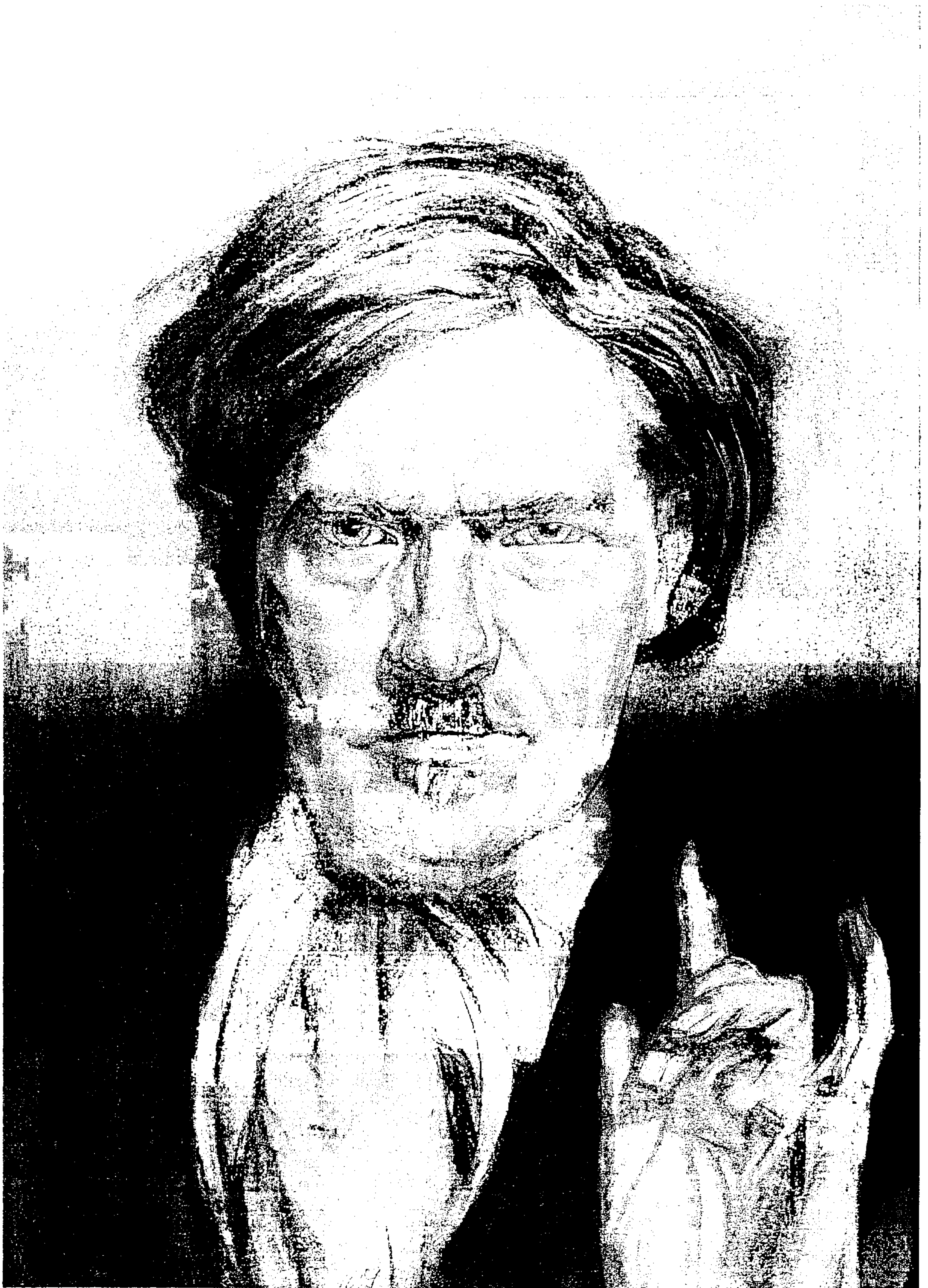
*William Burroughs:* Burroughs’ exposition of language as an idiom of power and control, and his questioning of our socially- and linguistically-circumscribed perception of time and reality, have become issues of central concern to Chaos magicians in their “war against reality”. In attempting to unpick the mediated nature of time and reality, Burroughs applied the literary technique of the “cut-up” (developed by Brion Gysin). This technique involves the arbitrary restructuring of “the word” (Burroughs 1985: 48) - those coherent and linear narratives (whether a piece of writing, music or a series of images) which imbue our perception of reality with the semblance of intractability - into a random montage; it was used by Burroughs to elicit different meanings and perceptions which lay beyond “authoritative” and lineal descriptions of reality. In this respect, Burroughs’ work has informed Chaos magicians’ interest in non-linearity (otherwise drawn from contemporary scientific discourses - see below), and in the possibilities of





Fig. 3 - Aleister Crowley.





**Fig. 4 - Austin Osman Spare (self-portrait).**



restructuring one's experience and perception of an otherwise socially-constructed universe.

*Timothy Leary and Robert Anton Wilson:* Timothy Leary's influence upon Chaos magick is profound but less immediate than Burroughs'; most Chaos magicians are familiar with Leary's work through Robert Anton Wilson's book *Prometheus Rising* (Wilson 1983), which examines Leary's "eight-circuit" model of consciousness. Each of these "circuits" represent a stage in humanity's psychic evolution, and Wilson claims that psycho-magical techniques can be used to raise consciousness to the eighth level of "non-localised", "cosmic" or "extraterrestrial" consciousness. This model of consciousness holds that many aspects of human culture - particularly religious and political institutions - have lead the species into an evolutionary dead end. More recently, Leary's work has been explored in relation to Chaos magical ideas in Dave Lee's (1997) book, *Chaotopia*. According to Lee, humanity is currently trapped within the fourth or "moralistic-social" circuit of consciousness where

"culture attempts to control the bonding of breeding pairs and instruct the young adult in how to pass on the narrow tunnel vision of the tribe's moral codes to the next generation" (Lee 1997: 17).

As a consequence, Chaos magicians believe that culturally-determined modes of thought and behaviour must be transcended if the species is to expand its awareness and "get off planet" (as one of my informant's put it). Accordingly, access to the higher circuits of consciousness allow the magician to reprogram thought and behaviour as a method of "immunising the self against infection by religion or ideology" (Lee 1997: 19).

*Discordianism:* created by Kerry Thornley in the late 1960s (Adler 1979: 293-294), Discordianism is an "invented" religion based upon a mystical exegesis of Eris (the Greek goddess of discord). Its central motto is "We Discordians must stick apart" (Melton 1978: 300) and like Chaos magick, Discordianism expounds a radically relativistic, individualistic and anti-doctrinal stance: anyone can join the "religion" by simply proclaiming themselves a Discordian; in doing so each



“member” is automatically ordained a Pope of the religion, and are thus imbued with absolute infallibility in any pronouncement they choose to make.

Discordianism is a synthesis of magic, Zen Buddhism, Taoism, and anarchist/libertarian philosophy (sometimes referred to “zenarchism”) - its aim being the undermining and destabilising of socially-conditioned structures of thought and belief (often using absurdist/surrealist and Zen-type practices). Sharing similar goals, both Discordianism and Chaos magick have been characterised as “guerrilla ontologies” (Sutcliffe 1996: 129) in their attempt to subvert notions of absolute truth. Chaos magicians have in fact derived many of their ideas and practices from Discordian sources, including: the “bible” of Discordianism, the *Principia Discordia* (Hill & Thornley 1966), and Robert Anton Wilson and Robert Shea’s (1975a; 1975b; 1975c) *Illuminatus!* trilogy - a science-fictional *tour de force* of occult conspiracy theory.

*Science Fiction and Popular Science*: scholars of the neo-pagan and magical subculture (Webb 1976: 496-515; Luhrmann 1989: 87-92; Harvey 1997: 181-186) have stressed the role played by sci-fi literature in shaping contemporary magical beliefs. The aforementioned *Illuminatus!* trilogy, and the work of genre authors Michael Moorcock (in which the magical power of Chaos and the multiplex nature of reality figure strongly) and H.P. Lovecraft have all exerted an influence upon Chaos magick. Some preliminary remarks concerning the sociological significance of science fiction are offered in section three of this chapter, but the genre is discussed in detail in chapter six of the thesis.

Broadly related to this interest in science fiction is the influence of post-Newtonian scientific thought - namely quantum mechanics and the science of complexity or “chaos” - upon Chaos magick. Public interest in such theories has accelerated in the last decade, primarily through their popularisation in books such as Stephen Hawking’s (1988) *A Brief History of Time*. Like science fiction, popularised recensions of quantum theory offer legitimacy to the belief that fantastic otherworlds not only exist but can be experienced (see for example Rucker 1985). The significance of post-Newtonian scientific theory is examined in detail in

chapter four, where I show that Chaos magicians see these ideas as reinvesting the cosmos with magical and sacred dimensions.

*Satanism*: The mystical turn of the 1960s also generated an interest in the “dark” side of magic and the occult (Lachman 2001), which found its most concrete expression in the Church of Satan (founded by Anton LaVey in 1966). A plethora of self-styled Satanic groups have since come into being, and the similarities between Satanism and Chaos magick are discussed in greater detail in chapter two. The varied forms of Satanism involve the rejection of Christian morality, and Satanists often base their beliefs upon vulgar expositions of Nietzsche’s “will to power”. Crowley’s writings have also had a profound influence upon Satanist groups (LaFontaine 1999: 91-92), although in adopting an explicitly materialistic stance, many Satanists reject Crowley’s more mystical leanings. Not only are Chaos magicians seemingly engaged in the same contestation of convention and dominant cultural values as Satanists (Lowney 1995), but Chaos magick also appears to have been influenced by the practices of the Temple of Set (an offshoot of the Church of Satan). Members of the Temple of Set take *xephering* - the continual transformation, “overcoming” and “evolving” of the self - as their principle practice (Graham Scott 1983: 43-44, 58-60; Temple of Set 1996: 7); this has its complement in the Chaoist practice of *metamorphosis*, or the shedding of culturally-embedded behavioural patterns through psycho-magical techniques. Ideological similarities between Satanism and Chaos magick have become concretised in the past few years with the establishment of informal links between the Church of Satan and the IOT (as discussed in chapter two).

### **Other Sources: Psychoanalysis, Surrealism, and Situationism**

*Psychoanalysis*: both Satanism and Chaos magick (along with most forms of contemporary magical practice) incorporate Freudian terms and concepts (often implicitly) within their discourse. Susan Greenwood (2000: 124-128) and James Webb (1976: 345-416) have both offered analyses of the relationship between psychoanalysis and the occult; in order to avoid replicating these discussions, my reference to Freud remains minimal throughout much of the thesis.



Specifically, notions of the unconscious - and its effects upon the human psyche - form a key component of the “psychotherapeutic” aims of Chaos magicians. However, the goals of Chaos magick (and Satanism) are antithetical to Freud’s view that social existence, repression and neurosis are co-dependent (Freud 1930). As a consequence, Chaos magical and other Left-Hand Path practices have drawn inspiration from the work of Wilhelm Reich (King 1971: 158-162; Regardie 1989; Shual 1995: 73-75) whose therapeutic approach - in seeking to liberate both body and psyche from the pressures of sexual repression - is also antithetical to Freud’s social psychology (Morris 1985: 728). One of the important source incorporating Freudian ideas which has directly influenced Chaos magick is William Sargant’s (1973) study of the psychopathology of trance and religious conversion, *The Mind Possessed*. In chapter three, I argue that many of the “core” techniques used by Chaos magicians have their origin in Sargant’s work

Jungian ideas suffuse much of the contemporary magical subculture, and are implicit within certain aspects of Chaos magical theory and practice. In other respects, the essentialism underlying Jung’s concept of archetypes has lead Chaos magicians to reject his ideas.

*Surrealism*: as a “philosophy concerned with liberating man from a false consciousness” (Webb 1976: 427) by “evoking new dimensions of perception and new means to express it” (Choucha 1991: 10-11) - often through the elaboration of repressed, unconscious desires - Surrealism maintains affinities with occultism and Freudian psychology (as documented by both Webb [1976: 427-429] and Choucha [1991: 49-54]). Choucha in particular links the work of Austin Spare with the Surrealist movement (particularly with regard to Spare’s use of automatism as a method of freeing one’s creativity from normative, conscious restraints). In this respect, the influence of Surrealism upon Chaos magick is indirect and largely confined to the use of trance as a method of altering “our perception of the ‘objective reality’ to which our systems of thought hold claim” (Choucha 1991: 121).

*Situationism*: the influence of the Situationist movement (emerging in part as a response to the Surrealist movement [see Webb 1976: 468]) is also implicit in

Chaos magical discourse. Situationist slogans such as “Power to the Imagination” and “Take your Desires for Reality” (Webb 1976: 469), the Marxist notion of alienation, and the “necessity for “liberation” from an illusory state of consciousness” (Webb 1976: 470) embedded in the Situationist project prefigure Chaos magicians’ own brand of magical libertarianism. Chaos magicians sometimes make reference to Debord’s (1967) notion of the “spectacle”: “a social relationship among people mediated by images” (Debord 1967: 12) whose “function in society is the concrete manufacture of alienation” (Debord 1967: 23). However, I only encountered a very small number of Chaos magician who had more than a passing knowledge of Situationism.

An interest in Situationist ideas appears to be a more recent development within Chaos magick, and can be traced to Phil Hine’s (1993) somewhat indirect discussion of Situationism. There, Hine appears to subvert the libertarian goals of movements such as the Situationist Internationale by stating that “[t]here is no escape from the Society of the Spectacle” (1993: 23); instead, he suggests that Chaos magicians follow Crowley’s lead by embracing the extremes of experience and in doing so “escape...by becoming...Spectacular” (Hine 1993: 23). As I show throughout the thesis, a consequence of this is that Chaos magick may form as much a commodified part of the “spectacle” as it represents a site of resistance to consumer capitalism.

### **The Origins and Recent History of Chaos Magick**

In various internet postings, Peter Carroll has claimed that the rationale behind the creation of Chaos magick lay in a disenchantment with the direction that the magical subculture was taking in Europe and America during the 1970s: Carroll’s principle complaint being that many occultists had become “armchair magicians” - preferring to debate the finer points of magical theory than actually engage in its practice. The IOT was established with the aim of stripping down magical theory to its basics, and of returning to a more pragmatic, practice-oriented approach.

The early writings of the magician Ramsey Dukes (1975; see also Hawkins 1996: 30) - who became a member of Carroll and Sherwin’s IOT - attempted to



synthesise the works of Crowley, Spare and Carlos Casteneda into a form of “magical libertarianism”. Dukes’ work prefigured some of the relativistic ideas and ethos of Chaos magick, and has proven influential in the shaping of the movement. However, one of the most significant books in the Chaos magical canon is Peter Carroll’s (1987) *Liber Null & Psychonaut*, which presents the basic philosophical tenets of Chaos Magick, along with extensive information on its “core” practices; elsewhere, Carroll (1992) talks extensively about the relationship between magic, chaos mathematics and quantum theory, and presents detailed information concerning the theory and structure of Chaos magical practice within the IOT.

The exact historical origins of Chaos magick are difficult to pinpoint: Jaq Hawkins claims that the IOT came into being in South London during 1978. However, Carroll has offered an alternative (and seemingly mythologised) version of events, stating that the IOT was founded in abandoned ammunition dump in the Rhineland during 1976 (Carroll 1990: 1)<sup>16</sup>. One Chaos magician I knew - who was personally acquainted with Peter Carroll - told me that Carroll and Sherwin “invented” the IOT, creating a mythologised history for this as-yet non-existent group in order to attract adherents to their “new” system of magic.

One other significant development in the recent history of Chaos magick is the emergence of “Thee Temple ov Psychick Youth” (TOPY), a magical order founded in the United Kingdom by the musician Genesis P. Orridge in 1981 (Barker 1995: 213). Although TOPY continues to operate in North America, it has not been particularly active in the UK since Orridge left the organisation in 1990. TOPY’s popularity prior to this was partly a result of its “propaganda wing” - a group of “alternative” musicians (led by Orridge) who performed and recorded material under the name “Psychick TV”. Although I met a few individuals who had been members of TOPY during the late 1980s and early 1990s, none of the Chaos magicians I knew claimed to be a current member. Nonetheless, many practitioners encountered Chaos magick via the ideas propagated by Genesis P. Orridge and TOPY - namely the emancipation of the self from social conditioning (through

---

<sup>16</sup> See appendix 1.

the use of sex magick, magical ritual, and techniques based on the work and ideas of Austin Osman Spare and William Burroughs)<sup>17</sup>.

### **Part 3 - The Sociological Context**

#### **The Sociological Context of Chaos Magick**

Contemporary Chaos magick in the UK exists in two broad contexts:

- A formalised international organisation known as the Pact of the Illuminates of Thanateros (IOT).
- magicians who practice individually and/or within largely informal group contexts. Groups and individuals that constitute this category have, in many cases, emerged schismatically out of the IOT.

Numbers of Chaos magicians active in the UK are notoriously difficult to determine<sup>18</sup>. During the course of my research, the membership of the UK section of the IOT was made up of no more than forty individuals at any given time. An open-day held by the IOT in Central London during 1998 attracted around seventy attendees, including twenty-five or so of its own members. Throughout the course of my research, I met approximately fifty Chaos magicians<sup>19</sup>. Although there are probably no more than a few hundred practitioners in the UK at present, Chaos magick has elicited a wider interest amongst the pagan community, and I met a number of pagans and magicians who were interested in or influenced by it.

Out of the Chaos magicians I had personal contact with, most were in their mid-to-late twenties or early thirties, and the majority had previously been involved in

---

<sup>17</sup> The central tenets of TOPY can be found on at least one web site (see Thee Temple ov Psychick Youth 2003).

<sup>18</sup> Chris Bray's survey of paganism conducted in 1989 (and summarised in York 1995) suggests a national figure of about 25,000 practising pagans in the UK and indicates that of this number, 7% had an *interest* in "Chaos".

<sup>19</sup> I also knew of three other Chaos magical groups active in the UK during the period of my research. One group had approximately six members; I was unable to elicit data concerning the membership of the other two groups.



some other form of magical practice (usually Wicca). Practitioners came from a variety of socio-economic backgrounds, and employment was treated in a somewhat instrumental manner by Chaos magicians: being employed on a semi-regular or part-time basis was preferred, allowing for the better use of leisure time for creative endeavours or for travel. Chaos magicians would also try to make strategic choices when seeking new employment: their principal motivation being the acquiring of skills relevant to more meaningful goals - creative writing, art, or music - than developing a permanent, "mainstream" career.

Only a small number of the Chaos magicians I knew (approximately one in ten) had been unemployed in the long term. Other practitioners were employed in a variety of jobs, and included: an accountant, a software designer, an editor for a trade journal, two individuals involved in the publishing industry, a charity worker and civil servant, a psychiatric nurse, a table dancer and part-time glamour model, and a criminal psychologist. However, in many cases practitioners held relatively low-paid clerical, administrative or retail posts. Most Chaos magicians lived in rented accommodation, although the first two Chaos magicians I met owned their own home; I only met one married couple (a teacher and a business consultant) who had children, and one female magician who was a single parent.

Practitioner's view of employment underscored a desire for autonomy from the Weberian iron cage characteristic of many forms of alternative western spirituality (Heelas 1996: 139). Gaining access to wealth was, nonetheless, seen as a way of facilitating self-empowerment and self-fulfilment; sorcery - offering the apparently rapid fulfilment of one's worldly desires - was certainly a powerful incentive for the more economically-marginal individuals who became involved in Chaos magick.

Many practitioners participated in an "alternative" lifestyle; there was a notable interest in the contemporary club scene amongst Chaos magicians, most of who preferred listening to "techno" or "dance" music. Many Chaos magicians were also interested in "alternative" and "industrial" forms of electronic music performed by the groups Coil and Current 93 (whose lyrics often contained magical references). There was a certain amount of overlap between this and the re-emerging "Goth"

scene, whose music and style of dress is characteristically dark, moody, and replete with pagan and magical imagery. Practitioners' own style of dress often comprised of black combat trousers and black t-shirts or hooded tops, with hair cropped short or completely shaven. A few Chaos magicians (particularly by those who were closely involved in the fetishist subculture) also sported elaborate tattoos (often depicting magical symbols or entities) along with various bodily piercings.

Jason - a Thelemite and Chaos magician who I interviewed in July 2000 - told me how he became involved in magic at the age of thirteen, "mainly through the Goth side of it, the darkness of everything that went with that, and...it sort of evolved from there, really". For many Chaos magicians, the attraction of role-play, fantasy (namely a widespread interest in science-fiction film and literature) or participation in a "subcultural" lifestyle, were responses to alienating childhood or adolescent experiences. Jason thus told me that his interest in magic was also piqued after reading Tolkein's *Lord of the Rings*: "initially it was somewhere that I'd just escape to, then actually realised that you could actually utilise that world, that it actually did exist". As a teenager, his desire to escape was driven by his "outsider" status:

"I always felt, like I was being treated like I was weird by the other kids at school...it was like a self-confidence thing...I think that if you speak to most people who are into magic, they were always, from an early age, for one reason or another, an outsider - either at school, or they were either bullied or they got into weird music...I think that, like, it [i.e. magic] provides an escape valve, its like...you know "I don't like this world, it doesn't particularly seem to like me, I'll go into this other world" - which may or may not exist, and I never really know anyway. Whether it does or not is irrelevant, but it provides somewhere that you can go to, something that you can start working with...but I think that's a pretty common experience for people getting into magic, either through music, or they somehow get rejected at school or knew that they were on the outside...they somehow knew they were different from the rest of the people".

According to Cohen, Ben Yehuda, and Aviad (1987), both the occult and science-fiction subcultures have emerged as important "elective centres" in response to the decentering of meaning in the modern, secularised West. Such centres are



important to Chaos magicians as relativised and highly personalised loci of religious meaning situated “outside the social and cultural confines of late modernity” (Cohen, Ben Yehuda & Aviad 1987: 322). As Jason’s previous comments suggest, the significance of the science-fiction genre is that it allows a “small and controllable excursion or escape into a fictive reality...that...provides modern society with both a new mythology and a new form of transcendence” (Cohen, Ben Yehuda & Aviad 1987: 331). Experience of reading or viewing of science fiction material is also similar to those generated by magical practice which, like sci-fi, offers access to fantastic worlds through the imagination. Ben Yehuda (1985) and Harriet Whitehead (1974) also suggest that both the occult and science fiction subcultures articulate a number of overlapping concerns, including: a fascination with the unknown; the instrumental control of powerful and seemingly fantastical forces, and the possibility of transforming the world in order to create a new moral order (see also Tiryakian 1974). Importantly, for those who feel alienated from the wider culture, involvement in science fiction and fantasy subcultures also offers access to new social groups (see Rabinovitch 1996: 78).

The adoption of Chaos magick was often part and parcel of a complete lifestyle that emphasised participants’ attachment to the “darker”, antinomian aspects of human existence. In many cases, the decision to embrace Chaos magick arose from a desire to create an identity out of practitioners’ own sense of marginalisation: Jason, for example, suggested that pagans do not become outsiders because they become interested in magic, but are treated as outsiders because they have an innate attachment to the otherworld, which others find frightening. The embracing of the “darkside” was also a way of positively dealing with a range of emotional problems (as discussed in chapter five). In other cases, the reasons were more difficult to discern: because Chaos magick emphasises the necessity of transforming identities, many Chaos magicians refused to pin down their own identity within a narrative of personal history.

Marion Bowman has highlighted the way in which neo-pagan beliefs have been used in the construction of ethnic identities (Bowman 1995). Whilst Chaos magicians often claim that such identities are restrictive, many practitioners

maintained an interest in the Northern Tradition (sometimes referred to as Asatru or Heathenism): a form of neo-paganism grounded in Scandinavian and Germanic mythology, and which sometimes has fascist and neo-Nazi overtones<sup>20</sup>. Some Northern tradition groups do hold racist views and maintain close links with white-supremacist groups in Europe and America (Harvey 1995; Goodrick-Clarke 2002: 257-278); others, however, espouse non-racist and non-exclusionist beliefs. I knew of one Chaos magician involved with the Northern tradition who had gained a reputation for his racist views; I only met this individual briefly, but some of his published writings did carry racist undertones. In most cases the attraction of the Northern tradition lay in its vulgar Nietzscheanism, which echoed Chaos magicians' own ethos.

Equally, a large number of Chaos magicians were interested in non-European magico-religious beliefs and practices (Voudou and Santeria being particularly popular). While this did not mean that practitioners were free from racist views, it suggested an openness and acceptance of other cultural beliefs. When recruiting new members, the Chaos magical groups I was involved with did not appear to discriminate on the grounds of gender, ethnicity or sexuality: during the course of my research, I met seven (male) Chaos magicians who were gay, two practitioners who were UK nationals from Afro-Caribbean backgrounds, and one Anglo-Asian Chaos magician.

### **Chaos Magick, NRMs, and the Gnostic Sensibility: Chaos Magicians as Gnostic Modernists**

As individuals who often feel disenfranchised, Chaos magicians seek self-empowerment and “wholeness” through the mystical immersion within Chaos - a goal that finds its historical counterpart in Gnosticism. Properly speaking, historical

---

<sup>20</sup> As James Webb notes, the spiritual perfection of the human being is a central theme informing contemporary occult discourse (1976: 18). In this respect, Webb also recognises the importance of ideas concerning spiritual progress and spiritual evolution as having played a central role in informing modern esoteric or “illuminated” racial politics. A number of popular books have sensationalised the connections between occult beliefs and Nazism (Suster 1981; MacLellan 1982; Baker 2000); however, in his important scholarly study, Nicholas Goodrick-Clarke (1992) examines the impact of esoteric ideas upon the emergence of the volkish movement in Germany in the 19th Century - ideas which subsequently informed Nazi philosophy. See also Godwin (1993) for a



Gnosticism was not a unified system of religious thought; but a pluralistic phenomenon - encompassing a variety of philosophies and cosmological systems - which existed around Alexandria and the Middle East between the 2nd - 4th centuries C.E. However, early Gnostic groups - and later medieval European Gnostic movements (such as the Cathars, Bogomils, and Albigensians) - shared a radical dualism in which matter was seen as corrupting if not intrinsically evil. For many Gnostic sects, the material cosmos was the faulty creation of the Demiurge: a false or ignorant god served by demonic beings known as Archons; the cosmos also formed a vast prison in which *pneuma*, or the “divine spark” (Jonas 1958: 44), had become embodied and ensnared<sup>21</sup>. Through its imprisonment in matter, *pneuma* had become alienated from the *Pleroma* - a state of divine fullness<sup>22</sup>. For the Gnostics, the barrier separating *pneuma* from divine plenitude could only be breached through spiritual illumination, or *gnosis*, which constituted both the experiential spiritual knowledge of salvation *and* a soteriological act in and of itself (Jonas 1958: 35).

Peter Carroll (1987) has drawn close parallels between Chaos magick and historical Gnosticism, treating them as embodying comparable libertarian aims. However, significant differences also exist between the two: the alienating dualism which Chaos magicians seek to breach differs markedly from early forms of Gnostic dualism.

The condition of human alienation is, for Chaos magicians, a result of our being trapped within culturally-determined, Aristotelian-dualistic modes of thought: because the structure of our belief systems “imply a rejection of their opposites they severely restrict our freedom” (Carroll 1991: 165). As a consequence, Chaos

---

discussion of links between the occult and radical politics.

<sup>21</sup> As Elaine Pagels observes, because “the fear of death and dissolution, are located, in the first place, in the body, the Gnostic tended to mistrust the body, regarding it as the saboteur that inevitably engaged him in suffering” (Pagels 1979: 144).

<sup>22</sup> In some Gnostic systems this spiritual source is also referred to as the “Father” or “ForeFather” which dwells “in invisible and unnameable elevations...He is uncontainable and invisible, eternal and ungenerated, in quiet and in deep solitude for infinite aeons” (Irenaeus, quoted in Grant 1961: 163). These notions probably have their roots in Platonic thought (Plato 1970); they are also found in later concepts of the divine “One” in neo-Platonic philosophy (see for example Russell 1946: 293), which formed the basis of Renaissance Hermetic magic and, subsequently, contemporary Western magic.

magicians often attempt to hold contradictory or paradoxical views in order to break this conditioning. Carroll also claims that:

“It is a mistake to consider any belief more liberated than another. It is the possibility of change which is important. Every new form of liberation is destined to eventually become another form of enslavement for most of its adherents. There is no freedom from duality on this plane of existence, but one may at least aspire to choice of duality” (Carroll 1987: 45).

The Chaos magical life force *kia*, like the Gnostic *pneuma*, is described by Carroll as “a small fragment of the great life force of the universe”. However, unlike *pneuma*, *kia* “contains the twin impulses to immerse itself in duality and to escape from duality” (Carroll 1987: 29). Carroll goes on to state that *kia* is not “trapped” in the world, but “has incarnated in these particular conditions of duality for some purpose” (Carroll 1987: 49). Although Jason initially believed that magic offered an escape from an alienating reality (see above), his encounter with Chaos magick also suggested a way of reconciling himself with the world:

“The nature of the cosmos is in chaos - we cannot escape from that...so I don't think we should have the audacity to say we are somehow separate from that. So, Chaos magick, for me, is...basically working with your environment and having the intelligence to know how to utilise the things around you in a magical way to achieve certain ends”.

Thus, Chaos magicians often reject the Gnostic belief that liberation is necessarily attained through worldly renunciation (see also Carroll 1987: 45)<sup>23</sup>.

Regardless of these disparities, the significance of historical Gnosticism is related to the sociological context of Chaos magick. Jonas (1958: 3-27) sees the emergence of Gnosticism and other early religious movements (including Christianity) as responses to a spiritual crisis due, in part, to the homogeneous secularisation of the known world at the time - a process instigated by Alexander the Great and consolidated under the central authority of the Roman Empire. Thus, localised national, cultural and religious systems became partially redundant in

---

<sup>23</sup> In this respect, the concept of Chaos appears to have closer ties to the Taoist path of non-action which is, as Brian Morris points out, life-affirming and not a form of ascetic world-renunciation (1994: 99), than with Gnostic thought. Taoist influences upon Chaos magick are discussed in



relation to their secular function, leading to feelings of disenfranchisement amongst subject peoples (see for example Burrige 1980: 105). The emergence of new, syncretic forms religious belief within the cosmopolitan milieu of empire (Wimbush 1990) - such as the Gnostic sects - has been viewed by scholars such as Jonas (1958: 22) and Kurt Rudolph (1991) as forms of protest to these early “globalising” and secularising processes. Carroll similarly takes the position that:

“The Gnostics were true anarchists of the spirit. They saw all other religions as encouraging enslavement to priesthoods and secular powers with their legal and moral strictures. Against these things they ranged their cosmological jokes, their anti-morality, and their magic” (Carroll 1987: 176).

This is a somewhat distorted view of Gnosticism. Chaos magick is concerned with resisting secular power and other forms of social control; but whilst forms of Gnosticism may be treated as protest movements, the mechanisms of state and religion as social regulators were not necessarily the principal concern of the Gnostics (although such mechanisms were viewed as implicit conditions of material existence under the Archons). As such, forms of Gnosticism rarely included notions of social revolution (Cohn 1957: 148) or the creation of a new, egalitarian social order.

However, Robert Segal (1992) and Hans Jonas (1958) identify the Gnostic sensibility not as a historical specificity, but as a universal and existential component of the human condition which “constitutes the belief in the alienation of human beings from their true selves, whether or not from any true world or divinity” (Segal 1992: 3-4; see also Couliano 1990; Segal 1995). Similarly, James Webb (1988) has defined New Age movements as being primarily “Gnostic” in their concern with self-realisation and “inner knowledge”. Likewise, James Beckford (1985) states that the 1960s counterculture’s “call for self-expression and self-realisation acted as a catalyst for NRMs [New Religious Movements]” (Beckford, 1985: 279). This contemporary concern with “self-spirituality” bears some comparison with historical Gnosticism: the political upheavals of the period

of late antiquity resulted in what Vincent Wimbush describes as the “renunciation of, or turning inward and away from, the clamor and disappointments of public life” (Wimbush, 1990: 89)<sup>24</sup>, and the emergence of the individual as the principal social unit.

The Euro-American counterculture of the 1960s, in its promulgation of alternative spiritual beliefs and lifestyles, imbued New Age movements with the motivation to seek a spiritually meaningful alternative to the alienating secular materialism of the West (Basil 1988; Nelson 1987). As another manifestation of this quest, Chaos magick represents a form of what James Webb calls “illuminated” politics: “a definition of reality that transcends the material point of view, and the emergence of the rejected - both in terms of ideas and of men - into unaccustomed positions of prominence” (Webb 1976: 13). My claim here is that Chaos magick is less a Gnostic rejection of modern materialism than it is a modernist embracing of those “rejected” aspects of modernity. Here I take Mike Featherstone’s (1995) definition of modernism as that which “worked off the principles of disorder and ambivalence”, and which

“refused scientific and technological utopian visions of the good life, and focused instead on the detritus of modern life...The modern city in particular threw up a series of new social types (e.g. the flâneur), new sites (bohémias, arcades, department stores) and imagery (consumer culture goods and advertising) which pointed to fragmentation, boredom and the vitality and resilience of the dark side of modernity. Modernism, which drew upon the Nietzschean transvaluation of values, sought a reversal of the optimistic official culture of modernity with its ordering, unifying and integrative ambitions. It drew on antinomian and transgressive impulses and sought to disassemble the established symbolic hierarchies of order and progress. It sympathised with the ‘other,’ the gypsy, the bohemian, the mad, the homosexual, the native and other minority positions which were to be cured, reconstituted and eliminated by modern institutions in the name of social order and progress”. (Featherstone 1995: 218).

The Gnostic aims of Chaos magick seek only to “transcend” the alienating, rationalising, conditions of modern existence in order to experience its inherent

---

<sup>24</sup> Burrige (1980: 107) also seems to imply that societies undergoing colonial homogenisation are subject to increasing individualisation as a result in the erosion of “traditional” forms of communality.



disorderliness, and “make oneself somehow at home in the maelstrom, to make its [i.e. modernity’s] rhythms one’s own” (Berman 1982: 345-346). In chapter four I argue that this wholeness is sought within the very inauthenticity of the “postmodern” spectacle, which is sometimes treated by practitioners as a refraction of the endless and inessential transformations of the underlying Chaos force, and the ultimate edifice upon which the “Chaoist” approach rests.

## **Part 4 - Methodology and Ethics**

### **Identifying Practitioners: Chaos Magick as a Category**

Chaos magicians are notoriously loathe to categorise themselves in catchall terms; as a result, it was not always easy to identify Chaos magick as a category of belief and practice. Most members of an internet newsgroup (going by the name “The Invisibles”) who I met had, for example, read most of the “core” texts of Chaos magick by authors such as Peter Carroll and Phil Hine; although they were visibly influenced by and attracted to Chaos magical ideas, they did not identify themselves as Chaos magicians, nor were they actively involved in Chaos magical groups. Other practitioners had at one time identified themselves as Chaos magicians, but had come to reject the label whilst continuing to use Chaos magical ideas and techniques. Others preferred not to categorise themselves as Chaos magicians, but nevertheless adopted the term as a convenient label when talking about their magical interests to other pagans. Of the three groups I worked with, both the Pact of the Illuminates of Thanateros (IOT) and the IOU (these initials did not form a magical acronym) explicitly identified themselves as Chaos magical in orientation; the third group, the Haunters of the Dark (HOD), initially treated their practices as Chaos magical; however, some of the group’s members later came to consider the HOD as being “post-Chaos magical”. Regardless of these uncertainties, I have treated all of the above as part and parcel of the phenomenon of Chaos magick.

### **Locating the Site of Research**

The practice of Chaos magick is largely tied to urban areas. London was chosen as the primary site of research, as preliminary investigations indicated that it held the largest cohort of Chaos magicians in the UK. I also knew that many pagan events took place in or around the capital. On a few occasions I ventured outside London to meet with Chaos magicians, and about twenty-five percent of the London-based practitioners I met hailed from the Midlands, the North of England, Scotland and Wales. No data emerged to suggest that there existed any significant regional variations in Chaos magical practices, although Chaos magicians who lived outside of London sometimes had access to rural sacred sites, where they would occasionally conduct their rituals.

The highly individualistic nature of Chaos magick also meant that, even in quasi-formalised groups such as the IOT, the organisational prowess of members was not always held at a premium. The loose, fluid and often informal nature of Chaos magical groups was, in fact, an important factor in determining the manner in which the research was conducted. In effect, there was no clearly-defined, geographically-located subject that formed the physical locus of the research. This was because, as one practitioner told me, Chaos magick was about

“working with what is around you because everything is chaotic, therefore, you can use anything you like, because it’s all part of that chaos - you can use any tools you want...there is no “temple” that is separate from the rest of the universe because everywhere is part of this big, growing, chaotic temple...you can do Chaos magick wherever you want, you can do it in a warehouse, with jeans and a t-shirt on, you can do it in the woods with robes on, or whatever, because it doesn’t matter, because it’s essentially all the same thing.

As a consequence, groups were rarely organised around or located at or near specific locales; the ad-hoc nature of Chaos magical practice also meant that groups would meet and practice in any suitable space - sometimes at a particular magician’s home, but also in socially- and geographically-marginal spaces such as derelict buildings or in deserted woodlands.



Between 1997 and 1999, most of the Chaos magical rituals I participated in occurred indoors: usually in the houses of IOT members, or in hired rehearsal rooms. These ritual gatherings lasted three hours on average, and occurred about once a month.

From late 1999 to mid-2001, approximately two-thirds of the thirty or so rituals (eight of which were “workshops” run by the IOU) I participated in (primarily those conducted by the Haunters of the Dark) occurred outdoors - often in a secluded woodland area in North London. These outdoor rituals were held approximately once a month, and each ritual lasted about one-and-a-half hours. Time spent discussing these rituals (three to four hours) in nearby pubs significantly outweighed the time spent actually conducting said rituals. Other HOD rituals were conducted in a deserted hospital in South London; the group also met at a community centre in South East London, which the IOU also used. During this period, I spent on average four to five hours a week, usually in pubs (or, more rarely, at a practitioner’s place of residence), with members of the IOU and HOD. These meetings also tended to coincide with Talking Stick, a public neo-pagan “moot” or forum held every two weeks in the function room of a pub in central London (see chapter two). I began attending Talking Stick on a regular basis in 1998, and it was here that I was first introduced to members of the IOU and HOD.

Chaos magicians often conduct their magic individually and in isolation; given the private nature of these practices, it was virtually impossible to observe magicians in such contexts. As mentioned above, groups sometimes hired small venues where they would conduct their rituals. These meetings would generally finish at ten or eleven o’clock in the evening, after which practitioners (few of who owned their own transport) would be in a hurry to leave, making it difficult to strike up casual conversations. Meetings were also regularly re-scheduled when the bulk of practitioners either failed to turn up, or sent e-mails at the last moment to say that they were unable to attend. On other occasions, I was informed literally hours in advance that a meeting was scheduled to take place.

In many ways, the Chaos magicians I encountered constituted what Phillippe Bourgois calls a “street culture of resistance” who did not form “a coherent,

conscious universe of political opposition, but rather, a spontaneous set of rebellious practices that in the long term have emerged as an oppositional style” (Bourgois 1995: 8). This, in effect, meant that the application of a traditional structural analysis to Chaos magicians’ lives and experience was extremely problematic. Fieldwork also took on an opportunistic and fluid character: reflecting the sometimes fragmentary nature of the research, ethnographic data is not always presented in the thesis in a strictly linear, narrative fashion. This does not, however, necessarily detract from the substance of the thesis, but offers a textualised reflection on the shifting and constantly negotiated sites of Chaos magical practice and experience. I have, nonetheless, endeavoured to retain some sense of chronological order, and a chronological overview of my research is presented below (see fig. 5).

Participation in a number of public Chaos magical and neo-pagan meetings, symposium’s and conferences also led to an increasing range of contacts within the field. I attended the annual Thelemic symposium (held in Oxford) in 1996 and 1997, one IOT organised conference in central London in 1998, and another Thelemic/Chaos magical conference (also held in central London) in 1999.

I also attended a number of non-Chaos magical pagan conferences including: annual one-day national conferences run by the Pagan Federation in 1998 and 1999 (held in a conference hall on the outskirts of London); a Pagan Federation regional conference held in central London in 1997; a neo-pagan conference in East London in 1999; and one-day conferences organised by members of the IOU in South London in 1999 and 2000 (which covered a wide-range of topics of interest to neo-pagans, and were not Chaos magick-specific). A number of regular attendees and speakers at these events had previously been involved in Chaos magick, and provided some important insights concerning the perception of Chaos magicians within the wider magical and neo-pagan subculture.

I also attended an annual event named “UnConvention” - organised by the *Fortean Times*, a popular magazine dealing with all aspects of the paranormal - in 1998, 1999 and 2000. This attracted a small number of Chaos magicians, and also



included talks by well-known practitioners such as Phil Hine and Steve Wilson on Chaos magical topics.

### **The Chaos Magical Subculture: Gaining Access**

Fieldwork was conducted within the context of the three aforementioned groups of Chaos magicians: The Illuminates of Thanateros (IOT), the IOU, and the Haunters of the Dark (HOD). The IOU was unrelated to the IOT, although three of its members had, at one time, been involved in the latter group. The HOD was an offshoot of the IOU, although one member of the group was also a member of the IOT, but not the IOU.

The initial stages of fieldwork were spent attempting to gain access to the IOT, as this was virtually the only Chaos magical group whose existence was publicly acknowledged. By the late 1980s, the IOT had become one of the better-known Chaos magical group in the UK, with a number of “satrapies” or affiliated groups across Europe and in North America. Members of the IOT were by this time publishing *Chaos International* - a somewhat irregular, homespun journal sold via mail order and distributed through various occult bookshops in the UK, Europe and North America. The journal included an eclectic mix of articles concerning Chaos magick, most of which were written by IOT members (although the journal also accepted contributions from unaffiliated magicians and pagans).

I first wrote to the IOT (through a contact address found on the website maintained by the IOT’s Austrian section) towards the end of 1996, expressing an interest in conducting research within the organisation. In January 1997, I received a reply from an IOT member called Jenna. Her response to my stated research aims was positive; Jenna did, however, mention that I would need to gain the permission of any members of the organisation before naming them in the research; she also informed me that I would have to check with the person assigned as my “mentor” before placing any private information about the IOT into the public domain. Jenna then went on to provide me with the address of Rick, the person would act my mentor (and who, it turned out, was Jenna’s partner) should I decide to join the IOT. I was also provided with a pledge, which I signed and forwarded to Rick - this

<u>Date</u>		<u>Location</u>
<b>1997</b>		
January	- first contact with the IOT (ch.1).	
March	- Rick contacts me; start of my training as a Chaos magician.	
May	- first meeting with Rick and Jenna. (ch.2).	The Plough, Central London.
	- first meeting with Temple Discordia (ch.3).	Mat's squat, North London.
June	- Mask-making activities (ch.5).	Mat's squat, North London.
August	- Rick's possession. (ch.5)	Rick & Jenna's house, South-East England.
December	- Rick and Jenna decide to leave the IOT.	
<b>1998</b>		
February	- Mat's possession by Baphomet during the London Working Group meeting (ch.5).	Rehearsal Rooms, South London.
March	- Annie's possession by Baphomet during the London Working Group meeting (ch.5).	Rehearsal rooms, South London.
	- Dawn quarrels with Ian, who subsequently leaves the IOT. Soon after, Ellen leaves Temple Discordia (but remains a member of the IOT).	Dawn's flat, North London.
April	- The Black Mass (ch.2).	"Torture Garden", central London.
July	- IOT public symposium, including Nathan's possession by Eris (chs. 2 & 5).	Red Lion Square, central London.
September / October	- Dawn and Mat both leave the IOT; Temple Discordia is dissolved.	

**Fig. 5 - chronology of fieldwork.**



**1999**

January to June	- regular meetings with Mat, Dawn and Guy to play <i>The Call of Cthulhu</i> (ch. 6); Occasional IOT meetings at various Locales.	Mat's flat, North London.
April	- Ananke (Chaos/Thelemic symposium)	Red Lion Square, Central London.
September	- The IOU begins a series of monthly workshops.	Community centre, South East London.
October	- the first meeting of the HOD.	Pub, central London.

**2000**

February	- first of the HOD's possession rituals (ch. 6).	Central London.
March to September 2001	- the HOD meet to discuss their magical rituals twice monthly. - the HOD also meet between once and twice a month to conduct magical workings.	Various pubs, central London. Community centre, South London; Woods, North London.

**2001**

June	- Members of the HOD "sacrifice" the magickal child".	Pub, central London
September	- Members of the HOD visit Dunwich to evoke Cthulhu.	Dunwich, East coast of England.

**Fig. 5 (continued) - chronology of fieldwork.**

marked my formal application to join the group, and reiterated the points Jenna had made concerning the privacy and anonymity of group members. Rick contacted me by telephone early in March 1997, which marked the beginning of my fieldwork proper.

**Research Methodology**

The principal methodology applied throughout my research was participant-observation. As a consequence of the opportunist and part-time nature of research, fieldwork lasted nearly four years. I was generally only able to meet with practitioners for a few hours every week, and there were periods (lasting as long as three months) during which no meetings took place. For example, the IOT group or

“Temple” in whose company I spent the first year of my research usually only met once a month, as did the IOU. Members of the HOD, who I encountered midway through the research, met on a more regular basis (usually once a week or fortnightly). Due to the fact that many of the practitioners I worked with were employed, I was rarely able to observe Chaos magicians on a day-to-day basis. Wherever possible, I spent time talking and socialising with practitioners outside of magical ritual, either at their houses or in the pub.

Researching contemporary Western magical beliefs and practices requires a distinctive approach to participant-observation: in order to gain entrance into and acceptance by magical groups, the anthropologist is required to undergo the same training and experiences as his or her informants. My own entrance and acceptance into the world of Chaos magick thus involved training in the methods and techniques of this form of magical practice. This course of training lasted for the first six-months of fieldwork, the first three months (March to May 1997) of which was conducted solely through correspondence.

Although pagans held occasional public rituals, I rarely had the option of observing rituals without participating in them. Within the IOT, rituals were generally conducted on a “closed” basis; this meant that members who were present at meetings but did not wish participate in a given ritual were expected to leave the vicinity until after the completion of the rite. Fieldwork therefore necessitated a deep participation in the rituals and practices of Chaos magicians - to the extent that I found myself propelled by some of the rituals into states of trance, even undergoing what Chaos magicians class as “possession” on a few occasions.

These experiences did not, however, compromise the objectivity of the research, but offered an insight into the intersubjectivity of magical experience, and into the ways by which such experience becomes collectively validated. Nonetheless, within the emotionally-charged arena of ritual, I sometimes found myself “believing” in those experiences. Writing up field notes became a strategy by which such experiences were codified and rationalised. At these times I felt distanced from magic - the research was, as Geertz (1983: 69) suggests, a process of tacking between the poles of local and the global perspectives. I was, nonetheless, forced to



address the question as to whether or not magic actually worked. With some qualification, I would answer in the affirmative: magic works if its aim is taken as the transformation of one's consciousness.

However, the issue as to whether or not magic is "really real" lies beyond the scope of the current work. Recently, Greenwood (2000: 12-18, 35) has suggested that if anthropologists wish to fully understand the practice of magic, they must both experience the otherworld, and take seriously claims for its reality. However, such a view tends to treat "magic" as an analytical totality, and does not account for the subtle gradations in magicians' own belief in its efficacy. The contemporary magicians I encountered did not themselves always uncritically accept the "objective" reality of the forces they claimed to encounter, control or manipulate - unsurprisingly so, given that the Chaos magical ethos is deeply entrenched in a position of radical scepticism. Mat - a member of the IOT who I met in 1997 - told me that in all of the magical rituals he had participated in, he had never seen a spirit or deity manifest to visible appearance, and believed that such things were generally experienced on an "inner, visionary level". Geoff - a Thelemic magician who I met in Oxford in 1999 - was also critical of those magicians who claimed to have witnessed physical or visible manifestations of deities; he believed that gods and spirits existed upon a more rarefied level of existence, which meant that it was easier to encounter them imaginally upon the "astral" plane.

I never encountered what I felt was explicit and irrefutable proof of magic, at least in the sense of the term as it is popularly understood. I was certainly presented with some minor but nevertheless remarkable "coincidences" - often absurdly so, such as the time a yellow "teletubby" doll seemed to appear out of nowhere in the middle of an otherwise deserted street where a group of Chaos magicians were evoking the solar powers of the cosmos. There was also the time when an ashtray inexplicably jumped off the centre of a nearby table mid-ritual. I also witnessed one memorable instance of "demonic" possession<sup>25</sup> and, for a time, I was utterly convinced that this represented a genuine instance of supernatural intervention. These events suggested that there was "something" to the practice of magic.

---

<sup>25</sup> The incident is described in chapter five.

Ultimately, my own stance on this point (inadvertently reflecting one of the central themes of the thesis) is one of ambivalence: no single magician who cast a spell to attain wealth was able to produce a bag of gold out of thin air; but Chaos magicians rarely claimed the ability to do so: acts of sorcery were often framed in quasi-scientific terms - as the manipulation of probability or coincidence based on as-yet undiscovered laws (and probably having their basis in quantum theory). Practitioners thus placed practical limits upon what magic was able to achieve. Magic is as much about knowledge and filling the gaps in knowledge as much as it is about power. The embracing of uncertainty is central to Chaos magick, but this embrace also renders those uncertainties meaningful in relation to both existing bodies of knowledge and to a wider whole.

Participant observation was supplemented with interviews. Most of the magicians I interviewed preferred to meet on “neutral” territory (particularly during the early stages of the research), invariably in one of a number of pubs in central London. Due to the circumstances and surroundings, I found that informal and unstructured interviews generally elicited the best response (see Greenwood 2000: 17). One of the problems I regularly encountered during interviews was the high value informants placed on secrecy; this meant that taping interviews was not always possible. As a consequence, some of the dialogue included herein has been reconstructed from fieldnotes and memory. The one exception to this involved the HOD, who regularly recorded their rituals, and allowed me full access to their audio and video archives.

In addition to the methodological issues outlined above, certain aspects of Chaos magicians’ praxis and lifestyles proved difficult to research; as a consequence, gaps exist in the ethnographic documentation of Chaos magick presented in the thesis. The areas in question relate primarily to sado-masochism, fetishism, and the use of sex for magical or consciousness-altering ends by Chaos magicians. However, involvement in sado-masochistic and fetishist subcultures was not necessarily widespread amongst practitioners - although such involvement was noticeable amongst members of the IOT (some of whose members had close links with the



sado-masochistic/fetishist club scene in London)<sup>26</sup>. As noted above, those who are attracted to Chaos magick often participate in a various “alternative” or “countercultural” lifestyles; however, a number of practitioners who I questioned on these matters were also at pains to point out that both sado-masochism and the use of sexual magick were by no means intrinsic to the practice of Chaos magick.

The extent of my experience of sado-masochism within the magical subculture was fairly limited. The sexologist Dr. Tuppy Owens, a prominent member of the Sexual Freedom Coalition<sup>27</sup>, gave an talk on “sexual blossoming” at Ananke - a Chaos magical/Thelemic symposium held in London in April 1999. The talk involved a practical (and rather tame) demonstration of “magical” sado-masochistic practices. Some months later, I witnessed a repeat of this demonstration as part of a talk given by a pagan dominatrix at Talking Stick. Along with the public ritual described in chapter two, this was as close as I came to witnessing or “participating” in these aspects of the magical subculture.

Whilst sado-masochistic/fetishist practices were perhaps subsidiary to the practice of Chaos magick, the use of sex for magical ends is a different matter: as noted, some practitioners claimed that use of sexual magick is not intrinsic to Chaos magical practices; however, autoeroticism *is* widely - perhaps universally - used by Chaos magicians in solitary acts of sorcery or results magic (see chapters three and four). During such acts, the experience of orgasm is used to project the magician’s consciousness into a state of *gnosis*, thereby increasing the chances of a spell or “sigil” becoming effective through the transference of the magician’s magical power or “lifeforce”. In some shape or form, sexual magick or the celebration of sex as a sacred act (often through the union of “male” and female” polarities of divine or magical energy) plays a prominent part in much of neo-paganism; however, in the context of Chaos magick and Thelema, sexuality is sometimes used as a tool for emancipating the self from perceived internalised societal norms - often via acts of “transgression”. In what can be characterised as a

---

<sup>26</sup> One of the IOT’s few public rituals was held in one such club (see chapter two).

<sup>27</sup> The aims of this organisation are “to reform the sex laws...promote pansexual freedom...to encourage mutual support with other sexual freedom campaigns, sex clubs, and groups.. To teach individuals, the media and authorities to revere sexual pleasure” (see the Sexual Freedom Coalition’s website: <http://www.sfc.org.uk>).

relatively “permissive” society, the presumed transgressive nature of sex and sexuality is, it has to be said, largely constructed by Chaos magicians. In some instances where the sexual act is associated with the evocation of “demonic” forces, this construction also appears to reify Christian moral assumptions concerning the “evils” of sex. Nonetheless, as noted in chapters four and five, where Chaos magicians actively seek to transgress social and sexual norms, such transgressions are often enacted ideationally and not literally. For example, Jason once cited the hypothetical example of an elderly man who had been married to the same woman for twenty or thirty years: for such an individual to become a Thelemite and begin exploring the magical potential of sex, “transgressive” sex magical practices (such as anal sex which, for some Thelemites, represents a sacramental act) could, Jason claimed, be enacted imaginally rather than physically during “normal” intercourse.

The Chaos magician Dave Lee also claims that “emancipatory” practices such as group sex are “unfortunately rare, even amongst left-hand path magicians” (Lee 1997: 77). This view was mirrored somewhat in my own experience: throughout the period of my fieldwork, I only encountered two instances involving ritual nudity (others undoubtedly occurred outside of my knowledge); I did not participate in either of these rituals, one of which may have involved some form of sexual contact between participants. From what evidence I was able to gather on the matter, it seemed that sexual magick was largely conducted within the private or domestic domain, usually between partners already involved in a sexual or romantic relationship. I did, however, hear a number of anecdotal accounts of rather “arbitrary” sex magical practices occurring between consenting (but romantically uninvolved) adults within a ritual context, only one of which I was able to substantiate.

As a consequence of the above, the partial nature of the research in the matter of Chaos magicians’ sexual interests/practices was, to an extent, unavoidable. I also felt that observing sex magical practices within the “closed” (i.e. non-public) context of the various groups would be intrusive (verging on the voyeuristic), and would also constitute a breach of trust given my status as a partial “insider”. My reticence in investigating these areas was - importantly - also a consequence of



my own reflexive response to the field encounter: on the occasion when I witnessed simulated sex between Chaos magicians as part of a public ritual, I felt rather disturbed by both the ritual and the surroundings in which I found myself (a fetishist nightclub). I was, therefore, understandably concerned for my own emotional and psychological wellbeing, and had no particular desire to witness or participate in either the sado-masochistic/fetishist subculture, or sex magical practices (however rare). Obviously, the autoerotic practices (“magical” masturbation) of Chaos magicians were not readily open to observation, although such acts were sometimes openly discussed by (mostly male) Chaos magicians. However, on one occasion, I was present at a group ritual where a participant was apparently masturbating in the corner of the room in which the rite took place. He was fully clothed and facing the wall, and it was impossible to tell whether or not the act was simulated or genuine. Nonetheless, I felt somewhat upset and disturbed at being present.

Although I have noted my own sceptical attitude towards the reality of magic, this scepticism often disappeared within the social context of its practice: on occasion, I felt a sense of palpable fear in the presence of some magicians. In addition to my reticence at delving too deeply into the sexual lives and habits of practitioners, this proved a further barrier to the research. As I became immersed in the world of Chaos magick, I found that I was less than eager to approach certain practitioners - often those who had achieved power and status within the magical groups I worked with. This was largely the result of my own paranoid fears that I might become the victim of “magical attack” (i.e. cursing or “hexing”)<sup>28</sup>, should these magicians perceive my role as anthropologist as a potential threat to their security and wellbeing. Such feelings were part and parcel of the emotional and conceptual baggage which I brought with me to the field. Despite a long standing interest in (and familiarity with) the contemporary magical subculture - along with a naive belief that my position as anthropologist would somehow free me from any inherent biases - I found (unsurprisingly) that I was nonetheless party to stereotypical cultural responses to magic and the occult as that which is irrational,

---

<sup>28</sup> See chapters two and three for examples of the use of magic for malign or harmful ends.

fearful, dangerous, and wholly “other”. At the same time, such responses exist within a mutual relationship, where fears surrounding the occult are actively encouraged by those practitioners who seek to establish their reputation as “dark” and powerful magicians (see chapter two). As a result, my feelings of personal discomfort meant that I was sometimes less than willing to approach and talk to certain members of the Chaos magical community in London.

Parts of the thesis (particularly those detailing the first twelve months or so of the fieldwork) are, therefore, perhaps more reliant on textual sources than would be expected in an ethnographic monograph. Where possible, I have complemented these sources with personal observations, or with accounts drawn from the practitioners’ own experience. However, contemporary pagans and magicians are often highly literate individuals; while there is no discounting the fact that personal experience is absolutely central to a magical practice, textual sources also play a primary role in learning the practice of magic. It was certainly my own experience that many pagans and magicians first encountered magic - and learnt at least the rudiments of magical theory and practice - via textual sources. One Chaos magician to whom I wrote stated there was no “strict cultus” in Chaos magick; as a result, he suggested that I “glean the answers you’re looking for from the texts at hand, as these are your surest source for structured, coherent information!”.

Whilst this does not offset the partial nature of some of the ethnographic material presented herein, the use of textual sources nonetheless gives a strong indication of the ideas and beliefs commonly held by Chaos magicians, even if it does not always reflect the ways those ideas and beliefs are encompassed within practitioners’ own subjectivities.

Gaining access to these subjectivities was problematic in other respects - particularly where I was attempting to gather data concerning Chaos magicians’ experience of possession. This was because the possessing entities were seen to inhabit the “inbetween spaces” - a concept which I discuss in detail in chapter two. In brief, such spaces exist in a metaphysical realm outside of the dualism that, for Chaos magicians, characterises the conditioned, everyday thinking of human beings. A brief extract from one such ritual involving members of the HOD



demonstrates the problem of trying to encapsulate supernatural forces which, according to members of the group, were not bound by human spatio-temporal conceptions. The ritual consisted of one member of the group (Garth) undergoing possession by an entity, during which he was questioned by another member of the group, Dane:

Garth (at the onset of the possession): I am nameless!

Dane: You who come before me and are nameless, do you have a name?

The absurdity of this exchange resulted in a certain amount of jocularly amongst participants; but attempts to elaborate the often strange and “incoherent” discourse of possession - to “name”, fix or otherwise delineate the “otherness” of such entities - often led to a frustrating impasse. Discussions were often conducted after these sorts of rituals, but practitioners recognised that experiences of possession ultimately lay beyond the limits of linguistic expression. While this did not mean that Chaos magicians ceased talking about such experiences, the discussions concerning them were sometimes as oblique and confusing as the speech of the possessing entities themselves. As a consequence, my attempts to grapple with the phenomenology of possession are not fully realised within the thesis. Nonetheless, where possible, I have included practitioner’s comments, along with my own observations, as to the “meaning”, significance and experience of possession rituals.

### **Ethical Considerations**

Despite my apprehensions, the groups and individuals I worked with were generally tolerant of both my presence and participation in their activities and rituals; and at all times, the research was conducted openly and overtly. My motives were only questioned on two occasions, by Chaos magicians who suspected that I was a tabloid journalist intent on writing an exposé of their activities.

I have attempted to maintain the confidentiality and anonymity of all those who participated in the research throughout the thesis. A few magicians involved with

the IOT did request that I maintain the anonymity of the organisation as a whole. This request has proven problematic for a number of reasons: primarily, because knowledge concerning the IOT already lies within the public domain - the thesis cites a number of extant textual sources (namely the work of Peter Carroll) sources containing detailed information concerning the IOT. As this thesis is aimed at an academic audience, with the expectation that readers may seek out some of the sources cited, any attempts at disguising the name of the organisation will ultimately prove futile<sup>29</sup>. Neither have I used a pseudonym for the IOU, which constituted a series of publicly-advertised Chaos magical workshops rather than a distinct group in its own right (although I have endeavoured to maintain the anonymity of those participating in the workshops). I have also maintained the name because (as explained elsewhere in the thesis) it indicates some of the ways in which IOT and non-IOT Chaos magicians conceptualised their relationship. The Haunters of the Dark (HOD) is a pseudonym<sup>30</sup> - the group continues to exist at the time of writing, and no information concerning this group exists in the public domain. Members of both the IOU and HOD asked me not make any information public about certain series' of rituals (some of which lasted over a period of months) until after their completion - it was felt that revealing too much about such rituals might disrupt their magical effects. This has not proved to be problematic, given the period of time which has lapsed between witnessing and writing about the rituals of both the IOU and the HOD.

On one occasion, "secret knowledge" was imparted to me - the content of which is not revealed within the thesis. In this instance, the importance of secrecy was related to notions of magical self-discipline and one's ability to remain silent rather than with the empirical nature of the knowledge imparted; as a consequence, my failure to reveal this knowledge has had virtually no impact upon the validity of the research project.

Illegal drug-use was, I found, widespread amongst Chaos magicians - although practitioners were fully aware that drug-induced states could impair the magician's

---

<sup>29</sup> For example, Graham-Scott's attempts to disguise a similar "quasi-public" magical group (Graham-Scott 1983) were not successful - in his citation of Graham-Scott's text Graham Harvey (1995a) openly refers to the actual name of the group which Graham-Scott researched.



ability to distinguish between “authentic” experiences of otherworldly forces and hallucinations<sup>31</sup>. Cannabis was often used for recreational purposes; amphetamines were used less frequently, and I knew a very small number of Chaos magicians who also occasionally “experimented” with crack-cocaine and heroin. “Ecstasy” was the drug of choice for Chaos magicians when frequenting their favourite clubs and nightspots. Practitioners would occasionally smoke cannabis before a ritual in order to put themselves into a state of mind receptive to *gnosis*; otherwise, drug-ingestion did not play a role in any of the group magical practices and rituals I witnessed; however, Chaos magicians very occasionally used hallucinogens in a magical context: magic mushrooms were sometimes taken by solitary individuals (and sometimes by small groups of practitioners) for magical purposes. There also appeared to be a small informal economy connected with the supply of illegal drugs amongst some sectors of the Chaos magick community.

The attraction of drug-use amongst practitioners was partly influenced by Aleister Crowley’s extensive experimentation with the “magical” or consciousness-transforming properties of drugs. Such substances were also readily available in many of the “alternative” clubs which Chaos magicians frequented, and were very much part of the wider counterculture in which they participated - one which stressed the rejection of conventionality and quotidian forms of consciousness. In this respect, drug use certainly carried a degree of kudos: on rare occasions, Chaos magicians would boast amongst themselves about their various drug and alcohol-fuelled binges. Such “contests” were implicitly legitimised in magical terms, revolving around who had the “weirdest” and most “reality-bending” experiences. For other practitioners, drug-induced states also offered a brief reprieve from the problems of their day-to-day life, including long-term illness, the breakdown of romantic relationships, or other emotional problems. Although, drug-use played a significant role in many Chaos magicians’ day-to-day lives, it constituted (as I have indicated) an often-peripheral aspect of magical practice. Subsequently, I have been careful to exclude any in-depth and possibly incriminating discussion concerning the topic.

---

<sup>30</sup> The HOD did perform occasional public rituals, but under another pseudonym.

### **The Structure of the Thesis**

Chapter two examines historical conceptions of the demonic within a Euro-American context, with specific reference to the magical and neo-pagan subculture. There I show how such conceptions have undergone a transformation within the context of modernity, and how such conceptions play a central role in defining Chaos magicians' response and adaptation to the uncertainties of their everyday lives. In Chapter three, I define the ethos and practices of Chaos magick, which are framed in relation to the process of learning to "become" a Chaos magician within the context of the IOT. There I also examine the materialistic and morally ambivalent aspects of "sorcery".

Chapter four leads on from the analysis of sorcery presented in chapter three. With particular reference to the way Chaos magicians have applied a particularistic and popularised reading of contemporary scientific theory, I argue that both sorcery practices and conceptions of the "demonic" within Chaos magick are also closely connected to magical discourses of self-transformation or *metamorphosis*. These discourses are, it is argued, a response to feelings of alienation and anomie, and represent strategies by which practitioners seek reintegration and an experience of wholeness. I also demonstrate that the nature of this "wholeness" is defined in ways that are both intrinsically modern, and congruent with processual models of nature and the cosmos emergent from the science of chaos and "complexity". Following this, I discuss the way in which these ideas are bound up with the "postmodern" practice and ethos of Chaos magick.

In chapter five, I examine the significance of possession by demonic or disorderly spirits in reaffirming this ethos within the context of the IOT. The principle focus of this chapter is the role played by spirit possession in the ordering of power and gender relations amongst the groups in question. However, the latter part of the chapter also examines the broader contours of trance and possession in relation to the project of self-construction, and as a site of "governmentality". There I suggest that the therapeutic aspects of trance and possession do in fact involve

---

<sup>31</sup> See for example Carroll (1987: 147 -150).



practitioners in a process of “self-making” which is in accord with many of the core values and assumptions of modernity.

Chapter six further develops themes of selfhood, possession and the demonic. I examine the ways in which the HOD utilise a category of “demonic” entities as a method of imaginally and metaphorically exploring the multiple, fragmented or transforming categories of the self in an increasingly complexified and uncertain socio-cultural context. Importantly, these entities also represent a fundamentally “modern” idiom which incorporate secularised and technologised conceptions of the supernatural. In concluding this chapter, I return to other issues raised in chapter five: namely, the way in which possession experiences also represent a reification of late modern consumer culture - namely through the “consumption” of experiences of “otherness”.

The thesis concludes in chapter seven, where I suggest that Chaos is attractive to particular individuals for a number of reasons, most of which are a consequence of transformations occurring within the wider socio-cultural matrix; these include: the exponential growth and subsequent unmanageability of knowledge; the emergence of secular concepts of cosmological uncertainty; and transforming experiences of selfhood and identity in the face of qualitatively new uncertainties. As a consequence, I argue that magical thinking fulfils a more generalised cognitive function in Euro-American societies - principally as a mode of thought by which meaning is elicited from the uncertainties and apparent disorderliness of the modern world. These general theoretical points are also marshalled in support of my core argument: that whilst Chaos magick represents a critique of certain aspects of late modernity, it also constitutes a “lifestyle option” and ethos which is supportive of and adaptive to the vagaries of late modern consumer culture.

## Chapter 2

### Through the Portals of Inbetweenness: Conceptions of the Demonic within Chaos Magick.

#### Part 1 - Entering the Realm of Chaos

##### Introduction

This chapter maps out a broad genealogy of the demonic in Euro-American moral discourse, and examines the way in which in this discourse has become transformed within Western magical subcultures. I show how, through the processes of secularisation, the demonic has become internalised as a symbol of the self within contemporary Satanism, and subsequently Chaos magick.

I go on to argue that it is through this predominantly modern conception of the demonic that Chaos magicians attempt to constitute themselves as standing in opposition to the wider culture. However, in the latter sections of the chapter I demonstrate that this view of Chaos magick is largely underwritten by the ambivalent character of the demonic - this ambivalence being a direct effect of the secularisation and relativisation of evil. I show that one of the consequences of this is that Chaos magical conceptions of the demonic are often bound up with may reiterate the essentially modern ethos of consumer capitalism; thus, to treat images of evil and the demonic in contemporary magical discourse primarily as symbols of resistance is highly problematic.

Here I suggest that Western notions of evil fall into a conceptual schema involving two ontological categories: exteriorised evil and internalised evil. Both views are largely concerned with those powers - whether external and supernatural, or internal to the human psyche - which disrupt and disorder socially-recognised, normative modes of behaviour.

Within the category of internal evil, the notion of evil is divested of its supernaturalist connotations, and is more properly thought of as either: maladaptive behaviour originating within repressed, unconscious drives, the result of neuro-physiological disorders, or a response to socio-economic deprivation. Likewise,



human misfortune is causally attributed either to natural and scientifically explicable processes or coincidence rather than supernatural agency.

The category of external evil includes the belief that anti-social behaviour and unfortunate events originate from an outside source, which may be considered to be an *a priori*, tangible evil. This category tends toward the view of evil as an autonomous supernatural agency.

The moral universe of popular Western Christianity represents a “weak” dualism (Taylor 1986: 35) in which Satan is both the lesser adversary of God, and the source and active agent of evil. However, the emergence of secular-scientific discourse has led, at least superficially, to the rejection of these notions in favour of naturalistic, internalised and psychological interpretations of evil.

Nonetheless, the idiom of Satan continues to inform contemporary Western moral conceptions. The continuation of such beliefs in modern industrial societies is, however, no more “abnormal” than other discernibly “occult” beliefs: the hidden telos of rational progress, or the mysterious power of “market forces”, for example. Thus, in this chapter, belief in witchcraft, the occult, and the supernatural powers of evil is treated as

“a set of discourses on morality, sociality and humanity: on human frailty. Far from being a set of irrational beliefs, they are a form of historical consciousness, a sort of social diagnostics...that try to explain why the world is the way it is, why it is changing and moving in a particular manner at the moment”. (Moore & Sanders 2001: 20).

Similarly, in his study of contemporary Greek representations of the demonic (*exotiká*), Charles Stewart (1991) states that

“demons cluster around refractory areas of experience. Incomprehensible phenomena are rendered intelligible through a recasting that could be said to humanize them; the moral foundations of the society are projected into the unknown. The construction, representation, and dissemination of evocative images enable an understanding and a mastery of situations that escape comprehension in other terms. This is an end in itself” (Stewart 1991: 15)

I go onto suggest, therefore, that the power and popularity of supernatural representations lies in their concrete, personalised character - allowing intangible

and abstract forces to be made visible and ultimately subject to control and manipulation.

### **Through the Portals of Inbetweeness**

My first face-to-face encounter with Chaos magicians took place mid-1997 in The Plough, a pub situated off New Oxford Street in central London. Although there was no single “site” upon which fieldwork was conducted, this small area of London became increasingly familiar to me during the research. In order to give some sense of the social and “magical” significance of the environment in which the practice and experience of Chaos magick is sometimes located, I have included a brief overview of the locale.

The Plough - which had been frequented by both Aleister Crowley and Austin Spare - represents something of an informal cornerstone of the London occult scene: during the latter stages of my research, this pub formed the regular meeting place of the Haunters of the Dark. Atlantis, one of London’s oldest occult bookshops, stands a few yards down the road - on one occasion, I was involved in a visualisation exercise with a group of Chaos magicians which took place in the basement of the shop. A forum known as “Talking Stick” is held twice monthly in another pub nearby; pagans from all over London come here to socialise and listen to talks on Wicca, Druidry, Chaos magick, Thelema, the Northern Tradition, Sumerian and Egyptian mythology, Amazonian shamanic healing, ufology, conspiracy theory, and vampirism. Conway Hall is situated a few hundred yards away: each month, the Pagan Federation (a national umbrella organisation of neo-pagans) invites various groups to perform “open” or public rituals at this locale - I participated in two such rituals which were presented here on separate occasions by the IOU and the Haunters of the Dark. Conway Hall is also regularly used to stage various pagan conferences; during the course of my research, a number of Chaos magical and Thelemic symposiums - including *UKaos*, *Erisinian Mysteries*, and *Ananke* - were also held here. Not far from this stands the Centre Point office block, built on the crossroads formed by Oxford Street, New Oxford Street, Charing Cross Road and Tottenham Court Road. A wine bar is situated at the foot of the building, where Chaos magicians and members of “The Invisibles” Internet



newsgroup occasionally meet to discuss writer Grant Morrison's magical and countercultural comic-book series of the same name. Centre Point was supposedly cursed by Aleister Crowley (Greenwood 2000: 3), a rumour probably inspired by the fact that in November 1949, Crowley's protégé Kenneth Grant participated - along with Gerald Gardner - in a disastrous magical ritual at a house then standing on the site (Grant 1977: 122). Grant claims that Centre Point has since become a physical manifestation of the "Portals of Inbetweeness" (Grant 1977: 126): magical gateways leading to "the zones of Non-Being represented by the other side of the Tree of Life which is dreaded by the non-initiate as the Tree of Death" (Grant 1977: 129) - a pertinent symbol overshadowing my own entrance into the liminal, antinomian and anti-structural world of Chaos magick. Such was the terrain upon which Chaos magick was conducted, where often-secretive magical groups would convene in public spaces which had themselves become part of the lore of contemporary magic.

The "zones of Non-Being" mentioned by Grant are also known as the Tunnels of Set (named after Set or Seth, the "anomalous" Egyptian deity of evil and confusion [Cohn 1993a: 12]): conduits to a chaotic and intrinsically alien universe (Grant 1975a: 12). The Tunnels of Set are accessed through *Da'ath* (the Hebrew word for "knowledge"), the eleventh *sephira* or magical power zone situated upon the Tree of Life. The inclusion of the letter "k" (the eleventh letter of the alphabet) in "magick" is also symbolic of this eleventh "demonic" power zone; "k" also signifies the Greek word *kteis*, referring to the female genitalia (Symonds and Grant 1973: xvi) - delineating the importance of sexual intercourse as a magical tool for contacting demonic forces<sup>1</sup>.

The Tunnels of Set (see fig. 6) comprise the "averse" side or "negative" underside of the Tree of Life, and represent the domain of dark, chthonic and disruptive forces known as the *qliphoth*<sup>2</sup>: a Hebraic word meaning "shells" or

---

<sup>1</sup> See also Grant (1972: 42-44) and Fortune (1935: 158-159) for magical interpretations of the term *kteis*. The relationship between the female genitalia and the demonic is further discussed in chapter five.

<sup>2</sup> Sometimes spelt as *kliphoth* or *qliphoth*. The kabbalistic magician William Gray (1974) gives the following derivations of the Hebrew word "kliphoth":

“QLL means to vilify, curse, or to bring a curse on oneself.

QLQL means mean and vile.

PVTh means to be apart or separated.

“harlots”. These “demonic” and inhuman extraterrestrial entities were often encountered by Chaos magicians through an anarchic form of visualised, otherworldly journeying or “freestyle shamanism” (Fries 1992).

Chaos magicians prefer the chaotic non-linearity of the Tunnels of Set as a model of spiritual self-realisation to the hierarchical cosmos of “traditional” kabbalistic thought. Importantly, the Tunnels of Set embody the key Chaos magical concept of “inbetweenness” popularised in the works of Kenneth Grant, but initially developed by Austin Spare (see Grant 1972: 180; 1975b: 197-198). The “sacred inbetweenness concepts” (Spare 1997: 13) of which Spare wrote are liminal spaces where the socially-ordained prism of everyday perception and cognition is rendered ineffective, where the linear narratives of spiritual progress collapse, and where the magician attains a brief but pristine glimpse of an “authentic” reality: Rob (a Chaos magician I met towards the end of 1999) had come to a conclusion - as a result of what he called “extradimensional/hyperspace researches” - that entrance into these “inbetween spaces” allowed human beings to realise that “what we perceive as reality is only a cross section...we can only see a very small bit...from our perspective and can’t make out the big picture”.

Experiences of these spaces (via trance or possession by their inhabitants) was, beyond the power of language to describe. Nonetheless, Chaos magicians would attempt to refract the experience of ambiguity and fragmentary consciousness indicative of inbetweenness via an often jumbled and impressionistic discourse. This is evident in the following example, which marks an encounter with Orzaz (via possession). Orzaz was an inhabitant of the “Ghooric Zone” - one of the “inbetween” spaces which members of the Haunters of the Dark regularly explored through trance and possession:

Dane: Are we in the presence of Orzaz, or someone else?

Damien / Orzaz: Yes.....Orzaz.

Dane: Have you got anything to say to us?

D/O: Do not look to the stars, look between the stars. Listen to the stars.

The sounds open the portal which is the stars...Do not call Orzaz, Orzaz is.

See Orzaz, do not call Orzaz. The call of Orzaz is Orzaz.

---

PTh means interstice, or a space between things

PThVTh is an euphemism for the female pudenda, or “hinge,” signifying the sockets that receive the phallic hinge-pin of the door”(Gray 1974: 17)



Dane: The “blackbirds” of which you have spoken before [Orzaz mentioned “blackbirds” in an earlier possession ritual]....

D/O: They are not birds, they are black, but they are not black - they are only black to you because you cannot see the colour that they are...

Dane: In which way does their nature impact with ours?

D/O: They move between you and as they move you can move with them and by moving with them you move through the portal which is the sound of Orzaz. The sound of Orzaz and the portal is the same...the vault is the sound of Orzaz. Opening the vault opens Orzaz. It is the sound...of the wings, of birds, as you call them...The beatings of their wings is the sound of Orzaz.....although they are not wings. You see them as wings in the same way you see the colour, and therefore they are your wings. You make them wings and you make them black.

As noted in chapter one, magicians often problematised the attempt to articulate magical experiences which were seen to exist “beyond language”. The imaginal and “metaphysical” zones in which such encounters took place were described by Dane as “pre-conceptual”, and were the “heterotopic” sites (Hetherington 1997) of the magical imagination: “an impossible space, a realm of difference as Derrida would have it (1976), an endless deferral of meaning...a space that has no knowable ontological ground” (Hetherington 1997: 67). Such a deferral is evident in the example above, where Orzaz derides the HOD’s attempts to clarify and categorise those things which inhabit the “inbetween” spaces according to this-worldly referents (i.e. the “blackbirds”). Nonetheless, Alan - a member of the HOD in his mid-forties - attempted to describe one such experience of these “inbetween” states. This occurred subsequent to his possession by a deity known as Hastur:

“I had the revelation that I described as "understanding how a God can be a place". Since then this has developed a little as follows: the word "place" is inadequate, as it implies a particular spot fixed somewhere specific in time and space. I toyed with the word "location" for a while...but this too is inadequate. Hastur can be different places, but does not "move into them (or out of them)". A location can temporarily be Hastur, but Hastur is not an adjective, more an event. Hastur is not IN places, or of them. Similarly, just as Hastur is not "the God of this place at the moment" neither is "this place the place of Hastur at the moment". It is more a matter of Topography. Not everywhere can be Hastur...The topography is not conjoined in space and time”

The above problematises the claim made at the beginning of the chapter: that

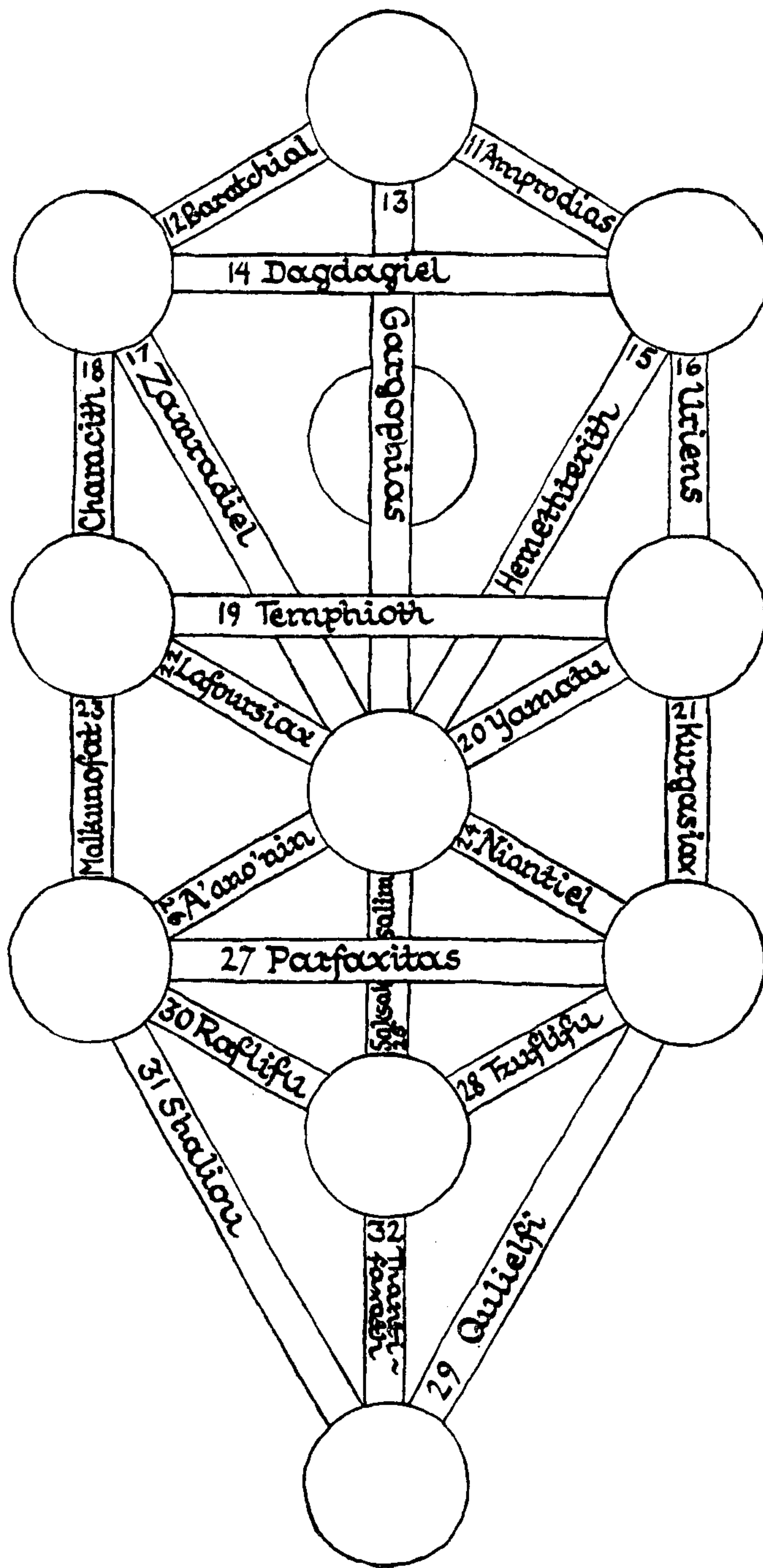


Fig. 6 - the Tunnels of Set.



Chaos magicians' concept of the demonic allows practitioners to give form and substance to the occluded social, cultural, and economic forces which shape their lives and sense of self. Despite the intangible and ineffable character of Orzaz and other similar "entities", they are nonetheless subject to a degree of control and explication through their subsequent encapsulation within the bodies and experiences of magicians, as produced by the mimesis of possession. As I demonstrate in chapter six, such ineffable and "non-rational" forces provide the starting point from which practitioners begin to articulate and challenge the problematic, rationalising trajectory of modernity. The question-and-answering technique used by the HOD in the above example<sup>3</sup> also offers the opportunity for interpreting and making meaningful the confusing discourse of the demonic; as is evident in Alan's comments, Chaos magicians do find ways of "making sense" of these encounters (albeit in highly personal and idiosyncratic ways). As a consequence of its ambivalent character, the demonic constitutes a somewhat ontologically fluid category for Chaos magicians: in this chapter, I point to instances where the demonic is clearly conceived of in more "concrete" and personified ways, as opposed to the more elusive form it take in the above<sup>4</sup>. Both conceptions of the demonic are, however, linked by the fact that it is seen to form the basis of human selfhood. Thus, in the case of the HOD, the manifestation of demons within possession led to an experiential awareness of the alienating, socially-constructed categories through which human experience and selfhood is given expression, allowing practitioners to undertake "work on the self"<sup>5</sup>. In this manner, the non-personified forms of the demonic continue to operate as a form of social diagnostics - although I suggest both here and in chapter five that the selfhood which is thus produced may also be seen as thoroughly "modern" in character.

### **Ordinariness and the Exoticisation of Magick**

The above re-cognition of a familiar landscape and recourse to a seemingly strange and mystical terminology serves only to exoticise the anthropologist's "heroic"

---

<sup>3</sup> This technique is further described in chapter six.

<sup>4</sup> See also chapter four.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

entrance into the world of contemporary magic: a realm which is alien yet familiar, situated as it is at the hub of metropolitan modernity. This conjuring up of strange and exotic imagery does, however, fail to represent the ordinariness and banality of the occult (de Sardan 1992). Although for a few hours every week I would find myself ingrained in a strange world of extraterrestrial demons, magical vortices to otherworldly realms, Black Masses and quests for objects of magical power, the rest of the time was spent at work, or chatting and drinking in the pub, or reading a book, or watching television: the things “ordinary” people do as part of their everyday lives. The relationship between ordinariness and the exotic is key to understanding the experience of the modern magician: within the holism of the magical subculture, the mundane is itself interpenetrated with the sacred. Thus, the often exciting quality of magic, of achieving competency in the practice of magic and the acquisition of “magical power”, is fundamentally grounded in tedium: spending long periods sitting motionless whilst practising breathing exercises; staring at a blank space in an attempt to strengthen one’s concentration or powers of visualisation; or achieving quiescence of mind. However, in practical terms, contemporary magicians define the sacred in relation to its separateness from the profane (i.e. Durkheim 1915: 52); thus, the danger of stressing the ordinariness of contemporary magic is that of domesticating the seemingly alien and exotic within anthropological discourse (Sontag 1966).

On occasion, magicians (usually male) would boast about having entered into psychic combat with some powerful demon or, in the words of Rick (one of the first Chaos magicians I met), of having “forced something into a triangle” - a euphemism for commanding a dangerous otherworldly entity into a magically-consecrated, protective triangle. At the 1998 Thelemic symposium held in Oxford, the question was raised as to what exactly attracts people to magic: one of the attendees replied that “when you look at people walking along the street, they just seem to be dead, like they have stones in their eyes”. Elements of elitism are apparent in most forms of contemporary magic: it is through the practice of magic that magicians become connected to supramundane forces and often believe themselves to be elevated above the commonality. Self-mastery is central to the process of becoming a Chaos magician - daily meditational and visualisation



practices are deemed vital if practitioners are to develop the discipline and self-control necessary to “strengthen their magical will against the strongest possible adversary - their own minds” (Carroll 1987: 9). In October 1999, I attended an IOT moot in South London, which attracted members from all over the country. Towards the end of the moot (which was held on Hallowe’ en or Samhain), those present began discussing the fact that the IOT had not attracted many new members in recent years. Most of the higher ranking members of the group felt that this was not necessarily a bad thing, one of who stated that becoming a Chaos magician was “pretty much a sink or swim situation anyway...we only want to attract people who are man enough - in their own way - to hold their own”. A few months later (in March 2000), I was at Talking Stick with Jason - a Chaos magician and Thelemite who I had met in the previous year. There he introduced me to Neil, a Thelemite in his mid-thirties. Later in the evening, Neil invited us back to his house; there he expressed the belief that there existed only a very small number of “genuine” magicians who were “able to structure reality according to their own will”, and who constituted a secret Thelemic elite which set them apart from “the herd”. According to Neil, this elite “controlled the world” at the behest of the Secret Chiefs or Ascended Masters - highly evolved entities who had transcended the limitations of their prior humanity. Somewhat prophetically, Neil stated that the day was coming when “the mist will be lifted from people’s eyes, and the true nature of reality will be revealed”. He himself had undergone a similar magical “illumination”, and described the nature of this reality as “horrible”. He was somewhat vague on this point, but indicated a spiritually amoral and uncaring cosmos run according to the principles of a vulgar Nietzscheanism: quoting from Crowley, Neil claimed that “the slaves shall serve” - the slaves being the mass of spiritually undeveloped humanity who had not discovered their “True Will”.

These ethnographic fragments indicate a not-uncommon (but by no means widespread) belief amongst “darkside” magicians: that they have attained a superior status to the “uninitiated”, and as a consequence are able to disregard the morality of the “herd” or the “masses”. The counterpoint to this being that, in identifying themselves as an “elite”, these magicians also reinforce their own socially-marginal status. Power, marginality and the construction of identity were, I

found, often intimately linked within the magical discourse of Chaos magick.

As detailed in the previous chapter, I had entered into correspondence with Rick and Jenna - both members of the IOT - during the early months of 1997; they had subsequently invited me to become a member of their "Temple" - the name given to the quasi-autonomous groups which comprise the IOT as an organisational entity. We eventually met in The Plough on a Saturday evening towards the end of May 1997. Without having seen either Rick or Jenna before, I recognised them the moment they set foot in the pub: both were dressed in black leather and velvet clothing adorned with pagan and occult jewellery, along with black hooded tops with a "Chaosphere" (the symbol of Chaos magick - see fig. 7) over the left breast, and the Chaos magical aphorism "Nothing is True, Everything is Permitted"<sup>6</sup> printed along the sleeves. I was, at this time troubled by a set of barely-formulated fears as to exactly what Rick and Jenna might possibly try to embroil me in - fears that were largely an extension of the demonisation of the occult within the popular imagination - a demonisation which, as their attire suggested, Rick and Jenna wished to embrace. Indicative of alliances with "dark", occult and anti-social forces, their mode of dress was, it seemed, an exteriorisation of their self-defined marginal status.

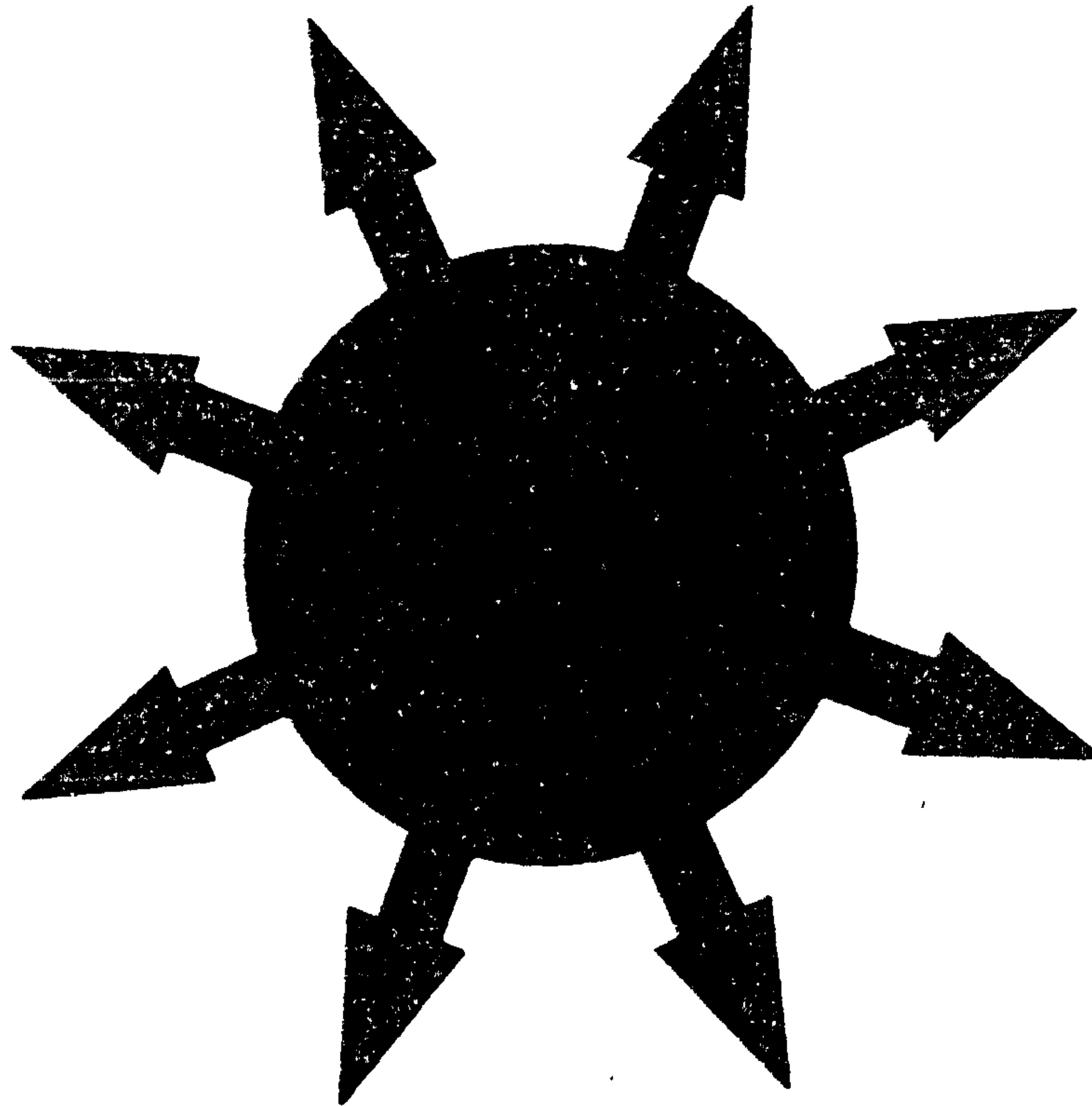
But Rick and Jenna were open and friendly towards me. Rick was in his late twenties and worked in the computer industry, assembling circuit-boards; Jenna was in her early thirties, working as an administrative assistant. They had been living together for about four years, and were financially secure enough to have started buying their own house near the South Coast. They had both been practising magicians for about ten years, and had both become involved in Chaos magick around the time of their first meeting.

Without the outward accoutrements of occult practice, Rick and Jenna might have been any "regular" couple - the social reality of contemporary magic lies somewhere between the poles of the ordinary and the exotic. However, during our initial conversation, Rick was keen to stress the dangers of magic. He told me about a magician that he once knew, who had participated in series of rituals meant

---

<sup>6</sup> This aphorism is mentioned by Nietzsche (1956: 287), but is attributed to Hassan I Sabbah, leader of the "Assassin" sect which supposedly existed in Persia around the Twelfth Century AD. See Dafny (1995) for a commentary on the origins of the legends surrounding the Assassins.





**Fig. 7 - the Chaosphere.**

to invoke a powerful demonic entity; according to Rick, the experience sent this unnamed individual insane. I heard similar stories from other magicians - the late Gerald Suster (a well-known Thelemite and author) referred to this as the ever-growing “casualty-list” of magic when I interviewed him; he also cited Kenneth Grant’s book *Hecate’s Fountain* (Grant 1992) as replete with dire examples of magicians who suffered mental dissolution, disappeared inexplicably, or had died as a result of their encounters with “demonic” forces. Grant himself never attaches any moral relevance to these accounts, which often evoke a sense of the power, daring, and elite status of the magician; in fact, the magician’s willingness “to dare” forms part of the “traditional” magical oath known as the “Witch’s Pyramid”<sup>7</sup> (which constitutes part of the initiation ceremony of the IOT<sup>8</sup>). Although I often experienced a sense of fear and paranoia as a result of magical rituals, I rarely encountered anything that closely corresponded to the dangerous experiences

---

<sup>7</sup> The Witch’s Pyramid in its totality is “to will, to do, to dare, and to keep silent”.

claimed by Rick and other magicians. Practitioners were, I found, liable to make recourse to the rhetoric of the exotic and the demonic as discourses of power, and in the construction of selfhood and identity. This is not to say that magicians invent the things they claim to experience: contemporary magic is centred on the exploration of imaginal realms which, for practitioners, is as equally real as the material world.

These occult discourses of the demonic do not, however, exist within a vacuum. Thus, in the following section, I argue that Chaos magical concepts of the demonic are embedded within an essentially modern, internalised view of evil. As notions of the demonic become naturalised and psychologised, they are divested of the weight of “traditional” supernatural authority. The consequence of this “detraditionalised” view of demonic power is that, for Chaos magicians, such power take on a morally ambivalent cast.

## **Part 2 - A Genealogy of the Demonic**

### **Satan as External Evil**

The notion of Satan has existed within Christendom from as early as the Fourth Century AD, and arose from a need to resolve the problem of theodicy in a world created by an omnipotent and benevolent God (O’Grady 1989; Stanford 1996: 84). Christian cosmology presents evil as emerging from the fact that human behaviour is proscribed by a divinely-ordained order. Behaviour which stands in contradistinction to that order is thus seen as motivated by an agency exterior to it - namely Satan. In this respect, Satan is in active opposition to the divine order, and thus becomes conceptualised as the inverse of God. Satan remains, therefore, outside the conceptual and moral boundaries defined by the Christian system of values.

The anthropocentric and personalised view of the cosmos expounded within Medieval and Renaissance Christian cosmology has been increasingly de-emphasised as a consequence of the Copernican revolution and the emergence of rationality as the dominant Western epistemological discourse since the Protestant

---

<sup>8</sup> See appendix 2.



Reformation (Tambiah 1990: 12-18). By the Nineteenth and early Twentieth Centuries, Darwin's naturalistic theory of human evolution - and Freud's later contention that human behaviour was underpinned by instinctual drives - further undermined Christian aetiologies concerning the divine origins of the human species. As a consequence of these epistemological shifts, secular-scientific discourse has come to emphasise the naturalistic, biological, psychological and sociological origins of behaviour previously considered "evil".

This epistemological shift has had a profound effect upon Western philosophical and religious ideas: the growth, for example, of an anti-religious existentialist current of thought exemplified by Nietzsche and the later philosophies of Heidegger, Sartre and Camus. Nonetheless, this intellectual current has also impacted upon religious thought in the existentialist theology of Paul Tillich and Rudolf Bultmann (Macquarrie 1955). These perspectives are less concerned with supernatural realities than with the locus of human meaning within embodied existence and an internal quest for "authentic being". Outside of recent Christian evangelical and fundamentalist movements, theodicy within the "mainstream" of Christian theology has, in general, abandoned the notion of evil as an externalised or personalised phenomenon in the figure of Satan (Hick 1968; Hebblethwaite 1979; Davis 1981; Horne 1996) - the focus shifting towards a concept of evil as a necessary condition of free will. This is not to deny that notions of moral responsibility were not apparent in Christian discourse prior to Freud *et al*, but merely indicates an increasing emphasis upon the internal and psychic - rather than supernatural - origins of evil.

Anthropology has also played a significant role in delineating this shift, its analyses of morality resting principally upon rationalist interpretations: as Evans-Pritchard (1976: 18) claimed, witches do not exist because they cannot exist. Anthropologists have thus tended to treat indigenous conceptions of supernatural evil as mystified reflections of socially-derived categories. With the rejection of indigenous interpretations, behaviour considered "abnormal" or "deviant" has been attributed to the irruption of repressed and socially-distorted unconscious drives (Freud 1930), or, taking shamanism and spirit possession as concrete examples, as the result of neurosis (La Barre 1972; Lévi-Strauss 1963), or responses to marginal

status, deprivation, gender inequalities and culturally-overdetermined identities (Lewis 1971; Constantinides 1985; Boddy 1988).

Thus, behaviour that is discontinuous to ordered social existence no longer requires explication through scientifically-unverifiable suppositions concerning supernatural agency; this has also been accompanied by a semantic shift away from a religious conception of behavioural causality - the term "evil" having been replaced within Western moral discourse by less emotive synonyms such as "maladaptive" and "non-normative".

Michael Lambek (1996) summarises the general status of demons and spirits within the context of modernity thus:

"Perhaps the missing factor in explaining the decline of spirits is the penetration of new forms of subjectification - discourses of psychology, of sexuality, and or morality that turn the locus of truth away from external numinals and toward the newly constituted, interiorized modern "self"...modernity ultimately locates agency within the self, replacing cosmology with psychology, passion with action. In this way, devotion to the other is lost, and our links to the external, but intrinsically interconnected world, are reconstituted as internal qualities of mind."(Lambek 1996: 248).

However, Lambek is cognisant of the fact that the conception of spirits transform as the social and cultural context of their manifestation also changes. Spirits and demons have not, therefore, simply been rationalised into non-existence within contemporary Euro-American societies: they continue to exist as subaltern forms of knowledge, albeit in ways that, for Chaos magicians, appropriate the categories of modern discourse. In the following sections, I demonstrate that a dialectical relationship exists between modern "institutionalised" knowledge and folk or supernaturalist conceptions of evil and the demonic. I focus particularly upon the manner in which the idea of Satan has undergone a process of transformation within Euro-American conceptions of the demonic, and suggest that it has done so in ways which encompass the internalisation of moral agency, as well as the religious and affective needs of human beings.



### **Satan as Other**

Various magico-religious belief systems still maintain a hold within modern Western societies and are, as this thesis generally argues, intrinsic to modernity. Notions of external “otherness” continue to inform popular, contemporary conceptions of evil, where individuals convicted of child-abuse, multiple murders and violent crimes of a sexual nature, are frequently alluded to as “evil monsters” and “beasts” within the tabloid press (Pocock 1986: 52). The application of such terms presents evil as something incomprehensible and external to the human framework. Yet whilst deeply-rooted cultural conceptions of “otherness” and external evil have a powerful emotional appeal, the “anti-human” behaviour of mass-murderers and sexual-abusers is rarely conceptualised as the result of supernatural influences. Thus, conceptions of evil have become widely rationalised.

Mary Douglas (1966: 97) suggests that to step outside of the formal structure of society is to become exposed to the power of the disorderly. As popular stereotypes within the European imagination (Cohn 1993b), witches are thus seen to derive their power through participation in acts which fall outside the divine ordering of Christian cosmology. Brian Levack (1996) has also argued that during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, European notions of witchcraft underwent a transformation - during this period, witchcraft no longer came to be viewed as a generalised mystical or occult power to cause harm, but was seen to originate from the Devil. A concept of external evil was reinforced in the stereotype of the witch’s Sabbat, presided over by the Devil or his demonic agents in corporeal form. This set of beliefs - engendered by the secular, ecclesiastic and scholastic authorities - gradually disseminated through all levels of society (Ankarloo & Henningsen 1993).

According to Norman Cohn (1993b), the European stereotype of the witch rested upon a number of assumptions: that witches met regularly at sabbats to practice cannibalism, infanticide, incest and various forms of sexually-deviant behaviour; that witches represented a secret cabal dedicated to the worship of Satan; and that they were intent on destabilising the status-quo. Similar notions exist amongst a variety of persecutory movements, both historically and cross-culturally (Douglas *et al* 1970b; Moody 1974: 365; Marwick *et al* 1975; Stevens 1991; Ankarloo &

Henningsen *et al* 1993) - as such, they appear to represent deeply-rooted and possibly universal socio-psychological mechanisms (Tuzin 1983) by which social boundaries are defined and reinforced through notions of “otherness”.

Poole (1983) describes, for example, how the Bimin-Kuskusmin of Papua New Guinea classify other ethnic groups in terms of their relation to human status - geographically-distant groups being viewed as “animal-men” who are inveterate cannibals. Similarly, Levi-Strauss (1969) has argued that animal kingdom can represent a useful category for conceptualising difference, whilst Mary Douglas (1966: 116; 1970a: 65-81) has famously suggested that the human body is often utilised cross-culturally as the primary symbol for delineating social boundaries. In this respect, animal/human dichotomies appear to represent a generalised classificatory mechanism by which the body is reified as the ontological signifier of one’s human status, and by which socio-moral boundaries may be asserted through the use of animal symbolism. This is also apparent in cross-cultural tendencies toward the theriomorphism of non-human, supernatural entities, and the common belief that witches are able to assume animal form or are closely linked to the animal kingdom (Evans-Pritchard 1976: 236-237; Stevens 1991: 26). Thus Christianity often symbolises supernatural evil in the animalistic image of the Devil - a horned, shaggy, cloven-hoofed and goat-like entity. These notions became reified in early modern European concepts of the witch, who was attended by animal familiars, and was believed to have sexual intercourse with Satan (sometimes in the form of a goat). Animal symbolism differentiates behaviour that stands in contradistinction to normative, divinely-ordained modes of behaviour, and is thus conceptualised as being less-than-human or of a non-human order. In this respect, accusations of incest, infanticide and cannibalism are indicative of assumptions that such acts are “natural” within the animal kingdom, and are thus external to “proper” human nature.

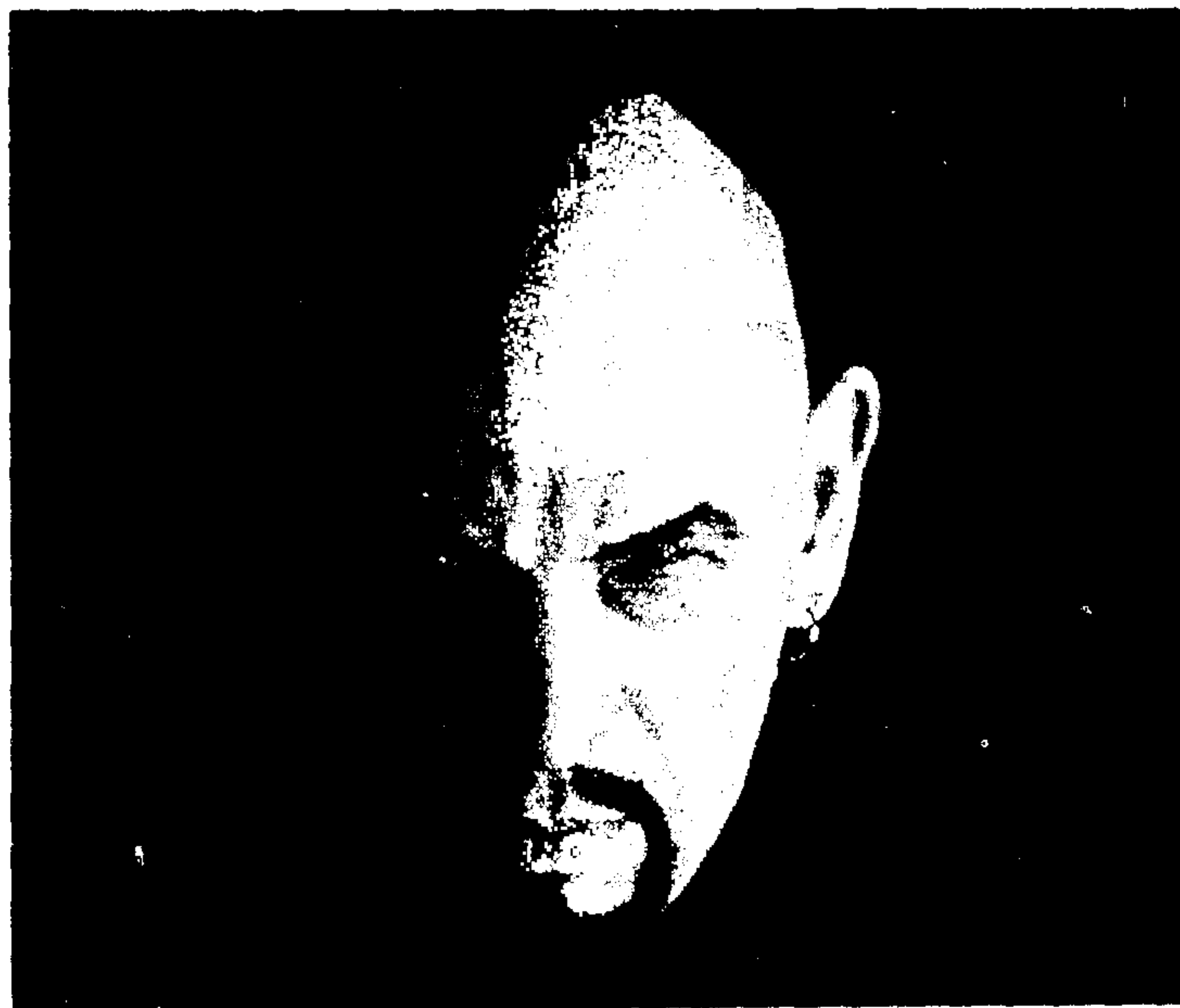
### **Satan as Self**

The Devil continues to cast his shadow over the seemingly modern, rational cultures of Europe and America, where a number of groups and individuals pursue



Satanism as a magical philosophy<sup>9</sup>. Satan has, however, undergone a few transformations: whilst retaining the form of a bestial, goat-headed god, for modern-day Satanists he also represents the “beast within”.

The Church of Satan - founded by Anton LaVey (fig. 8) in San Francisco during 1966 - is the most prominent and well-publicised Satanic organisation. Other groups include The Temple of Set and the Order of the Nine Angles (Harvey 1995a; Graham-Scott 1983, Goodrick-Clarke 2002: 213-231)<sup>10</sup>. The beliefs of



**Fig. 8 - Anton LaVey**

modern-day Satanists represent a secular, materialist philosophy espousing individualism, self-affirmation and self-empowerment, drawing inspiration from Nietzsche, Aleister Crowley, and Darwin. Burton Wolfe, a member of the Church of Satan, describes Satanism as

---

<sup>9</sup> In his survey of Satanism in the UK, Graham Harvey (1995) estimates that there are probably as few as one hundred self-identified Satanists in Britain. In a more recent survey, Jean La Fontaine broadly confirms Harvey's figures (1999: 104-105).

<sup>10</sup> There also exists a plethora of lesser-known Satanist groups (see Melton 1978: 300-307).

“the belief that human beings are inherently selfish, violent creatures, that life is a Darwinian struggle for survival of the fittest, that only the strong survive and the earth will be ruled by those who fight to win the ceaseless competition that exists in all jungles” (Wolfe quoted in LaVey 1969: 18).

Satanism denigrates Christianity as an ideology of the weak; Anton LaVey has thus denounced the Christian message of love and forgiveness: “if a man smite you on one cheek, SMASH him on the other!” (LaVey 1969: 33); likewise, the Church of Satan rejects Christian notions of self-denial in favour of sensual indulgence (LaVey 1969: 81-86; Barton 1990: 64). Although this type of Satanism represents a belief which is antithetical to Christian *morality* (Fritscher 1993: 364), it does not, as such, represent an *anti-theology* - the worship of Satan as a spiritual entity that is the inverse of God. The Chaos magician Steve Wilson, a well-known writer and lecturer on the UK’s neo-pagan scene, informed me that when people generally refer to Satanism, what they mean is *devil worship*: the inversion of Christian *theology* in which Satan is actively worshipped as an anti-god. According to Steve, Satanism proper is the anti-Christian *moral philosophy* of self-exaltation. Marian, a self-identified Satanist in her early thirties who I met at Talking Stick thus stated:

“I don’t believe in Satan as a sort of being, the kind of thing reflected in other religions which believe in some sort of external god. I am my own god, I am the centre of my own universe, I am doing my own thing. As a Satanist, you worship yourself, not some external being that doesn’t exist. Your moral code is something you create yourself - not what others tell you. You live by your own moral code. And that is really all there is to Satanism, in my opinion!”

Alternatively, the Temple of Set - a group tangentially related to the Church of Satan - does conceptualise the figure of Set<sup>11</sup> as a distinct, supernatural entity. However, Set is not the focus of worship, but is regarded as the entity responsible for endowing humanity with intellect, will and consciousness (Harvey 1995a: 288; Graham Scott 1983: 59). The Temple of Set thus claims that the ““worship” of Set is...the “worship” of individualism” (Temple of Set 1996: 7) - a sentiment also

---

<sup>11</sup> The Temple of Set is not, properly speaking, interested in the symbol of Satan *per se*. However, David Austen - the Temple’s High Priest in the UK - recognises that the organisation follows a



echoed by Marian.

In either case, these modern Satanists tend towards a conception of Satan as an idealised and empowered self rather than an external source of evil. Furthermore, Satanist ideology tends to posit this in Darwinian terms: as an embodied, biological, instinctual self (Fritscher 1993: 369). Marian thus felt that the traditional, bestial imagery of Satan was important because:

“it’s quite a cool image [laughing] that you can use yourself, you can see yourself in it...Its an external focus, which is better than thinking of all these gods and goddesses floating around, because its an image of base human instinct which is very animal-like...its like paring your humanity down to its base animal instincts for food and sex”.

Such ideas are contiguous with the concept of Satan - both within Christianity and contemporary occult traditions - as linked with animality, sexuality, and materiality (Cavendish 1975: 174). This is also reflected in the symbol used by the Church of Satan, which consists of an inverted pentagram containing a goat’s head within (see fig. 9). For many contemporary magicians, the uppermost point of the pentagram represents the “fifth element” of spirit (see fig. 10)<sup>12</sup>. In its inverted form (see fig. 11), the elemental hierarchy of the pentagram is reversed, and spirit becomes subordinate to the elements of earth and fire. In Satanist terms, this represents an affirmation of the primacy of matter (earth) over spirit - and the power of the magician’s will (fire) to transform material existence for his or her own ends (King 1989: 160). For LaVey, Satan thus represents liberation from the Christian emphasis of spirit over matter, and a symbol of indulgence and bodily gratification (Alfred 1976: 185). As a consequence of this emphasis on materiality, the Church of Satan takes an ambivalent stance where the supernatural basis of magic is concerned. LaVey thus claims that magic “is never scientifically explainable, but science has always been, at one time or another, considered magic” (LaVey 1969: 110). Elsewhere, he defines magic as the rational utilisation of one’s own intellectual and physical attributes: a form of applied psychology (LaVey 1969: 110-113; Moody 1974: 378) which can be used to manipulate one’s social environment in order to bring about desired results.

---

broadly “Satanic” philosophy (Baddeley 1999: 112).

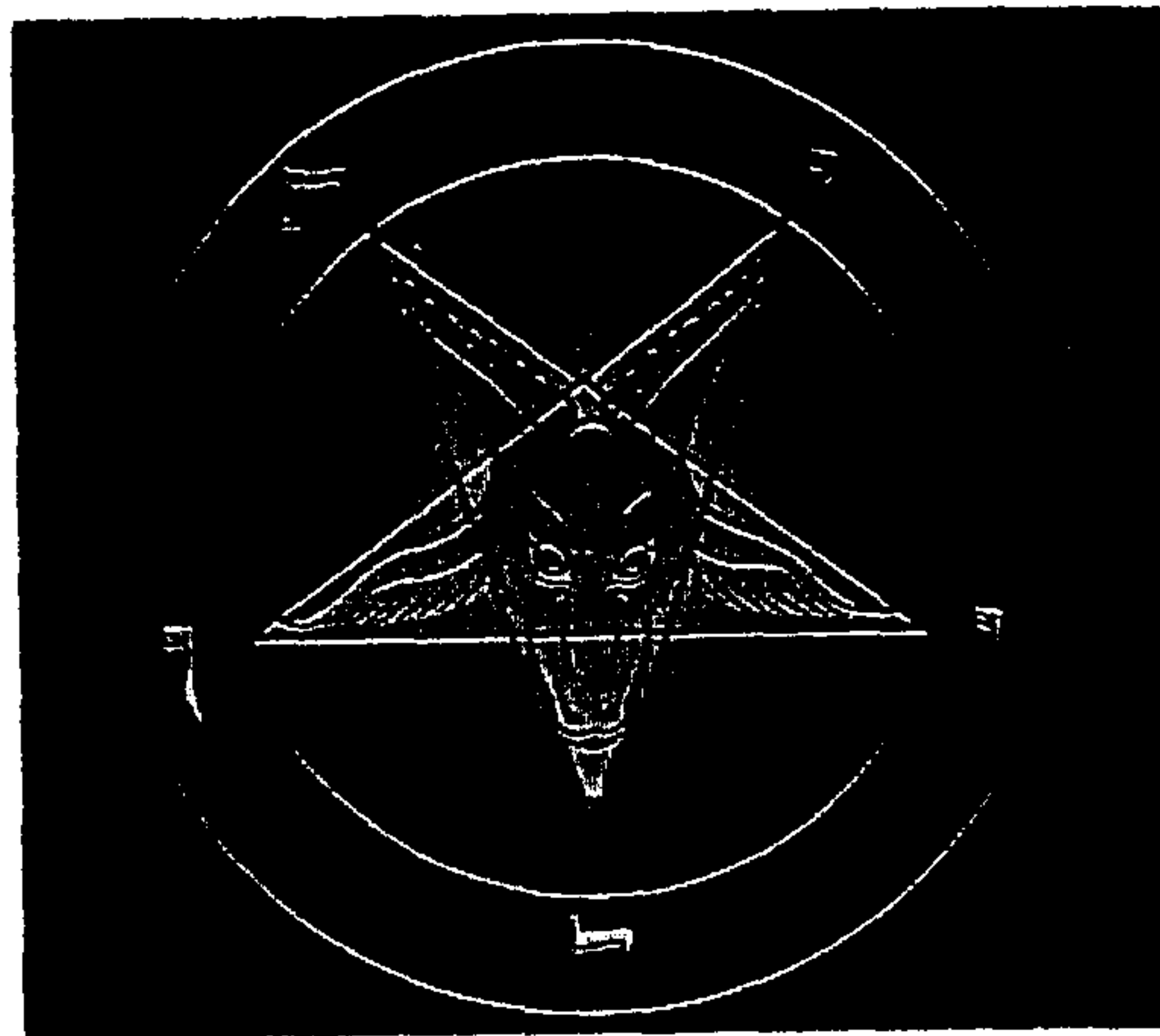


Fig. 9 - the symbol of the Church of Satan.

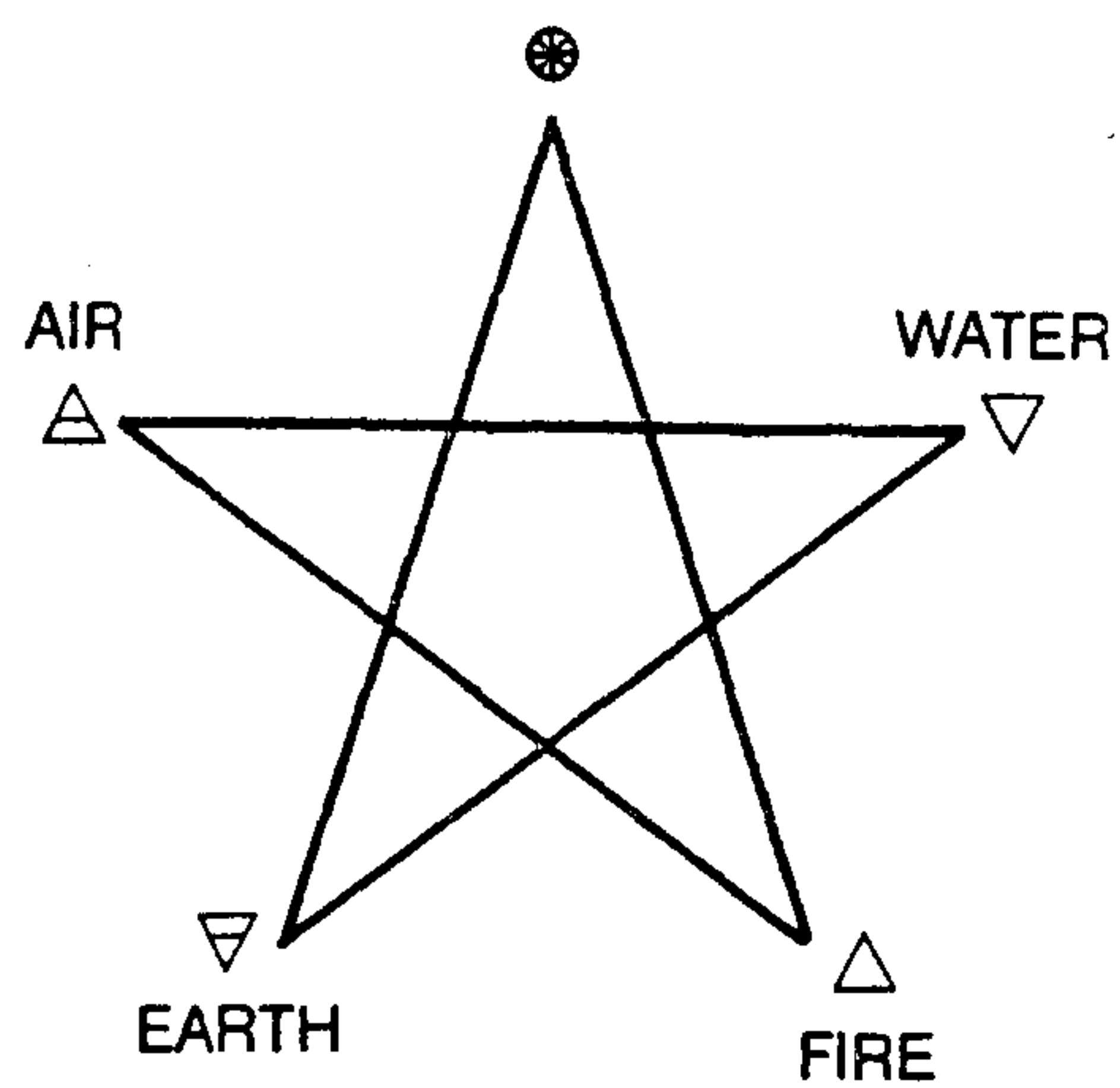


Fig. 10 - the pentagram (with elemental correspondences).

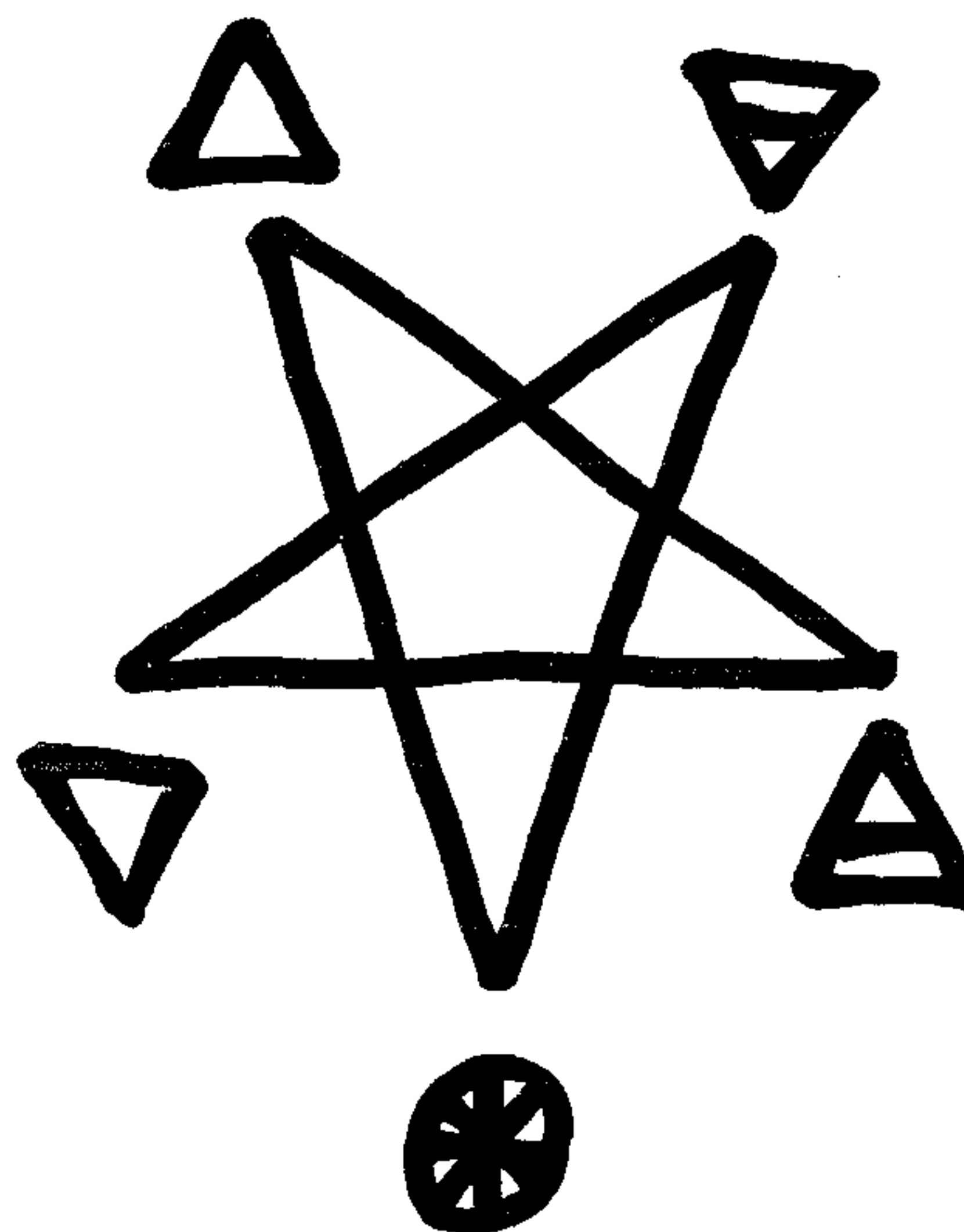


Fig. 11 - the inverted pentagram.

<sup>12</sup> See also Israel Regardie (1971: 280-284) for a more detailed magical synopsis of the pentagram.



The use of bestial, Satanic imagery - in symbolically delineating anti-Christian notions of moral “otherness” and the abnegation of social norms - is also evident in the magical discourse of Aleister Crowley, one of the inspirational forces behind contemporary Satanism (La Fontaine 1999: 91-92). Crowley referred to himself as “To Mega Therion” (Crowley 1969: 834) or “The Great Beast” of the Book of Revelations. He also identified himself with “Baphomet” (Crowley 1969: 832), an androgynous goat-like entity (see fig. 12) described by the 19th Century occultist Eliphas Levi (1995: 207), which is also associated with the inverted pentagram (Crowley 1973: 174) used by the Church of Satan (see above), and also with the Christian Satan<sup>13</sup>. However, as with the Satanist groups already mentioned, Crowley’s “Satanism” is also somewhat problematic when evaluated in relation to the “vulgar” use of the term (King 1977: 168-169); his followers generally see his use of the title “To Mega Therion” as a statement of Crowley’s rejection of Christian moral standards rather than an inversion of Christian theology.

Baphomet has since become a symbol of Chaos magick, and it was not unusual to find various statuettes or other representations of Baphomet in the homes of Chaos magicians I visited. The “Mass of Chaos B” is a ritual that is often performed by the IOT and involves possession by Baphomet<sup>14</sup> - formal initiation into the organisation is partly dependent on the practitioner’s successful incarnation of Baphomet within this rite. Significantly, this embodiment of the “demonic” plays a central role in forming Chaos magicians’ existential orientation - one which encompasses “evil” and the demonic within the naturalisation of the disorderly and the uncertain. However, for Chaos magicians, Baphomet is not intrinsically evil, but a manifestation of Chaos within the terrestrial life-world; as such, Baphomet is represented as a conglomerate of all terrestrial life: an androgynous, goat-headed and bat-winged humanoid entity (sometimes depicted with avian, aquatic and reptilian characteristics).

The above views elicit a “modern” tendency to categorise the demonic in secular-psychological or materialistic terms, or as a symbol of the self; where Satan

---

<sup>13</sup> The name Baphomet makes its first appearance in Thirteenth Century Europe, when the monastic-warrior order of the Knight’s Templar were accused of worshipping an idol named Baphomet. According to Peter Partner (1981: 34), Baphomet is a bastardisation of the name Mahommed - the implication being that the Knight’s Templar had converted to Islam.

<sup>14</sup> See chapter five.



**Fig. 12 - Baphomet.**

*is* externalised as a metaphysical being, he is seen as the cause of human volition, and a gauge by which the self measures its potential for expansion. These conceptions are in fact part of wider secular transformations involving the ontological status of spirits and otherworldly entities within the Western magical subculture<sup>15</sup>.

Such transformations have also occurred alongside the widespread adoption of psychological and psychotherapeutic discourses by contemporary Western magicians. Carl Jung's work has been particularly influential in this respect, so that some pagans and magicians have equated spirits and gods with the archetypal symbols of the collective unconscious. Although some pagans view this as psychological reductionism, for others it does not necessarily deny the genuinely supernatural status of spirits. Within the holistic worldview which permeates contemporary Western magical belief, the identification of spirits with aspects of the psyche is simply an inner reflection of the spiritual forces which suffuse and

---

<sup>15</sup> See chapter six.



govern the cosmos. The shift is, therefore, a move toward a detraditionalised concept of supernatural beings as embodied, internalised, and “spiritualised” aspects of the self. As I demonstrate later in the thesis, this is encompassed in rites of spirit possession where, as Michael Taussig (1993: 240-243) suggests, the mimetic embodiment of otherworldly entities may be used to experientially encompass alterity within the perception of the participants.

### **The Devil, Wildness, and Power**

Elsewhere, Taussig (1987) argues that the notion of wildness has been a potent image within European consciousness, particularly in terms of the relationship between wildness and the colonial construction of “the savage”.

Taussig suggests that, in their subjugation of the Indians of the Putumayo region of Colombia, European colonisers engaged in the creation of a “magical realism” around the native Indians, and resorted to “objectifying fantasy in the discourse of the other” (Taussig 1987: 8). This involved the association of the native “other” with wildness and nature, and with the “primitive”, the disorderly and the irrational. Taussig claims that the South American landscape was terrifying to the “civilised” sensibilities of the European, whose culture was based upon the rational subjugation of nature - the closeness of a wild and untamed environment had profound psychological effects upon the colonisers, particularly as its closeness was a reminder of their own “savage” heritage - their own sublimated “antiselves” which proved a potent driving force in the production of European culture. The underlying themes of Taussig’s work have been more recently reflected in contemporary allegations of Satanic Ritual Abuse, where the figure of the imagined Satanic abuser inspires fear and terror as the bestial antithesis of “natural” human behaviour (La Fontaine 1994: 20), obscuring the socially-problematic fact that child-abuse often occurs within the family (Nathan 1991: 79)<sup>16</sup>. During the 1980s, the “anti-Satanist movement” in the UK transposed the imputed savagery and bestial nature of the Satanic stereotype onto a ghettoised

---

<sup>16</sup> Jean LaFontaine (1998) also notes that:

“most of those who abuse children find their victims either through living with them (fathers, stepfathers, and mothers’ partners, resident staff in boarding schools and residential homes) or working with them (school teachers, choir masters, staff of organisations for children’s activities)” (LaFontaine 1998: 84).

underclass social group (unemployed, working-class parents) who, according to Jean La Fontaine (1998 68-75, 185-186; 1999: 125), were seen as lacking the primary social constituents of “proper” human nature. This “resurgence” of the Satanic as a symbol of internal moral impurity also appears to reify a predominantly “modern” capitalist ideology. Ralph Austen (1993), for example, suggests that the emergence of the stereotype of the witch’s sabbat in Early Modern Europe was closely related to the genesis of European capitalism. As an elite formulation which demonised excessive consumption, the sexual promiscuity and orgiastic feasting which characterised the sabbat was “opposed to the accumulative process with which the persecutors themselves identified” (Austen 1993: 101). Austen concludes that “European antiwitchcraft beliefs represent a moral economy *of*, and not opposed to, capitalism” (Austen 1993: 101)<sup>17</sup>. That such accusations resurfaced in the phenomenon of Satanic ritual abuse allegations during the 1980s indicates that they remain entrenched in modernity. In the UK, these accusations occurred during the height of Thatcherism, and were aimed against a group whose consumption of resources was seen to overreach their capacity for economic productivity. Furthermore, exponents of the reality of Satanic ritual abuse - like contemporary Satanists themselves - avoided making recourse to overtly supernaturalist narratives, legitimising their claims by redefining Satanism in secular terms instead (Best 1991: 104). Thus, “traditional” beliefs in demonic possession and the malign power of the “evil” eye were recast in terms of “scientific” - and thus authoritative - discourses of psychopathology and behavioural modification (Woodman 1997: 136-139).

Taussig states that the Indians of the Putuyamo region, having been trapped “by their image as pagans with inherent links to the occult...wrest a livelihood from that image, ensuring its vitality in the popular imagination of the nation” (Taussig 1987: 153). In the image of the shaman as wildman, the Putumayo Indians identified a source of empowerment and resistance to colonisation - one which itself originated within the symbolic representations of the terrified colonial imagination.

---

<sup>17</sup> Alan Macfarlane (1970) has also argued that witchcraft accusations in England - while generally divested of the sabbat beliefs characteristic of accusations on the Continent - were often levelled at an underclass of whose survival was dependent on the charitable distribution of surplus goods. With the emergence of an individualistic and capitalistic worldview, these individuals often became demonised as witches (MacFarlane 1970: 196-197, 202).



Similarly, Chaos magicians encourage their own identification as progenitors of evil (Hawkins 1996: 83-84), reclaiming the symbol of the black magician as a source of power: thus the Chaos magician Ramsey Dukes has argued that “[w]hen occultism dissociated itself from the worst excesses of Dennis Wheatley, it castrated itself; for the worst excesses of Dennis Wheatley are where it’s at” (Dukes 1998: 62; see also Hine 1997: 6) - by which Dukes means it is the *frisson* of engaging with the anti-social, the demonic which lends magic its power and psychological affectivity.

In terms of Taussig’s formulation, the stereotypical cultural representations of the witch and the Satanist are symbolically related to nature, to the wild, to the disorderly other, and are thus equated as enemies of Enlightenment rationalism. Ironically, Taussig points out that because the colonists were in awe of a self-created sense of terror, it had power over them - so that many colonials went to the Indians for healing; thus “healing can mobilize terror in order to subvert it” (Taussig 1987: xiii). The same sentiments underlie the growing popularity of neo-pagan movements - Wicca in particular has gone through a transformation since the 1970s when it was still linked in the popular media to Satanic orgies, blood sacrifice, and “black magic”. The journalist Margot Adler’s (1979) book *Drawing Down the Moon* - a sympathetic study of Wicca and neo-paganism during the late 1970s - represented a turning point in the representations of contemporary witchcraft. Adler’s work both drew on and reiterated existing academic research which treated neo-paganism as part of a wider spiritual response to the dissatisfaction with the materialism and rational instrumentality of industrialised, economically-driven modernity (Bellah 1976). No longer a cultural image of evil, witchcraft has become a significant cultural resource for challenging overdetermining patriarchal conceptions of the feminine (in neo-pagans’ reclamation of the stereotype of the witch), and in “healing” the alienating and environmentally-destructive effects of modernity.

### **Part 3 - Chaos Magick and the Modernity of the Demonic**

#### **The Black Mass: Resistance to Modernity?**

Although Wicca has become increasingly media friendly, Rowe and Cavender (1991) argue that Satanism remains a favoured bugbear of the tabloid press. Satanists would probably not have it any other way. The acceptance (and subversion) of identities that are intrinsically linked to the Satanic or the demonic is indicative of what Taussig calls the “tripping up of power in its own disorderliness” (Taussig 1987: xiii): in reclaiming the demonic as a source of identity formation and self-conceptualisation, Western culture’s own fearful imaginings are used to resist its rationalising thrust.

On one memorable occasion, the oppositional nature of Chaos magick was forcefully represented through the public enactment of a Satanic Black Mass. This occurred in April 1998 (almost a year into my fieldwork). I include the example in order to illustrate the ways in which Chaos magicians utilise Satanic and demonic imagery in rituals which offer symbolic resistance (Hall & Jefferson 1975; Cohen 1980: x-xvi) to the dominant values of the wider society. However, it is important in the context of my argument to recognise that, while contesting certain moral aspects of the dominant culture, the use of Satanic iconography and ideology is less a commentary on the dangerous excess of modern capitalism than the embracing of those excesses (Clough & Mitchell 2001). Following this section, I go on to demonstrate, through a case study of James (a self-styled black magician partly responsible for staging the Black Mass), how the agentic reclamation of a negative, bestial and demonic stereotype becomes entangled within its own contradictions - tripping itself up in its own disorderliness and ambivalence. As a consequence, such Satanic stereotypes may become subsumed into - and indeed recapitulate the values of - the dominant culture rather than effectively resisting it<sup>18</sup>.

The Black Mass had been organised by members of the IOT, and was performed in a London nightclub to an audience comprised largely of fetishists. James, a magician in his late thirties who was both a member of both the IOT and the Church of Satan, was the prime mover behind the performance. James was tall and

---

<sup>18</sup> As an indication of the changing media attitudes towards the Satanic, Gavin Baddeley (1999) - who became an ordained minister in the Church of Satan during the course of his research - has,



lean, and his gaunt features were enhanced by the fact that he was, like his icon Anton LaVey, shaven-headed. His striking appearance was further emphasised by numerous studs, spikes and rings hanging from piercings in his ears, nose and lips. Dressed in black leather and a black, floorlength hooded cloak, he looked every bit the Satanist. He also carried a polished wooden staff, inscribed with runes and other magical symbols. This was, in fact, fairly typical attire for James, even outside of IOT activities. The Satanic Mass itself was being conducted as a requiem for Anton LaVey, who had died in October 1997. This seemed to indicate that, at least for some Chaos magicians, LaVey had played a significant role in the formation of their ideas and beliefs. On the day of the Mass I met Harald and Anna - two visiting Dutch members of the Church of Satan who had also played a key role in organising the event. Both were also in the process of joining the IOT - Anna had in fact been initiated into the organisation earlier that day, whilst Harald underwent his initiation some months later. I only met Harald on three occasions, but understood that both he and James had played a pivotal role in forging an organisational relationship between a Church of Satan group or "Grotto" in Amsterdam, and the UK section of the IOT. James also told me that he planned to cement this relationship by establishing an IOT Temple specifically dedicated to working within a Satanic "paradigm".

The Black Mass began just after midnight. Lasting about forty minutes, it was performed in front of over seven hundred clubgoers (including over thirty members of the IOT). Heavy black curtains concealed the back of the stage, whilst in its centre stood a large altar draped in black cloth bearing the symbol of the Church of Satan in red. The lights dimmed, and James appeared on stage - accompanied by three female members of the IOT who were dressed in black leather nuns' habits. Two musicians - a violinist and a drummer - were also stationed on the left-hand side of the stage and improvised over a pre-recorded soundtrack of harsh and discordant music. There appeared to be a problem with the sound levels, and the spoken parts of the mass became difficult to discern. James himself was wearing one of his "Chaos Clown" outfits. This comprised of black Pierrot-style clown's costume embroidered with large red "Chaospheres". After a protracted and barely

---

for example, recently offered a more "sympathetic" journalistic account of contemporary Satanism.

audible preliminary invocation, James gestured to one of the leather nuns, who moved towards the centre of the stage. James handed her a metal bowl: after hitching up her habit, she proceeded to urinate in the bowl in plain sight of the audience (most of who cheered). James then retrieved the bowl, and walked slowly from one side of the stage to the other, dramatically flourishing the bowl and its contents. He then sniffed the urine, and affected an expression of delight at its fragrant smell; after dipping his hand into the bowl, he dabbed some of the urine behind each of his ears, as if it were indeed perfume. In mockery of the Christian communion, James raised the bowl to his lips and appeared to drink deeply. Wiping his mouth with satisfaction, he cast the remnants of the bowl into the audience (who again cheered). At this point, two of the nuns led the “virgin sacrifice” on stage. I recognised this as Julie, another IOT member. She wore a suspender belt, stockings and high-heels, but was otherwise naked. She lay down on the altar while the nuns bound her hands with lengths of black cord. James produced what appeared to be a communion wafer. He spat on it, knelt down and placed it between Julie’s thighs, appearing to perform oral sex on her. After a few moments, James stood up, turned to the audience, and then ate the communion wafer (more cheering). The music died down at this point, and James announced that he would now attempt to make Satan, in the form of Baphomet, manifest on stage to “accept the sacrifice”. He began to evoke Satan in Enochian - a magical language commonly used by ceremonial magicians for communing with otherworldly entities. On completing the evocation, James urged the audience to chant “Baphomet, Baphomet” in order to summon forth the Devil. The music resumed, and most of the audience complied with James’ request - at this point, it was impossible to hear anything that was being said on stage. As the music and chanting reached a crescendo, the curtains at the rear of the stage were drawn back to reveal Baphomet: a Chaos magician dressed in a black rubber bodysuit moulded in the form of a demonic creature - the costume included a huge pair of wings and was surmounted by impressive mask in the form of a horned goat. Baphomet also sported a huge black rubber phallus between its furry legs. Striding triumphantly over to the altar, Baphomet proceeded to simulate violent sex with Julie. Baphomet “withdrew” its penis at the point of orgasm, ejaculating a fluid resembling semen



over Julie's body; simultaneously, James pretended to sacrifice Julie using a stage knife, so that her now still-form was covered in fake blood. He then proceeded to catch the rivulets of "blood" and "semen" dripping from Julie's limp body into a glass, again drinking it and flicking drops into the crowd. Baphomet was then "given licence to depart" and withdrew solemnly behind the stage curtain. Harald appeared on stage at this point, wearing a long cloak of some black, glittering material, and James invited IOT members (who were scattered throughout the audience, but identifiable by the black robes they wore) to be blessed by the priest of Satan. As the collected ranks filed onstage, Harald blessed each of them, using a black dildo he held in his left hand to make an inverted sign of the cross on their foreheads. James then led each of them over to kneel between the legs of Julie's prone body. I was suspicious of what this might entail, and decided not to participate: almost two years after this event, I was told by one of the participants that he had been encouraged to perform oral sex on Julie. I have no idea as to whether had Julie consented to this: I saw her soon after the ritual, and although she seemed physically unharmed and was proud of her performance, she also seemed shaken by it.

### **The Black Magician: Supporting Modernity**

Chaos magicians identifying themselves as "Satanic" or "demonic" figures are often complicit in their own marginalisation - not simply in terms of the wider society within which they participate, but also within their own subculture.

James readily took on the mantle of "black magician", publicly identifying himself as such on a number of occasions. Although James was indicative of a substratum of individuals attracted to Chaos magick, his behaviour and ethos was by no means typical of Chaos magicians. In actively pursuing the black magical ideal of selfish indulgence and power over others, James did in fact manage to alienate a significant number of the organisation. Even at times when he evidenced compassion towards others, he justified this from a black magical perspective. I was present at one IOT ritual which James had organised for the purpose of healing a friend who was seriously ill, and asked him afterwards how this fitted into his black magical worldview:

“It isn’t really that strange that black magicians should indulge in healing rituals. Black magic is all about the self, so healing yourself can’t be considered paradoxical because it is beneficial to yourself. Also, doing healing rituals for others is acceptable for a black magician, especially if they’re close friends. You don’t really need to think of it in terms of being altruistic - you can want your friends healed for selfish reasons, because they’re important to the way you feel about yourself, and because you don’t want to suffer the pain of losing someone you love”.

I never became particularly close to James, and his preferred method of self-presentation as a “dark” and powerful figure certainly effected me - I always felt nervous in his presence. On one occasion, I had arranged to visit him at his flat in South East London with the aim of conducting an interview. I arrived at the appointed time, and he quickly ushered me in. He was, he told me, in the middle of indulging one of his favourite “perversions” - listening to the long-running radio soap-opera, *The Archers*. This was a perversion, he explained, because the programme edified the conservative ideals of middle England that were so completely antithetical to his own beliefs. He then told me to sit down and asked me to remain silent until the programme had finished. I tried to speak to him at one point, and he abruptly told me to shut up. Although James’ “perversion” may have been genuine, I suspect it may have been a performance meant either to intimidate me, or to demonstrate his adherence to the “Discordian” or absurdist ideals of Chaos magick.

By this time, a large and vicious looking dog (appropriately named “Satan”) had wandered into the living room, where it began pawing and slavering over me. James told me that I was safe from the dog unless I intended to cause him harm, which did little to allay my growing fear. By the time *The Archers* had ended, I was too nervous to pursue the planned interview. I made the excuse that I had only come to see him in order to purchase one of the printed t-shirts he produced specially for IOT members; after I had paid him for the garment, I left. While James never audibly expressed any concerns about my role as anthropologist, it may well have been the case that he was cautious of me for this reason.

James’ enactment of his black magical identity was often a source of tension within the IOT. His own appearance (and the similar appearance affected by



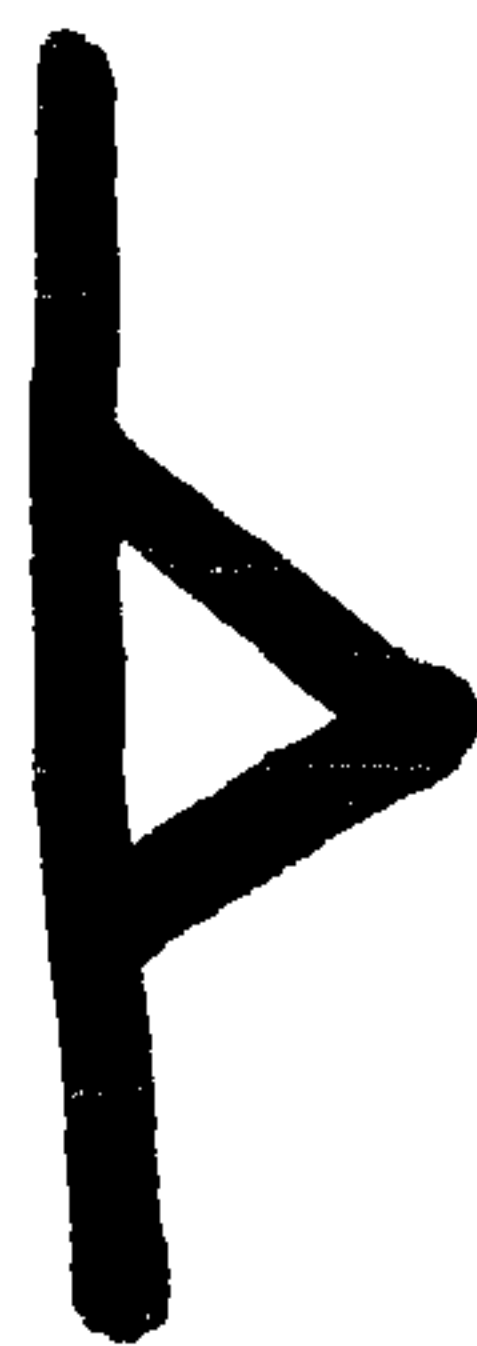
members of the Temple that he led) was a case in point - particularly for other Chaos magicians who tended to dress more-or-less conventionally. Ellen, a young American Chaos magician living in London, eventually stopped inviting James and members of his Temple to her house because “the rest of neighbourhood thinks that the circus is in town when they’re around; its like a freakshow - it just doesn’t look good”. As a relatively high-ranking member of the IOT, James would also resort to calling upon his status within the IOT to justify his actions when challenged by those of lesser rank. Many of the lower ranking members felt dissatisfaction with the organisation because, according to one Chaos magician, “the hierarchy’s more interested in political wrangling than actually doing real magick”. A number of other members I spoke to felt that James’ desire for personal power was often at the heart of this politicking; it was generally believed that he was manoeuvring himself into a position of leadership over the UK section of the IOT once Dave (the current leader) decided to resign. Dane (an IOT member who I first met at the Black Mass) became particularly annoyed with James’ attitude to Aries - a young male magician who had become James’ protégé. Aries clearly respected James, while James would often publicly admonish Aries for his clumsiness. James’ status also had the effect of shaping other IOT members’ attitudes towards Aries, who quickly became the butt of a number of jokes. If James’ use of power was obvious and direct, others took a more oblique route in contesting that power: Dane, for example, planned to present a ritual to the IOT which would entail Aries’ possession by Zaraguin, an obscure Voudoun *loa* apparently depicted in scorpion-form. The aim of the ritual was to “sting” the consciences of both James and those others in the IOT who had mistreated Aries. By empowering him with the *loa*’s divine essence, the ritual would also demonstrate that Aries was a competent magician in his own right.

James also had a predilection for “knacking” or magically cursing those who had slighted him, and would often recount his efforts in order to enhance his aura of power. Dawn, a Chaos magician I had worked closely with as part of Rick and Jenna’s Temple (see chapter three), was a “victim” of one of his curses, which she received (in the form of a postcard) soon after she had resigned from the IOT (see chapter five). She claimed that James had in fact used his status to force her

resignation. This was due, Dawn felt, to the fact that she had publicly criticised (in the organisation's internal newsletter) a spirit possession ritual involving Baphomet which James had organised. In Dawn's eyes, his apparent dislike for her ran deeper - she believed that James felt threatened by women, particularly powerful women. She told me that, on one occasion, James claimed to have cursed and "utterly destroyed" a woman with who he was co-organising an alternative club-night in East London. According to Dawn, James eventually forced the unnamed woman out of their joint-venture because she had become too successful; she ended up running another club-night elsewhere, whilst James' venture eventually failed. Dawn suggested that

"Nothing bad ever seems to happen to anyone he curses - for such an experienced magician, it's surprising that his magic is so unsuccessful. I think that's because his worldview, as a black magician, is extremely uncreative. He's not really interested in gaining power over himself, but over others".

Where James saw himself as powerful, Dawn pointed to the fact that he was avoided and disliked by the same people he seemed to think he had power over. She showed me the postcard which James had sent her - the curse was written in the Runic alphabet used by pagans working in the Northern tradition. Thurisaz was prominent in the curse (see fig. 13) - a rune associated with conflict, aggression



**Fig. 13 - the Thurisaz rune**



(King 1993: 100), and with trolls, giants and demons (King 1993: 55); as a magical symbol it is used to “bind, restrict and control” (Fries 1993: 206) and, according to ancient sources, both “causes the sickness of women” and is “the torment of women” (Thorsonn 1988: 23). She was unconcerned about the curse’s effects, and stuck the postcard to her fridge door as a reminder of James.

Why do individuals such as James find fulfilment through association with the demonic? James was - largely by his own choice - unemployed. He supplemented his state benefits by performing as an “alternative” clown. During the occasion on which I visited him, he showed me publicity shots of his act, which consisted of hanging large weights from his genital piercings. He was heavily involved in the fetish scene, and also told me that he also occasionally designed fetishist club wear (including the rubber Baphomet outfit used in the Black Mass). He seemed to crave public recognition, but sought it through the enactment of his own private needs and desires. On one occasion, he took a booking for a dinner held for officers and their wives at an army barracks - and was promptly marched off the premises after concluding the act with a naked invocation of Satan. He was a talented artist, but told me that because of the Obscene Publications Act, he was unable to sell or display his work due to its explicit sexual content. In James’ eyes, the problem lay not with him, but with a society that condemned him because of his refusal to conform to its own expectations. James’ social “deviance” found an outlet through his iconoclastic identification with the demonic, even to the extent that he became marginalised within his own chosen subcultural milieu.

As a consequence, James conformed to Luhrmann’s stereotypical assessment of Chaos magicians as enactors of (largely male) adolescent fantasies of sexual violence. James’ interest in both the demonic and sexual experimentation was somewhat typical of Chaos magicians; however, I found that many of the practitioners who became involved in Chaos magick sought to look beyond its purely transgressive aspects; their transition to Chaos magick was often marked by an intellectual commitment to its ethos, often emerging from an engagement with the popular scientific ideas upon which the practice is founded.

Although Chaos Magicians tend to be readily accepting of their own “darkside”, they rarely act in overtly “evil” ways. Tanya Luhrmann does in fact recognise that

chaos is a key concept within the magical subculture as a whole, where it represents “darkness: the deep, the destructive, the angry, primordial, irrational” (Luhrmann 1989: 99). Dane once related an incident from his childhood which places the experiential allure of “primal Chaos” into context. He told me that as a boy, he lived near a woodland area, which he loved to explore. On one occasion, he decided to light a fire in the middle of the woods. The fire, he said, began to spread uncontrollably, and he fled the scene in a state of panic. The frisson of fear and excitement - of unleashing forces beyond one’s control - was something he wished to recapture in magical ritual, particularly in the context of the HOD, whose practices revolved around the invoking of powerful and uncontrollable entities. These primal and non-rational forces are not only alluring to practitioners but are sought out because of the powerful emotional states which such encounters generate - states which are used to project the magician’s consciousness into a heightened state of “magical” awareness. The experience of chaos also articulates an essential, psychotherapeutic dimension to the magician’s career: Tanya Luhrmann notes that, for many pagans,

“to enter chaos is to empower oneself. The notion that one grows through facing what one fears is common enough. The more subtle notion, that the deepest fears are in the psyche and it is these which one must control through confrontation, is the keystone of the therapeutic arch” (Luhrmann 1989: 105).

A similar view was expressed by Mat, a member of the IOT who I met during the early stages of my research (see chapter three). When I interviewed him late in 1998, Mat told me that he often felt compelled to undergo spirit possession because of the very fact that idea frightened him - principally, he was afraid of losing control to forces which might be considered “dark” or “dangerous”. He felt that fear and paranoia were intrinsic to the practice of magic, but formed part of a learning curve by which magicians arrived at a better understanding of, and control over, the hidden forces motivating their beliefs and actions.

In this respect, Chaos magick represents a radicalised exploration of what Luhrmann calls the “keystone of the therapeutic arch”. As I suggest elsewhere in the thesis, many of the Chaos magicians I spoke with saw their encounter with the



darkside as important in actually evolving a sense of personal morality - once one has experienced the destructive power of Chaos, one becomes aware of its danger and power to effect others. It is also for this reason that the practice of Chaos magick necessitates self-discipline on the part of the practitioner: while immersion into one's personal darkness can temper one's feeling of control, becoming obsessed by that darkness is seen as a sure way of relinquishing control.

Michael Jackson suggests that individuals may embrace socially-imposed identities as malevolent witches in order to give meaning to their own suffering (Jackson 1989: 88-101); or as Edwin Lemert states (summarising the work of French sociologist Giora Shoham), the "ontological significance" of embracing evil is to "give structure, meaning, or social substance to eroded identity" (Lemert 1997: 9). Edward Moody (1974) - who spent two years conducting anthropological fieldwork within the Church of Satan during the late 1960s - found that Satanists often came from dysfunctional family backgrounds, and lacked a sense of emotional security and self-esteem. Their subsequent inability to enter into "normal", everyday social relations meant that potential Satanists often became victims of social labelling (Goffman 1961; Gove 1975), particularly where their behaviour was perceived as morally "deviant"<sup>19</sup>. Moody also suggests that they were attracted to Satanism as a result of "cognitive dissonance" (Festinger, Riecken & Schachter 1956: 25-30): for such individuals, the moral values of Christianity - love, forgiveness, self-sacrifice - were no longer consummate with day-to-day experience of a bigoted, self-centred, and materialistic American society which nonetheless claimed to expound those values. The result being that potential Satanists came to believe that evil had conquered over good (Moody 1993: 186). Moody claims that under such conditions, individuals feel a need to discover the source of their perceived deviancy and thus "give a name to the unnamed forces which they feel moving and influencing them" (Moody 1974: 362). Eventually, they came to identify with the dominant cultural signifier of that deviance, namely Satan. In becoming Satanists, they empowered themselves by allying with "the winning side".

---

<sup>19</sup> Moody (1974) gives the examples of sado-masochism and transvestism, but defines the deviance of the Church of Satan's members in broader terms as "culturally unanticipated or unexpected behaviour" (1974: 359).

Nonetheless, Moody saw the Church of Satan as playing a positive, socialising role for its members. By offering them an arena wherein deviance could be freely enacted and was in fact positively valued, the Church of Satan acted as an agent of catharsis. In this respect, Moody also sees Satanism as fulfilling a psychotherapeutic function - a view mirrored by LaVey who has described the Church of Satan's rituals (such as the Black Mass) as cathartic "psychodramas" (LaVey 1972: 31-36). It is difficult to see, in the case of James, the positive socialising effects of his own identification with the Satanic - although many other Chaos magicians did feel that involvement with demonic forces within magical ritual had a cathartic effect; in this respect, contemporary Chaos magical ritual operates in ways similar to witchcraft beliefs (i.e. Kluckhohn 1944) and "rituals of rebellion" (i.e. Gluckman 1963) in other cultures, as offering an outlet for "deviant" and socially-disruptive iconoclastic fantasies<sup>20</sup>.

Commendable as Moody's analysis is, it remains constrained by an all too unambiguous view of morality. The rapidly changing and pluralistic environment of modernity creates anxiety, and an inability to adapt to changing cultural norms leads to negative responses (Moody 1974: 364); but deviance itself is socially constructed around ambivalent sites of social conflict (Curra 2000): the dominant Christianised moral system rejects the excesses of modern capitalism as "evil", yet everyday experience appears to contradict those values - practitioners exist in a world in which moral expectations regularly conflict with the socio-economic realities of capitalistic modernity. Furthermore, Christian religious institutions such as the Catholic Church have come to treat the rationalising, progressive project of modernity in a positive manner (Mitchell 2001b: 80). As a consequence, "images of evil serve as a means by which people objectify socio-economic uncertainties and mediate the ambivalence of social and political change" (Mitchell 2001b: 77). On the other hand, the detraditionalisation of Euro-American religious expression - along with the psycho-secular internalisation of morality outlined above - also means that the moral significance of evil and the demonic has become relativised; as a consequence, images of evil and the demonic themselves take on an

---

<sup>20</sup> Nelson & Taub (1993) do, however, make the valid criticism that much of the sociology of Satanism focuses upon the positive value of Satanism, and tends to underplay criminal and anti-societal elements that arise within it.



ambivalent cast. For adherents, both Satanism and the morally-relativistic ethos of Chaos magick appear to valorise this view. For James in particular, it was not simply the case that he saw himself as evil; rather, he had come to redefine evil in terms of these ambiguities and ambivalences, so that the conservative and restrictive ideology public expressed in *The Archers* was itself deviant.

James also used his identity as a black magician in ambiguous ways - ways that appeared to celebrate some of the core capitalistic values of modernity. On the occasion of the Black Mass, he had invited a filmcrew from Channel 5 to record the event. Earlier in the evening, I had struck up a conversation with Dane - like myself, a relative newcomer to the IOT. Dane was in his early twenties and had recently moved to London from Birmingham, having completing a degree in psychology. He sported long hair and a goatee beard, wore t-shirts bearing occult and "demonic" motifs, and was rarely seen without his long black leather trenchcoat. This made for a rather imposing image in the New Age bookshop where he eventually found employment. Dane was contemptuous of the New Age's concern with "white light", and found subtle ways of insulting many of the New Age customers that visited the shop.

Soon after the nightclub had opened, James came over and directed the two of us to stand near the club's foyer to bless the club-goers in the name of Satan as they arrived. After donning our black hooded robes, Dane and I spent the next three hours proclaiming improvised Satanic sentiments as clubbers dressed in bondage gear, leather and PVC entered the building. James would periodically check up on us to make sure we had not deserted our post, and happened to be nearby when the filmcrew turned up. He noticed that the cameraman was already filming, and unceremoniously ushered Dane and myself out of the way so that he could strike a suitably "Satanic" pose.

In another telling instance, James' pre-occupation with personal power and self-aggrandisement appeared to subvert the very aims of the organisation he claimed to support. This occurred in July 1998 during a public symposium held by the IOT in Conway Hall. The event ended with the incarnation of the goddess Eris in a rite of spirit possession, the aim of which was to overthrow the "spectacle". To this end, members of the IOT had constructed a wooden altar covered in devices emblematic

of consumer society: advertisements from glossy magazines, photographs of media personalities, and photocopied sheets of paper currency. At the culmination of the rite, David, the Chaos magician who had taken the role of Eris, physically attacked the altar, encouraging the rest of the participants to join in the symbolic destruction of the spectacle. However, James had once again invited a film crew along to record the event - afterwards, he openly admitted that he did so in the hope of attaining media exposure and celebrity for himself.

Short extracts of both rituals were later screened on an “alternative” late-night television programme. Effectively, the rituals had become commodified and subsumed within the spectacle, repackaged for popular consumption as another lifestyle option. If Chaos magical groups can be said to socialise their “deviant” practitioners, then the effect of this is to inculcate them more deeply into the individualistic, narcissistic, materialistic and capitalistic values of modernity.

### **Ambivalence and the Modernity of the Demonic**

The issue of the “modernity” of contemporary Western magic suffuses the thesis, which treats Chaos magick as a project actively engaged with uncertainty as an intrinsic aspect of modern living. This is exemplified by the embodiment of uncertainty and its “interiorisation” (Green 1999) through rites of spirit-possession, sometimes conducted in marginal urban spaces (squats, disused buildings, urban wastelands, etc.), and often involving “demonic” and “chaotic” entities. In the previous section, I demonstrated the ways in which Satanism and Chaos magick - through their ambivalent conceptions of the demonic - both mediate and become intertwined with the capitalistic values of modernity. Here I also suggest that Chaos magicians’ interest in the demonic represents a radicalised reification of other aspects of the modern.

The use of the demonic is closely interwoven with the way in which practitioners attempt to grasp the new cosmological and ontological uncertainties implicit in the rationalising thrust of modernity - primarily, the way in which modern scientific theory has challenged the cosmological and ontological certainties posited by the Judeo-Christian foundation of Euro-American religiosity. Chaos magick fulfils a need to encapsulate a range of abstract and largely “mystified” forces that appear to



govern the self, society and the wider cosmos. By personifying these forces, Chaos magicians make them amenable to human understanding and control. As indicated previously, the manner in which Chaos magicians exert this control is intrinsically modern - insofar as practitioners rely on theories and techniques appropriated from secular, scientific and psychological discourses.

According to Kenneth Grant (1977), the various paths of the Tunnels of Set are associated with the *qliphoth*: demonic forces bearing such exotic names as Kurgasiax, Thantifaxath, Temphioth, and Gargophias, and denoted by various arcane symbols (see fig. 14). Through these demonic gateways, magicians may return to a primal state of undifferentiated being by subsuming themselves into the “None” and the “Void” (Grant 1977: 154-156). These ideas manifested regularly in the ritual discourse of the HOD, often whilst members “journeyed” into the liminal space they called the Ghooric Zone - an extension of Grant’s Tunnels of Set. The instances set out below arose as a consequence of group or “mass” possession, when the inhabitants of the Ghooric Zone incarnated themselves in the bodies of participants<sup>21</sup>. Here, notions of the void, the abyss, nothingness, absence and self-annihilation are delineated as focal points of magical experience:

Dane (to Alan): guide our brother [Edward] toward that which may inspire us with knowledge and insight...into the fields & folds of the Ghooric Zone.

Alan (directing Edward): Through the purple mists you must travel...Seek thee the Dead One across the planes of basalt. Before you stands the Black Monolith, beyond which lies a prehistoric monastery wherein abides a priest of the Ancient Ones...

Edward: There is nothing past the Black Monolith. It is alive!

A: Touch the Black Monolith...merge yourself with it.

E: It's like acid.

A: That is the knowledge of the Old Ones that you seek...*it destroys until there is nothing...*

E: [begins screaming].

A:....of yourself.

E: *I am annihilated utterly!*

A: *The void which is beyond blackness*, upon the very foundation of reality, as you perceive it. Scry the words [you see there]...

E: Zon-ith, glyphs, interdimensional glyphs, there is no language...They

---

<sup>21</sup> Due to the circumstances of these rituals, it became difficult to determine the exact names of some of the entities possessing the participants, so in this instance I have used participants names only.

are glyphs, multi-dimensional glyphs.

D: Are you able to take some of these glyphs with you so that we might use them?

A: As Thoth I once walked amongst you, master of Magick, scribe of the Gods. It is in the book of Thoth that you will find the key to the words & the rites. You can transform those glyphs into words & symbols by which human beings may understand *the profundity & the emptiness*. [my emphasis].

Similar notions were expressed in a later group possession ritual:

Dane: *Not seeing, doing, within us. No name, no substance. Beyond the beyond is the presence here. The void reveals itself to itself, through the names and forms.*

Alan: Is this knowledge of any use or consequence to us? What is the significance of your presence here?

D: *Absence.*

A: *Is Absence something we should seek?*

Edward: *Absolute Absence!* [my emphasis].

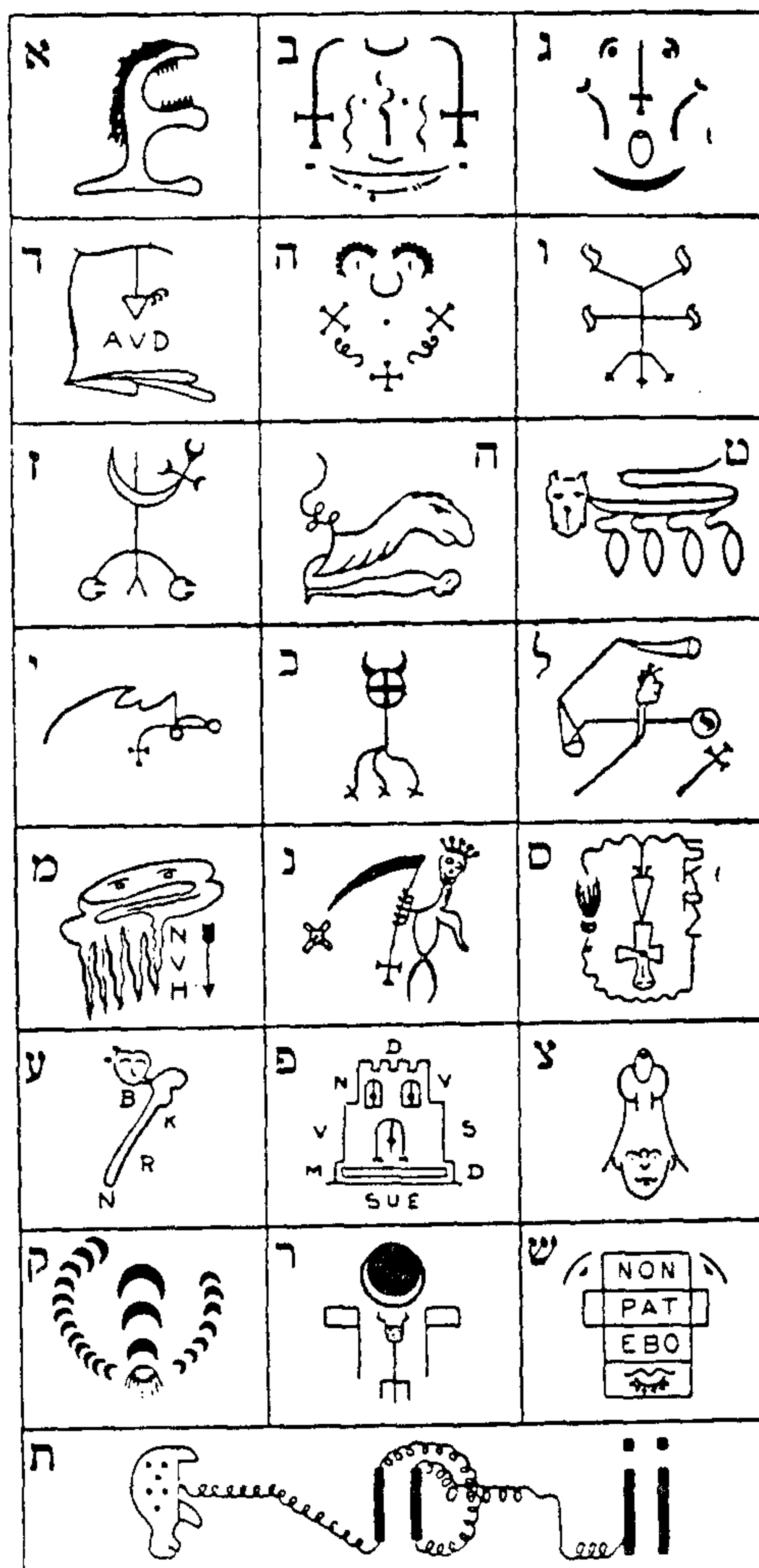
For many Chaos magicians, magic and contemporary scientific theory are two sides of the same coin, which offer access to the primordial zones of “non-being”. They represent experiences which are made explicable by becoming personalised, manifested and embodied through possession by entities which are believed to “inhabit” these metaphysical zones. This view of the demonic is located in a dialectical relationship between popular science, psychology, and magic, and thus has important implications in terms of how “modern”, secular discourses have been conceptualised and utilised by Chaos magicians. Grant, for example, suggests that the *qliphoth* and other “forces considered by the ancients as dark and evil are now revealed by science as the anti-worlds and inner spaces of the known universe” (Grant 1980: 8). For Chaos magicians also, prior conceptions of supernatural evil are also conflated with quasi-mystical exegeses of the often puzzling realm of quantum theory and subatomic physics (see chapter four). As a consequence, occult movements often treat “rational” knowledge as imperfect and incomplete<sup>22</sup> - insofar as it lacks a meaningful, spiritual dimension. Thus, occult theory views itself as “completing” the “scientific” project of modernity through the integration

---

<sup>22</sup> See chapter four.



of inner experience with the abstract theorising: Chaos magicians do not simply want to theorise about the nature of reality, but are driven to encompass and concretise it within their own, meaningful experience.



**Fig. 14 - the symbols of the twenty-two demonic guardians of the Tunnels of Set**

In line with both ancient Hermetic principles and modern psychological theory, demonic forces are considered by Chaos magicians to be the hidden but formative aspects of the magician's psyche. The result of this view is that the symbolic hierarchy of Christianity becomes reversed - the trajectory of the Chaos magician's spirituality is "downwards" or "backwards" (Drury 2000: 133) towards

the darkness and demonic, rather than “upwards” towards the light of the divine. However, Chaos magicians see such conceptions as entrapped in dualistic modes of thought, which insist on a moral dichotomy of the supernatural. This backwards or downwards turning to the primordial roots of consciousness is not, therefore, seen as retrogressive in a lineal, historiographic sense: according to Alan, a Chaos magician I encountered on the same night I met Rick and Jenna (and who, I later discovered, was one of the organiser’s of the IOU),

“magicians spend too much time looking to the past. We need to look to the future, to the gods that do not exist yet. In some ways, those future gods are our future selves. We spend so much time fearing the future, when we should embrace it. We must embrace the darkness”.

Similarly, Jaq Hawkins suggests that, for Chaos magicians, darkness “represents mystery; the unknown territory. (Hawkins 1996: 84). Along with Chaos magicians’ focus on the “void” or the “abyss” (as indicated in the transcriptions of the HOD’s rituals presented earlier), these views attest to the fact that darkness is not treated as a representation of supernatural or moral evil; rather, it is both simultaneously the “devolved” or primal root of being, and representative of the unexplored potentialities of an evolved self-awareness. In an e-mail I received towards the end of my research, Dane also claimed that the encounter with “darkness” was an iconoclastic act, wherein the magician becomes emancipated from the influence of

“dead gods - a term which basically includes anything we invest time and energy into. i.e. all our ideas, beliefs and identities etc. The kinds of thing which we shed in the Darkness of Death, (or the feints at Death mirrored in the Death Posture)”.

(The Death posture is described in more detail in the next chapter, but is a technique which is supposed to replicate the experience of death).

From the broadly “Gnostic” psycho-spiritual perspective offered by Grant and the Chaos magicians, the conceptual environs and entities with which they are concerned have been culturally-defined as evil and demonic by Judeo-Christian morality. This is because such zones of “non-being” are spaces wherein the egoistic subject is dissolved within a continuum of “pure” cosmic or divine consciousness,



thus challenging the dominant spiritual hierarchy of Christianity that treats God and humanity as ontologically separate. It is within such zones that the magician can experience the infinite potentialities of the self-as-process without being circumscribed by essentialised notions of “being”. The attainment of such experiences may also necessitate symbolic and literal acts of transgression in order to liberate the magician from restrictive forms of social control. In contesting this essentialised notion of being and selfhood, Chaos magicians actively transgress culturally-defined boundaries of both self and body, treating them as malleable and uncertain in seeking encounters with a demonic alter through acts of spirit possession. Again, I suggest that these notions of transgression represent a radicalised view of the relativistic turn of modernity - a point which is closely linked to processes of religious detraditionalisation, wherein the locus of spiritual truth comes to be located within inner experience rather than in an external religious authority, text or institution.

According to the Chaos magician Frater Equilibrium (2001), Chaos magick entails

“a rejection of the single self hypothesis, which is considered to be an outdated concept left to us by the legacy of monotheism. Instead, it is assumed that we are each any number of different selves or ‘daemons’, a Greek word meaning ‘persona’, which is another Greek word meaning ‘mask’, and completely devoid of judgements concerning good and evil” (Frater Equilibrium 2001: 1)<sup>23</sup>.

This conceptions of the self was often made explicit in day-to-day Chaos magical discourse, and formed the basis of the second of a series of Chaos magical workshops (held in November 1999) run by the group calling themselves the IOU. The focal point of this workshop was a participatory exercise called “Who’s There?”, the aim of which was to try and identify one’s core self, or the originary point of one’s “inner voice”. Alan - one of the IOU organisers (and a former member of the IOT) - asked the fourteen or so participants to split into pairs. One

---

<sup>23</sup> In many respects, Chaos magicians’ concepts of the socially-constructed self appear to reiterate in oblique metaphysical terms the theoretical position taken by Marcel Mauss (1985) and developed by Louis Dumont (1985): that the modern Western notion of egoic individualism became formalised with the advent of Christianity and the emergence of the concept of the soul as a bounded and indivisible entity.

person in each pair was then instructed to begin the exercise by asking “who are you?”, and to continue asking the question for a two minute period. In turn, their opposite number was required to furnish an answer each time the question was asked. The point of this was to express the ways in which we defined ourselves both internally and in relation to the wider world. Most participants initially responded with their name or profession, then with other markers of their identity (i.e. “I am young”, “I am a man”, “I am a parent”, etc.). After two minutes of this, each member of the pair had to exchanged roles and repeat the process. Most of the participants found that they quickly exhausted the range of possible answers, and in the discussion that followed described a sense of disorientation and even a brief feeling of “egolessness” resulting from the exercise. Afterwards, Alan told us that we should try and apply this technique to ourselves on a regular basis, and told us to think about whether it was possible to identify the “self” which was asking the question “who am I”. For Alan, this indicated an infinite regression of “selves”, none of which represented an essential core of selfhood; rather, it demonstrated how

“we define ourselves by our masks or, more properly, let ourselves be defined by the masks we wear. Once you recognise the hollowness of these ideas by breaking down the barriers of ego to reveal that nothing lies beneath”.

For many Chaos magicians, the masks or “daemons” which inhabit the human psyche are quasi-autonomous and self-replicating mental virii<sup>24</sup>. These “daemons” are commonly believed to be transmitted through the media and the various social and cultural institutions which rule our lives. When they inhabit or “possess” human beings, daemons also create the desires, neuroses, and habitual patterns of behaviour which shape the experience of the self. This particular notion also represents a recasting of William Burroughs’ belief that language is a self-replicating psychic “virus” which acts as an instrument of social control (Burroughs 1985: 48-52; 88-96). Such daemons - also referred to as

---

<sup>24</sup> This “folk” theory has been inspired by a popular understanding of Richard Dawkins’ (1976: 192; 1986: 158) notion of “memes” (see also Bowker 1995), or what Dan Sperber (1985; 1996: 56, 100-106) calls an “epidemiology of representations”.



“psychodenizens” - constitute the socially-determined self, and as a conglomerate are mistaken for an essential, unchanging self.

The broadly secular-psychological view of the demonic iterated above are not specific to Chaos magick; the tenets of medieval demonology as found in grimoires such as *The Goetia* had already been recast in psychological terms by 19th Century occultists (see Cavendish 1975: 255): Crowley for example argues that the existence of spirits and demons can be defined in rational terms as “portions of the human brain” (Crowley 1997: 17); their evocation thus represents “a series of minute, though of course empirical, physiological experiments” (Crowley 1997: 18).

In the above conception of the demonic, demons are utilised as representations of the “evils” of modernity. However, Jon Mitchell (2001a) notes that

“Despite the apparent demonisation of ‘modernity’ in the images of evil, to read this as an unequivocal rejection of ‘modernity’ is an oversimplification. An ambivalence prevails, which encompasses a simultaneous fascination with and desire to be ‘modern’, and a deep anxiety about where society is heading. The demonic, in this understanding, is not a barrier or resistance to change...Rather, the proliferation of images of excess or evil might actually be seen as part and parcel of that ‘modernity’...This signals a moral indeterminacy or ambivalence that rails against the prevailing dualistic assumptions that have characterized the study of morality” (Mitchell 2001a: 5-6).

The attitude of ambivalence by which Chaos magicians often approached encounters with the demonic is evident in comment made by Rob - a Chaos magician who worked as an internet researcher for publishing company in central London - on the HOD’s e-mail list in November 1999:

“Friday night I had a very strange and very vivid dream involving a demonic succubus type chick who appeared in my dream with intent to shag. All very peculiar. *Don't know if I should ignore the experience as just a dream, protect against it happening again or encourage it and try to work with it in some way.* I think I'll wait and see if it happens again of it's own accord” (my emphasis).

As “facets of identity”, demons may also be bargained or negotiated with (Frater

Equilibrium 2001: 1) - which the Chaos magician Ramsey Dukes views as a process of *working with* evil in a positive manner, rather than *working for* evil (Dukes 1998: 22)<sup>25</sup>. Dane explained this to mean that demons were simply habits and socially-constructed behavioural pattern that could be personalised and “banished”, controlled or adapted according to the magician’s needs. Similarly, after the IOU’s “Who’s There?” exercise, Alan explained that the “masks” we wear are not intrinsically malevolent, but we do limit the possibilities for self-transformation if we treat them as defining our sense of selfhood. He believed that once you accept their superficial and arbitrary nature, “you can begin to control and define your masks rather than allow them to control and define you”. As a consequence, the demonic may be mastered and directed towards positive ends: Susan Greenwood (2000: 195) gives the example of a Chaos magician using demonic forces to effect healing (see also Hine 1997: 41-43). Rob also related (again via e-mail) the following “cathartic” experience of negotiating with one of his own “demonic” splinter-selves:

“The last week or so I’ve been aware of a splinter of my personality in dissent against the rest of me. I decided to externalise the voice of dissent and treat it as a separate entity. The entity characterised itself as a [...] malevolent trickster and betrayer. Over the last few days I was becoming more and more aware of the being exerting it’s influence over me and making me more and more volatile towards everyone I encounter.

On Saturday night [...] my girlfriend who was next to me dreamed about this [...] entity. Exactly as I had visualised it and telling her exactly what it had been hassling me with. As soon as I woke up I felt like the lid had been removed from the pressure cooker that my subconscious has been the last few weeks.

Not entirely sure what to make of it...I think I’ve maybe come to a compromise with the fucker though”.

Chaos magicians’ engagement with the demonic is, therefore, less a rejection of the alienating conditions of modernity than their subversion to practitioners’ own ends:

---

<sup>25</sup> During a talk presented at Talking Stick in 1998, Dukes claimed that this approach to the demonic was increasingly evident within the moral ambivalence of the wider society, citing as an example the then current Labour government’s decision to negotiate with the “demonic” forces of the IRA rather than “exorcising” them.



“Attempts at self-deprogramming, searching out and destroying all those media daemons we find inside us are nothing short of futile. Even considering the possibility of success, the result would be an organism quite incapable of operating within the modern world. A more practical alternative is to recognize and exploit those daemons foolish enough to become trapped in our lair. Smite your enemies with Bugs Bunny! Summon the weathergirl and make it rain! Invoke the Terminatrix and get laid!

As yet there are no copyright regulations on psychic activity. The post-modern magician is free to RIP OFF™ any aspect of reality that they choose, appropriating those facets of Maya that appeal, reconfiguring them according to whim.” (Frater Equilibrium 2001: 26-28).

Many of the practitioners I met made (sometimes vague and unqualified) statements to the effect that Chaos magick was typically “postmodern”, or recognised themselves as being intrinsically attached to the late modern or postmodern world: as one Chaos magician told me early in my research, “I’m not looking for an escape from this world - it’s [i.e. Chaos magick] a way of enhancing the way I live in the world”. Similarly, Phil Hine suggests that while Chaos magick

“breaks with the Modernist idea of progress and historical continuity...[it] instead ransacks all available cultures and time zones in a diverse exercise in collage. The immediacy of experience becomes the important factor, rather than continuity with the past or projection into any one future. Thus an appropriate slogan for this age would be Mutate and Survive. Nothing is finalised or formalised, but merely re-arranged” (Hine 1996b: 175).

Thus, Chaos magick represents an attempt at becoming adaptive to the increasing diversification and complexity of the modern world, whilst rejecting the certainties offered by religious fundamentalism and/or nationalism (Lee 1997: 176).

According to this view, the aim of Chaos magick is not to effect an escape from an “illusory” reality; rather, Chaos magicians hold that *any* order of reality - be it cognitive, perceptual, epistemological or moral - is simply the effect of the insubstantial play of the Chaos force. Thus, while Chaos magick elicits distinctive “Gnostic” features, it incorporates a “world-accommodating” rather than a “world-renouncing” ethos (Wallis 1984: 9-39). The mystical unity with Chaos gained through *gnosis* does not fulfil the hope of attaining a higher state of existence entirely separate from world, but the realisation of the potential of Chaos within

what the practitioner defines as “reality”. However, I go on to argue that what this experience does impart is an emotionally satisfying sense of wholeness and totality. It is, however, important to recognise that for Chaos magicians this experience of wholeness is not one of *eternity* and *stasis*, but one that is *processual*.

Chaos magicians challenge deeply rooted cultural categories concerning the ontological status of the illusory and the real - using an eclectic mixture of postmodernist and poststructuralist thought (see for example Richardson 1999), science, psychology, magic and mysticism. In doing so, they attempt to create uniquely hybridised systems of belief attuned to a social reality perceived as “chaotic and fragmentary, coming increasingly to resemble a fractal structure” (Hine 1996b: 174). To exist and thrive in such a world is to engage in an unceasing process of self-metamorphosis, a continual adaptation and negotiation of identity and selfhood.

The notion that Chaos magick is a product of religious detraditionalisation also locates it within the ideological sphere of modern individualism - even though Chaos magicians tend to reject the idea of an essentialised self. In practical terms, this suggests that whilst rejecting the alienating aspects of capitalist commodification (Sutcliffe 1995: 129), Chaos magick does ultimately reify the underlying assumptions and values of modern consumer capitalism which rest in part upon that selfsame individualistic ideology. As suggested earlier in the chapter, Chaos magicians’ attempts to magically subvert the consumer spectacle sometimes misfire in the face of competing interests of those involved. However, as Anthony Cohen (1994: 168-176) demonstrates in his recent attempt to recast the anthropological problem of self-consciousness, distinctions can be made between the cross-cultural experience of the individual as a self-authorial agent, and individualism as an enclosed ideological concept tied to capitalism. In this respect, Chaos magicians’ focus on the individual does, in practice, tend to emphasise the authorial self in ways which are not necessarily attributable to “ideological” individualism. This has important connotations, as Roy Willis (1999) suggests, when considering the relationship between humans and spirits - Willis takes a radical stance against the scientific-objectivist trends in of anthropology to suggest that, within the phenomena of shamanism and spirit possession,



“human selfhood emerges not just as the substantive, if elusive entity evoked by Cohen, but also, and equally, the negation of that ‘authorial’ self’s irreducible particularity, in the innate impulsion of self-consciousness towards expansion, towards identification with alien otherness, in that expansive process potentially taking on ecological, even cosmic attributes” (Willis 1999: 3).

The reality of cosmic consciousness aside, the thesis does recognise the significance of this impulsion (whether innate or otherwise) within Chaos magick (and other forms of contemporary Western magical practice). This drive towards expansion and identification with otherness represents a significant motivation behind practitioners’ engagement with demonic and other “spiritual” beings - a motivation which, as I demonstrate later in the thesis, is concretely attached to practitioners’ desire for wholeness and connectivity to the cosmos-at-large. However, I go on to suggest that whilst this impulsion may have positive effects for practitioners, it may also become subverted to the consumption of neatly-packaged experiences of exotic “otherness”.

In this chapter, I have continued to demonstrate the validity of the argument which forms the core of the thesis: that Chaos magick - and by implication the contemporary Western magical subculture as a whole - is deeply embedded in the contours of modernity or “late modernity”. This is apparent in the way that Chaos magicians articulate a predominantly “modern” conception of the demonic (albeit one with roots in ancient Greek thought) as internalised evil, where evil takes on an ambivalent cast. On the one hand, I have shown that Chaos magicians treat the demonic as a personalised idiom through which the hidden, abstract and alienating socio-economic, cultural and psychological effects of modernity are rendered visible and subject to control. On the other hand, practitioners sometimes appropriate the demonic as an idealised but antinomian model of selfhood, which is seen to be resistant to those effects. However, in this second instance, I have also demonstrated that practitioners’ use of the demonic elicits a tendency to recapitulate the very same values and conditions of late modern consumer society which they also attempt to resist.

## **Chapter 3**

### **“Ride the Shark of Your Desire”:**

#### **The Sorcerer’s Becoming.**

### **Part 1 - Chaos Magick in Theory and Practice**

#### **Introduction**

This chapter outlines the process of becoming a Chaos magician, and examines the ways in which the collective ideals - of what is otherwise an individualistic “system without a system” - become internalised through shared practices and through learning to experience magic in a group context.

I begin the first part of the chapter by arguing that Chaos magick is not simply a system of techniques, but that the way practitioners utilise magical techniques is shaped by a definably “Chaos magical” ethos. I then present a detailed overview of the “core” practices and sources of knowledge used by Chaos magicians, based on the published work of Peter Carroll and on my early fieldwork experiences. Following this, I describe the organisational context in which training to become a member of the IOT occurs.

In section two, I suggest that the individualistic Chaos magical ethos becomes internalised through the system of “mentoring” used by the IOT. Drawing on my initial experiences of learning to become a Chaos magician within an IOT “Temple”, I show how the experience and ideology of magical practice are collectively ordered and valorised through group ritual, and through shared aspects of symbolic meaning.

In the final section of the chapter, I present a detailed examination of two central aspects of Chaos magick: the notion of the “magical will”, and sorcery. There I suggest that the existential project of self-actualisation is intricately bound up with the pragmatic aspects of Chaos magick. Sorcery is aimed at the fulfilment of practitioners desires, but I also argue that it provides a theoretical framework which organises, makes meaningful, and offers a sense of control over magicians’ experience of the ambiguities of the modern world (as well as articulating those



ambiguities). I go on to develop this aspect of my argument in chapter four, where I argue that sorcery is intrinsically linked to the ideology of Chaos magick - one which seeks to articulate both a sense of selfhood and an experience of “wholeness” which is deeply embedded in the uncertainties and insecurities of late modernity.

### **A System of Techniques**

Peter Carroll claims that “Chaos Magic concentrates upon technique” (Carroll n.d.a.: 2), and Chaos magicians commonly employ a battery of ritualistic and broadly “shamanic” techniques (Carroll 1987: 14-23; Harvey 1997: 100) in order to attain *gnosis* or mystical and intuitive knowledge. Practitioners use these techniques in ways that are independent of the magico-religious systems from which they are drawn. For example, Chaos magicians use meditational and yoga practices derived from Hinduism and Buddhism; however, the value of such techniques is not seen in terms of Buddhist or Hindu soteriological frameworks, but in terms of their utility in facilitating *gnosis*.

As a result, Chaos magick has been characterised as a system of practical techniques - both by other pagans and academics (see Greenwood 1996b: 281), and by Chaos magicians themselves: at a magical symposium in 2001, Steve Wilson began a presentation on Chaos magick with the following remarks:

“I prefer the term “results” magic to “Chaos” magick, because Chaos magick is all about achieving results. This would be my basic definition of magick: if you achieve a result by using a technique, then it’s magical; if you don’t, then it’s not.”

As such, this emphasis on instrumentality and technique does offer an initial approach by which the general contours of Chaos magick can be made visible. However, it remains a somewhat unsatisfying and over-generalised description of Chaos magick - one which also does not take account of the distinctiveness of practitioners’ “beliefs” and practices: whilst Chaos magicians often construct ritual through an imaginative bricolage of cross-cultural borrowings, Sabina Magliocco (1996) demonstrates that the same is true of neo-paganism in general. What is

missing from this account of Chaos magick is the fact that its techniques and practices are formulated within and shaped by a relativistic, antinomian, utilitarian and individualistic ethos<sup>1</sup>. This ethos was summarised by Damien, a Chaos magician in his early thirties:

“There is no belief, there is no truth. All belief systems are fictions, all belief systems are mental constructs that are created in order for people to go about their lives. Chaos magick is essentially magick without belief, or magick that does not rely upon a particular system or a particular set of techniques. The basic idea of Chaos magick is that every, each individual Chaos magician will formulate their own way of doing things, work it out for themselves rather than just doing what they’ve read in a book, or what they’ve been told by somebody else. You work it out for yourself. One believes things for as long as is necessary”<sup>2</sup>.

Similarly, Dane stated that

“It’s more of a sort of postmodern approach, so you’re kind of surrendering up the idea of absolutes and going for a more relative or relativistic, you know, individual, eclectic kind of approach. If you invest belief in it, it goes from being something...fictitious, to something magical or mythical, and that can apply, like, to the suspension of disbelief that happens when you watch a film or read a book. A Jew can live in a Jewish reality, a Christian can live in a Christian reality”<sup>3</sup>.

Whilst individualism and relativism permeate most forms of neo-paganism, Chaos magicians articulate their relativistic values in distinctive and radicalised ways. Forms of neo-paganism such as Wicca, ceremonial magic, and the Northern tradition - whilst remaining open to innovation - all tend to elaborate fairly consistent mytho-cosmological beliefs based on extant historical and cultural forms (i.e. Celtic, Hebraic, or Norse literature and mythology). Although neo-paganism is pluralistic and polytheistic, Prudence Jones also suggests that there “is great faith among Pagans of an underlying unity in the cosmos” (Jones 1995: 44).

Chaos magicians also seek a sense of unity or “wholeness”; but unlike other pagans, they do not see this wholeness as indented into an indelible cosmological

---

<sup>1</sup> See also Carroll (n.d.a.: 2) and Sherwin (n.d.a.: 2).

<sup>2</sup> This quote was taken from the HOD’s video archive (see Philpott 2002).

<sup>3</sup> Op.cit.



structure; they also - as Damien and Dane's above comments suggest - reject the existence of universal truths which articulate the nature of this wholeness. Thus, the principal *modus operandi* of Chaos magick is to unmask "belief" as a truistic device used in the reification and universalisation of specific epistemological, cognitive and ideological systems: the "reality tunnels" or dominant frameworks of belief by "consensus reality" is maintained. Or as one Chaos magician had it: "by applying the Chaos paradigm by using multiple, different, belief systems, you come to realise that no single one is true so you don't get fixed in dogma".

As a consequence, Chaos magicians treat belief as a tool or technique of magic. In one of the IOT training documents which Jenna sent to me at the beginning of my fieldwork, it was thus stated that practitioner should aim to

"take on a belief in order to achieve a particular effect on the selves or on our circumstances. The belief is considered "true" only for the time we employ it; belief becomes a tool...rather than the envelope of "truth"... This approach is encapsulated in the slogan Nothing is True, Everything is Permitted".

This approach is founded on Austin Spare's claim that the success of any magical act is reliant upon the magician's investment of belief in that act (Spare 1913: 43-45, 50-52), and also derives from Aleister Crowley's warning that

"Gods, Spheres, Planes, and many other things...may or may not exist. It is immaterial whether they exist or not. By doing certain things certain results follow; students are most earnestly warned against attributing objective reality or philosophic validity to any of them" (Crowley 1973: 448).

Chaos magicians have also applied a particularistic reading of quantum theory in order to legitimise their claims: namely the theory of an observer-dependent universe in which the human subject constitutes reality in the act of observation. In concert with Chaos magicians' non-essentialist concept of the self, the perceived isomorphism between self and external reality also reinforces the view that "institutionalised" knowledges and belief-systems - and the "consensus reality" erected upon their foundations - are contingent, malleable and by no means

intrinsic aspects of the “real”. By demonstrating that any system of belief can be made to “work”, all beliefs may then be considered equally true, or rendered equally false.

Practitioners are otherwise sceptical of rational and scientific forms of knowledge, and view “ordinary” states of consciousness as internalised representations of a dominant rationalist ideology; such states form the normative experiential benchmarks of reality because we are socially-conditioned to treat them as such<sup>4</sup>. As a consequence, Chaos magicians reiterate a Gnostic theme permeating neo-pagan and New Age discourse: the view that human beings exist in a state of socially-imposed alienation from the sacred cosmos.

The relationship between the individual and the wider cosmos in terms of the construction of knowledge means that practitioners’ concepts of the self are central to understanding the system, practice and ethos of Chaos magick. However, Chaos magical concepts of the self needs to be disaggregated into two levels. At one level, social-conditioning and the experience of dissonance and alienation in day-to-day life results in the “postmodern” condition of the fragmented self. On another level, the techniques utilised by practitioners are often aimed at the recapitulation of an “authentic” state of being denoted by *kia* - one which has its roots in “primordial” and “shamanic” forms of consciousness (Carroll 1987: 88-89, 169-171). This is a concept of the self as “becoming” rather than an essentialised being; as a result the Chaos magical view of selfhood diverges from neo-pagans’ search for an essential self. *Kia* - as the ontological foundation of both the cosmos and human consciousness - underpins the very fluidity of the magician’s lifeworld.

Chaos magicians treat the fluidity and uncertainty of late modernity or postmodernity in ambivalent ways. In one respect, uncertainty is alienating: as Fromm (1960) argues, the social and economic requirements of modernity create

---

<sup>4</sup> A similar view is also articulated in some anthropological studies of spirit possession. Janice Boddy, for example, suggests that such states rest “on epistemic premises quite different from the infinitely differentiating, rationalising, and reifying thrust of global materialism” (Boddy 1994: 407); as such, they are considered abnormal in the context of the industrial West and become pathologised (Ong 1988; Bock 1980: 185-195) or are otherwise treated as “dangerous” and socially disruptive (Douglas 1970a: 72-81). In this respect, Chaos magical discourse also represents a continuation of the radical critique of psychiatry and the category of mental illness (i.e. Goffman 1961; Szasz 1961; Foucault 1967; Laing 1967).



the psychological conditions of alienation and powerlessness, which in turn make the possibility of individual freedom existentially unattractive. In other ways, Chaos magical discourse attempts to articulate a response to this, in embracing uncertainty and treating the need for security as a result of social conditioning and, ultimately, as a system of control.

Within Chaos magical praxis, freedom nonetheless entails mental rigour and self-discipline. In effect, the magical techniques utilised by Chaos magicians are embedded in a existential project wherein human consciousness - seen to exist only as a phenomenological process - is elaborated as the only source of meaning in a world without predetermined essence or intrinsic meaning.

### **Sources of Magical Knowledge**

Amongst practitioners, an understanding of the theory and practice of Chaos magick was derived from three domains of knowledge: textual sources, teaching, and personal experience.

*Textual Sources:* textual material is one of the principal sources from which the magician learns various rituals, magical techniques, and magical theory. Chaos magicians make recourse to a core body of textual material, resulting in a degree of homogeneity across practices within the community of Chaos magicians in London and the UK. This corpus is somewhat distinct from the common pool of intellectual capital - namely the written works of William Burroughs, Wilhelm Reich, Robert Anton Wilson, Timothy Leary and Terrance McKenna - drawn upon by Chaos magicians. As indicated in chapter one, this group of countercultural artists and thinkers have helped shape the *ethos* - but not necessarily the *practice* - of Chaos magick as it exists at the present time. With one exception (the work of William Sargant - see below), the sources I am concerned with here are those from which practitioners learn the basic principles and practices of magic in general, and of Chaos magick in particular.

The written work of Aleister Crowley, Austin Spare, and Kenneth Grant also fall into the category of “inspirational” sources; however, their published writings also

serve as guides to the theory and practical application of magical techniques for Chaos magicians.

Peter J. Carroll's (1987) *Liber Null & Psychonaut* is probably one of the single most important texts used by Chaos magicians, and represents the key resource for learning how to "become" a Chaos magician: virtually every Chaos magician I encountered owned a copy of this text.

The Chaos magician Phil Hine has published a number of books on Chaos magick, including *Prime Chaos* and *Condensed Chaos* - many Chaos magicians preferring Hine's practical approach to the theoretical complexities of Carroll's work. Other important texts by Chaos magicians include books on sorcery or results magic by Sherwin (1992), Hall (1992) and Frater U.D. (1990). Increasingly, electronic media has formed a key resource for Chaos magicians: both Hine (2002) and Carroll (2002) maintain their own web sites; there also exist a number of specialist sites on the Internet where large amounts of Chaos magical material are archived (see for example Chaos Matrix 2002). These sites also include links to electronic versions of most of Austin Spare's published works (many of which are out of print or only available in expensive collector's editions).

Many practitioners were unaware of the fact that psychiatrist William Sargant's book *The Mind Possessed* (1973) had played a significant part in shaping the theoretical and practical dimensions of Chaos magick. Although not cited in Peter Carroll's highly influential *Psychonaut & Liber Null*, I was informed by one magician involved in the creation of the IOT that Carroll had used Sargant's ideas as a template for what became the core practices of Chaos magick. I include a short discussion of Sargant's here, because it has a direct bearing on the principle techniques that Chaos magicians learn to apply, and which are described later in the chapter.

In brief, Sargant examines the psycho-physiological processes underlying ecstatic religious experience and is, importantly, concerned with how trance experiences can alter or transform existing beliefs - a notion, which is absolutely central to Chaos magick. Drawing on the Pavlovian concept of "transmarginal inhibition", Sargant claims that a "paralysing inhibition of normal brain function"



(Sargant 1973: 11) caused by an inability to cope with overwhelming emotional stimuli creates a “hypnoid” state wherein:

“human beings become open to the uncritical adoption of thoughts and behaviour patterns, present in their environment, which would normally not have influenced them emotionally or intellectually” (Sargant 1973: 12).

For Sargant, affective and ecstatic magico-religious practices are likely to induce hypnoid states through emotional excitation (Sargant 1973: 58, 73), creating “a state of mind in which the ideational field is clear for the first comer” (Sargant 1973: 33). In this respect, Sargant’s ideas are mirrored in what Peter Carroll refers to the “excitatory mode” (Carroll 1987: 33) of trance attainment, where physical, sexual or emotional over-stimulation paralyse the rational mind and allow for the implantation of new beliefs<sup>5</sup>.

*Teaching:* The techniques presented in Carroll’s book form the basis of the training programme of the IOT. The structure of the IOT is partly organised around a system of mentoring by which more experienced and knowledgeable Chaos magicians offer advice and guidance to newer members. Throughout the first year of my fieldwork, the IOT also ran regular workshops in the form of the London Working Group (see below), where the basics of magical ritual were demonstrated to new members. The IOT remains the longest running order of Chaos magicians, and is probably one of the most influential Chaos magical organisation in existence: out of the fifty or so Chaos magicians I encountered in the field, over thirty were current members and another eight had at one time been affiliated to the organisation; as a consequence, Chaos magicians (regardless of their organisational affiliations) tended to draw on a common body of practice and experience.

*Personal Experience:* practitioners often cited the experiential dimension of magic as one of the most important sources of magical knowledge. This includes knowledge attained via tutelary spirits and deities, or through insights gained

---

<sup>5</sup> Sargant’s study does in fact make reference to the work of Aleister Crowley and the practices of contemporary Western magicians who, he claims “whip themselves up into a state of mental and emotional intoxication in which reason is overwhelmed, with or without the use of drink, drugs or sex” (Sargant 1973: 101).

through meditation or other mystical states. Personal experience is seen as being particularly important within Chaos magick, because it allows the magician to determine his or her own view of reality; thus - in theory - teaching in the IOT was meant to be informal and non-pedagogical. Magicians of whatever hue recognise that the practice of magic is often a highly subjective experience, because its principal aim is the transformation of one's subjective awareness. However, as I demonstrate below, the collective experience of magical practice often involves a degree of intersubjectivity, due to the fact that practitioners draw upon a common set of symbols and ideas<sup>6</sup>.

### **Core Practices: "Liber MMM"**

One of the key textual sources used in the process of becoming a Chaos magician is "Liber MMM", a ten page document which comprises the first chapter of Peter Carroll's *Liber Null & Psychonaut*. There, Carroll outlines a set of practices that enable practitioners to overcome their own mental conditioning. According to the Chaos magician Frater Choronzon, the initials "MMM" stand for magic, mind-control and metamorphosis (Frater Choronzon 1991: 4). Liber MMM requires practitioners to maintain a disciplined mind and body as pre-requisites for entering into trance. It is through trance states that practitioners undertake acts of magic - the final goal of which is metamorphosis, or the "willed restructuring of the mind" (Carroll 1987: 16), including the control and binding of "daemons" or "psychodenizens" to the magician's will.

"Liber MMM" comprises of the following techniques which the magician is required to master to the extent that he or she can conduct each exercise for a minimum period of fifteen minutes (without distraction) before proceeding to the next:

*Motionlessness/posture.* The practitioner is required to find a comfortable position and keep the body immobile. At the same time, the magician should try and maintain a mental focus on the body rather than allowing his or her thoughts to drift.

---

<sup>6</sup> See chapter four.



*Breath control.* In the next stage, the magician is required to control and regulate the cycle of breathing, seeking to attain slower and deeper breathing rhythms as a requirement for entering into trance states. Once again, the magician is required to remain focused on breath control throughout the period of the exercise.

*No-mind/not-thinking.* The practitioner should seek to enter into a state of mental vacuity or quiescence. This is in order to quell “the internal dialogue”: consciousness’ incessant and distracting chattering to itself.

These three exercises constitute the preparatory stages required for the successful practice of magic, which also necessitates single-pointed concentration. Carroll goes on to outline three other exercises, which enable practitioners to strengthen their powers of concentration:

*Object concentration.* The magician should begin by choosing an arbitrary and personally meaningless object to focus his or her attention on for a prescribed period.

*Sound concentration.* The magician attempts to repeat (either verbally or mentally) words or sounds without allowing their attention to stray.

*Image concentration.* A simple image or shape is visualised, and the magician should attempt to maintain this visualisation for as long as possible without being distracted or allowing the image to blur or fade.

These techniques formed the basis of magical training amongst virtually all the Chaos magicians I encountered; as Rick informed me during our initial e-mail conversations

“the training of MMM is important as it sets the aspiring magickian [sic] upon a solid structure from which to work his conjurations from. These are simple trance techniques and exercises...which are probably the best basic techniques to begin exploring with. They negate obsession<sup>7</sup> when brought into play, invaluable when exploring the more experimental realms of magick”.

Although this training is designed to facilitate trance or *gnosis*, the techniques themselves are used in many other magical activities. The mastery of sound

---

<sup>7</sup> The term “obsession” denotes both unwarranted possession by a spirit or entity, and also an

concentration is, for example, necessary for the effective use of chants and mantras in magical ritual; the ability to sustain clear visual imagery in one's mind is required when undertaking "pathworkings" (imaginal journeys using guided imagery), and also plays an important role in acts of sorcery (see below).

### **Recording Practice: The Magical Diary**

There is an explicit expectation within the IOT that members should conduct some form of magical practice on a daily basis, even if this only involves spending fifteen minutes on one of the Liber MMM exercises. New practitioners are encouraged to keep a regular account of any such exercises in a "magical diary" or "magical record". This includes noting: the date, time, and duration of an exercise undertaken; any conditions that appear to help or hinder the success of magical practice; and any notable results achieved. It is also generally believed that the keeping of such a record enables individual practitioners to identify those magical methods and systems that work best for them. For those new to magical practice, the keeping of a magical diary also represents the first steps in *metamorphosis* or self-transformation - namely, the insertion of a new habitual practice into the practitioner's daily life.

Keeping such a diary is standard practice for many magicians and neo-pagans, although Chaos magicians such as Ray Sherwin tend to emphasise its utility as a "scientific" tool which

"should be kept in as scientific manner as possible...Results should also be recorded accurately as to their nature, their extent and the time at which they were brought about" (Sherwin. 1992: 22).

Marian - the Satanist I met at Talking Stick (see chapter two) - was a scientist by profession, and was somewhat sceptical as to the "scientific" value of the magical diary: magicians were often dealing with subjective experiences - the kind of "data", she felt, that was difficult to measure empirically or according to rigorous

---

obsessive attachment to a particular idea or belief.



scientific standards. Nonetheless, she stressed the magical diary's importance in the process of self-transformation:

“it allows you to see the kind of questions you've been asking yourself over the past few years, that certain things come up or disappear - so you ask yourself why this is the case, why this is important, and you can also relate that to changes in your own life”.

The Chaos magician Ed Richardson also claims that “the use of the diary is good discipline” (Richardson n.d.a.: 14) - a point that was often stressed by members of the IOT. Rick, who was one of the few magicians I was in regular contact with during the first few months of my IOT training, told me that it was important that I keep a detailed magical diary: at the conclusion of the training period (which lasted six months - see below), I would be required to surrender the diary to him. At this point, he would review my training and assess my suitability for formal initiation into the IOT. It was also standard practice within the IOT to allow other initiated members of the group access to a prospective initiate's diary prior to initiation. On one occasion - the day of the Black mass detailed in chapter two - I was privy to a discussion concerning one individual who had recently completed his training. Although this individual was eventually initiated, a few members of the IOT questioned his suitability because of the notable gaps that existed in his magical diary: because he had been remiss in recording “daily practice”, it was felt that being he lacked both the discipline and commitment which the IOT required of its members

For Chaos magicians, self-discipline is necessary for the successful practice of magic: an undisciplined body and mind - unconscious movements, irregular breathing, distracting thoughts - have the potential to undermine the mental focus necessary for the effective practice of magic. Self-discipline, self-improvement, mental clarity, awareness of unconscious processes, and control of mental and physical states are, therefore, fundamental aspects of the magician's training.

### **Magical Training and the Structure of the IOT**

Training in the techniques outlined in “Liber MMM” is structured according to a particular framework within the IOT, which aims to lead members through a series of initiations. Thus, while espousing a non-authoritarian ethos, the membership of the IOT forms a four-tiered hierarchy of grades or “degrees” of initiation. From lowest to highest, these comprise of: fourth degree (4<sup>o</sup>) or neophyte; third degree (3<sup>o</sup>) or initiate; second degree (2<sup>o</sup>) or adept; and first degree (1<sup>o</sup>) or magus. The degree structure of the IOT itself remains within the quasi- Masonic tradition of other secret and magical societies such as the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn and the Ordo Templi Orientis. However, Carroll claims that the IOT differs from these groups because its grade system reflects the technical accomplishments of its members rather than being dependent upon “more questionable claims to authority from concealed sources” (Carroll 1992: 194). This is a reference to the fact that some groups (including the Golden Dawn and the Ordo Templi Orientis) claim legitimacy from higher spiritual authorities, known variously as the Ascended Masters, Secret Chiefs, or the Great White Brotherhood. During our initial e-mail discussions, Rick thus told me that I should rely on my own experience rather than placing trust in a spiritual teacher or “guru”; to this extent, he felt that the structured and hierarchical nature of the IOT’s training system was simply a

“springboard that novices use to project themselves up to the neophyte grade where they are then free to experiment in a far more personalised and creative way...these exercises are the basic foundations to build your own systems upon, all that needs to be shown is the ability to apply, understand and utilise these exercises.”

All members of the IOT, regardless of status, are expected to choose a magical name and number, preceded by Frater (for men) or Soror (for women) - a common practice within other magical groups and organisations. The IOT encourages its members to adopt absurd or comical names in order to maintain a critical distance from the perceived pretensions of other magical orders: Frater Mystic Trousers, Soror Purity Bunnyfluff, and Frater Antiques Roadshow were a few examples I encountered during fieldwork. However, many members also adopted “darker”



names such as Frater Panther Oblivion and Soror Satana Pandemonium as an affirmation of their “darker”, antinomian stance.

At the very beginning of my training period within the IOT, I received a package from Jenna containing a number of printed documents, one of which stated that

“The minimum requirements for admission are 6 months’ recorded work on Liber MMM...During this 6 month period, you are referred to as a Novice, and you have a Mentor, a contact within the IOT who supports you in your work. You will be expected to keep in regular contact with your Mentor, who, wherever possible, will give you an opportunity to get involved in...work with other IOT members”.

Novices are not formally recognised as members until their initiation into the 4<sup>o</sup> at the end of their training period. The role and input of novices is, however, informally recognised within the IOT: novices are allowed and encouraged to create and lead group rituals (during which other initiated members generally recognise the novice’s ritual “authority”). The role of the novice’s mentor is taken by a member of the organisation who has attained 3<sup>o</sup> status or higher. It is normally the case that, throughout their training period, novices participate in the same IOT group or “Temple” to which their mentors belong.

Temples<sup>8</sup> are quasi-autonomous sodalities and represent the “grass roots” level of the IOT, which is more akin to a loose network of groups than an organisation *per se*. Another internal IOT document which I received from Jenna - entitled “Chaos Magic and the IOT” - states that:

“IOT Temples are autonomous, provided they follow a few basic rules which keep the Pact’s identity intact. This means that there isn’t a single type of work that all Temples will engage in - each is an affinity group with its own specialisms.”<sup>9</sup>.

The “basic rules” referred to are a set of formalised ritual offices which each Temple must include within its structure in order be recognised as part of the IOT (or “the Pact” as it is referred to in the above). Every Temple must be lead by an

---

<sup>8</sup>The term “Temple” does not designate a specific physical space but an aggregate of individual practitioners who have chosen to work together.

individual of 3<sup>o</sup> or higher, designated as “Master or Mistress of the Temple” (commonly referred to as the MT), and whose role is to organise and take charge of Temple meetings. Any individual wishing to create a new Temple must also be sponsored by a member of 2<sup>o</sup> or higher. Each Temple is also required to ordain one of its members (of 3<sup>o</sup> or higher) as an “Insubordinate”, who is supposed to check any possible abuses of power by publicly ridiculing the MT (if he or she acts in ways considered “dogmatic”). Each Temple is also required to appoint an Archivist (who can be of any degree, including novices) to take notes at Temple meetings, and organise the Temple’s archives.

IOT Temples were not expected to have a long life-expectancy (about eighteen months being the average)<sup>10</sup>. Dave Lee, who was the head of the UK section of the IOT throughout the course of my research<sup>11</sup>, told me that a Temple should ideally come together in order to explore and reify the shared interests and aims of its members. He also felt that Temples should be dissolved once those aims had been realised; this, he believed, also offset the danger of institutionalisation which could subvert the very ethos of the IOT - staving off what Peter Koenig (1999) refers to as the “McDonaldisation of Occulture”: the systematic and efficient rationalisation of magical experience as a commodity. Often, Temples were instituted in order that IOT members might collectively explore a particular paradigm or belief system: for example, a Temple (of which Rick had been a member) that had been dissolved shortly before I joined the IOT had been dedicated to a magical exploration of Haitian Voudou.

Such notions reflect the impact of “ontological anarchist” Hakim Bey’s (1985) concept of the “Temporary Autonomous Zone”:

---

<sup>9</sup> “The Pact” is another informal name for the IOT.

<sup>10</sup> In fact, the short history of Chaos magick is replete with schisms and mass desertions. One such desertion occurred in the mid 1990s, when an entire Temple comprising of about eight individuals left the IOT because, according to one ex-member, they collectively felt the organisation had become “too dogmatic”. I also met four other Chaos magicians who had comprised another Temple of the IOT, and who had left en masse for similar reasons in the late 1990s.

<sup>11</sup> Dave Lee has publicly identified himself as such in a number of sources, including his own book *Chaotopia* (Lee 1997).



“an uprising which does not engage directly with the state, a guerrilla operation which liberates an area (of land, of time, of imagination) and then dissolves itself to reform elsewhere/elsewhen” (Bey, 1985: 2).

This space of spontaneous and creative interaction situated outside of institutionalised, hierarchical social bonds was taken by some Chaos magicians as a model of the new sociality envisioned as “Chaotopia” (see chapter four).

Despite these ideals, on the macro-scale the IOT was organised according to an apparently rigid system of national and regional “sections”. Each section comprised of Temples operating within a given geographical zone (i.e. the North of England, the South-East of England, etc.), and was led by a co-ordinator (normally a 2<sup>o</sup> member). The IOT also held an annual general meeting (during the period of my research, this was held variously in North America and Germany). Furthermore, each national section would hold its own annual “Section moot” (in the United Kingdom, this usually took place at the end of October).

Success in magical training allows practitioners to attain higher positions within the grade system of the IOT, and to establish their own Temples. As magicians attain status within their groups and become well-known within the broader neo-pagan community, they may be approached to give talks or organise workshops at neo-pagan and magical conferences - Dave Lee, Phil Hine and Steve Wilson (three well-known Chaos magicians) were often in demand as speakers at such conferences and symposiums. Involvement in the IOT did, therefore, offer an opportunity - attractive to those who did feel themselves to be socially marginal - to attain status within their peer group and the subculture as a whole. Yet beyond the purely practical concerns of status and recognition, magical training and experience affirms the reality of magic; in the next section, I examine the ways by which the mentoring system and the group context of magical training moulds that experience so that it conforms to the collective ideals of the IOT.

## **Part 2 - Becoming a Sorcerer: Experiencing Chaos Magick**

### **Learning to Experience Chaos Magick**

Rick and Jenna represented my first point of contact with the IOT. Jenna had previously informed me (by letter) that Rick would mentor me throughout the duration of my magical training (which effectively lasted from March to October 1997). During the two months before our meeting in May 1997, most of my contact with Rick was rather impersonal and conducted over e-mail. After our first meeting, I was regularly invited to join with other members of the Temple that Rick organised and led. However, Rick told me in no uncertain terms that I would not be considered a full member of the IOT until I had completed my training programme and undergone my formal initiation into the 4<sup>o</sup> (which occurred in October 1997).

The need for developing self-discipline in magical practice was also emphasised by Rick early in my training. Early in May 1997 (just before I met Rick and Jenna), I found that I was struggling with the practices outlined in “Liber MMM”. I e-mailed Rick to say that I found concentrating on an object even for a couple of minutes unbearably tedious. In reply, he told me that this was perfectly normal, and believed that this indicated the presence of the “demon of apathy”<sup>12</sup> which he himself had encountered on many occasions. This “demon”, he informed me, was a manifestation of the “psychic censor”, which maintains our internalised and encultured configurations of belief in the face of anomalous or inexplicable experiences (such as those generated by magical practice). The psychic censor is generally viewed by Chaos magicians as a psychological mechanism generated by human cognitive dispositions (that are themselves bounded by the physiological conditions of embodied existence). This is to say that, for Chaos magicians, our perceptions of the world are not only partly determined by a general set of social and cultural suppositions, but that we are also biologically “hardwired” to perceive and to classify the world in particular ways. However, Chaos magicians believe that these innate dispositions can be mystically “short-circuited” or “re-wired” as a result of the experiential, non-rational knowledge of Chaos attained within magical trance. In an e-mail describing his experience of a series of magical rituals

---

<sup>12</sup> Phil Hine refers to this as the “demon of inertia” (Hine 1993: 7).



(involving mystical self-identification with vast, alien entities called “the Old Ones” - see chapter six), Dane noted that such experiences enable magicians to overcome the psychic censor and the

“limitations of human thought...We need to become serpent-like to overcome these, we need to regularly shed the skins of our ideas and our limitations or physicality, shedding these and our attachments to them. The ... [Old Ones] reflect a route out of the prison we now inhabit, (a conceptual prison, I assume rather than a physical one), but, if we aren't careful it too may become a prison also. Essentially then...we shouldn't let ourselves be fooled into thinking that any sort of concept we hold is capable of containing the reality of that which is unnameable. These projected interpretations & names being but skins that we should shed. Along with perhaps, the skin which identifies our sense of self with our singular bodies and minds”.

In his e-mail, Rick also advised me to attempt to “banish” the psychic censor or “demon of apathy” whenever it “manifested itself”. In his final comments, he also suggested that I view any difficulties as

“a testing of one’s magickal stamina/discipline. If you can make it over this hill, you will be able to achieve what you feel is impossible in the long run. It is hard work though, which is what puts a lot of individuals off joining [the IOT]. Some seem to think that there is no work involved and just because they have an ego the size of Crowley’s that it automatically makes them an amazing mage of some sort...the key word here is persistence”

Encouraging as his words were, they also implicitly underlined the importance of internalised discipline and self-surveillance if one expected to be recognised as a Chaos magician within the IOT.

A few days later, Rick telephoned me to say that it would be useful if I began experimenting with a short ritual known as the Gnostic Pentagram Ritual, although it is generally referred to as the GBR (Gnostic Banishing Ritual). Rick felt that this would help me to banish the demon of apathy, and in doing so energise me and enable me to sustain my focus for longer periods. He also claimed that this would give me an insight into how the separate elements of the “Liber MMM” training

program could be incorporated into magical ritual, as the GBR involved the integrated use of mantra intonation, visualisation, and breath control (see also Carroll 1992: 183).

The GBR is one of a category of rituals which are referred to as “banishings”. Banishing rituals form a part of common practice amongst neo-pagans, and have a dual function as rites of “opening” and “closing”. Opening rituals delineate a shift in the magician’s awareness from the mundane to the magical, and thus mark out a sacred space separate from the profane world. Closing rituals normally take place after all other magical work has been completed, and return the magician to an “ordinary” state of consciousness; they are also used to clear the ritual space of any residual psychic energies once other magical rituals have been completed. Although they constitute rituals in and of themselves, opening and closing banishings form part of the wider structure of magical ritual and are comparable to the separation and re-aggregation phases of ritual theorised by Arnold van Gennep (1960; see also Turner 1967: 94; 1969). Banishing rituals may take a number of forms, but often they call upon the elemental forces of the cosmos (earth, air, fire and water) to watch over and protect the magician’s work. In the case of the GBR, the elemental forces are incorporated within protective pentagrams which the practitioner visualises at each of the four quarters of the compass.

The GBR is probably one of the most commonly used rituals amongst Chaos magicians (including those not affiliated with the IOT), although it has evolved into a number of variant forms. Instructions for the rite are described in full in Carroll’s book *Liber Kaos*:

- “1) Stand facing any preferred direction.
- 2) Inhale fully. Exhale slowly sustaining the sound “I” (a high pitched ieeee! Sound) while visualizing a radiance of energy in the head area.
- 3) Inhale fully. Exhale slowly sustaining the sound “E” (a lower-pitched eeeeh! Sound) while visualizing a radiance of energy in the throat area.
- 4) Inhale fully. Exhale slowly sustaining the sound “A” (a high pitched aaaah! Sound) while visualizing a radiance of energy in the heart and lungs, which spreads to the muscles of the limbs.
- 5) As in 2, but the sound “O” (ooooh!) in the belly area.
- 6) As in 2, but the sound “U” (a very deep uuuur!) in the genital/anal area.
- 7) Repeat 6. Then 5, 4, 3, 2, working back toward the head.



- 8) Inhale fully. Exhale slowly, forming each of the IEAOU sounds in turn while, with the left arm, drawing in the air a pentagram, which is also visualized strongly.
- 9) Make a quarter turn to the left and repeat 8, then continue to turn and draw the remaining pentagrams with mantra and visualization until returning to the start position.
- 10) Repeat steps 2 -7 inclusive” (Carroll 1992: 184-185).

The Chaos magician Steve Wilson informed me that the vowel sounds used in the ritual represented the residua of ancient Gnostic incantations; they are what Kenneth Grant (1972: 100-118) refers to as the “Barbarous Names of Evocation” which evoke the preconceptual depths of the psyche existing beyond language (see also Wilson 1994: 116). As such, these seemingly meaningless incantations are believed to be effective in inhibiting “discursive thought” (Carroll 1992: 182), allowing the magician to gain access to magical or non-rational realms of consciousness. The vowel sounds are also used to open the *chakras* or energy points that exist throughout the body, and to facilitate the flow of this magical energy.

The GBR instructions Rick had made available differed in content from those given by Carroll, and were not particularly clear on whether the vowels should be vocalised or mentally intoned. I was also interested to understand the sort of “results” which the ritual was supposed to produce, and towards the end of May 1997, I sent a detailed e-mail to Rick, describing my experiments with the GBR. Rick’s reply contained the following instructions:

“Vibrating is a case of singing the vowel sounds in such a way that one’s body resonates with it. The actual pitch differs from person to person but in all cases the sound projected has to be LOUD. You will know when you’re doing it right when the following occurs:

1. I I I I I should make your skull vibrate (literally).
2. E E E E E should make your throat vibrate, ditto.
3. A A A A A should make your heart vibrate.
4. O O O O O should cause your stomach to resonate, etc.
5. U U U U H! Should make your genitals (gonads for men and labia for women) vibrate. This is what INTONING is all about. Activate various areas of the body to stimulate/awaken certain sensitive points in order to understand how the body works in full. Magick is about awakening AND directing certain forces within one’s self for whatever one intends. This is

why MMM is a requirement of the IOT. It is the basic grounding towards mastery of these techniques. When utilising any banishing it is best to be “AS LOUD AS POSSIBLE!!!” in order for it to work effectively. Be loud and notice how the sound of each vowel vibrates certain areas of your body, feel and sense each vibration in turn and, through practice, learn to recognise what each vowel stimulates or conjures up within your body...ALWAYS be vocal, try to break away from the concept of “mentally” sounding words. It has a far greater power behind it, which you will learn in time”.

Following these instructions, I found that my own experiences began to conform to those which he had delineated so authoritatively. Rick’s final comments, that I would “learn in time”, reinforced a sense of my own relative position within the hierarchy of the group. In subtle ways, learning to become a magician through the mentoring system serves to integrate the prospective member into the organisation’s structures of power<sup>13</sup>. Rick also encouraged my efforts in telling me that he believed I had “real magickal potential” and an “innate psychic ability...worth fostering”. Thus, the magician’s relationship with his or her mentor at the early stage of training also plays a positive role in the collective construction and validation of magical experience (see Truzzi 1974a: 250).

The three sources of magickal knowledge are rarely segregated in day-to-day practice: textual sources provide a canon of theoretical knowledge and practical techniques, which may be clarified by the mentor where uncertainties arise. The efficacy of magical techniques may then be confirmed and legitimised through the personal and subjective experience of the results achieved during the implementation of such techniques. In theory the mentor should not pass judgement on the novice’s success or failure in achieving results, but should allow the novice to experiment with and modify beliefs and techniques until he or she discovers those which prove to be personally efficacious.

However, the legitimacy of knowledge and practice is also determined by the way such experiences conform to those of the magician’s mentor and, importantly, to the collective expectations of the group. During the period of 1997 - 1998, the IOT also held a “working group” that met once a month at an arts centre in East

---

<sup>13</sup> See chapters four and five.



London. This was oriented to the training of novices, and aimed to give them practical experience in the techniques outlined in Liber MMM; it also offered novices the opportunity of meeting other members of the IOT, and to gain further experience of “working” magic in a group context. Novices were encouraged to present their own rituals at the working group, whilst more experienced members would regularly present group rituals in order, as James (who I first met at the working group) informed me, to understand the “correct” way of constructing and performing magical ritual.

### **Meeting the Temple**

Novices initially encounter the group context of magical practice through contact with their mentor’s Temple. By the end of May 1997, Rick had invited me to attend a meeting of his Temple (of which he was the MT). This was to occur the following week - an event that, for me, precipitated a deeper level of involvement in the community of Chaos magicians in London.

Rick’s Temple - known as Temple Discordia - usually met in North London at the homes of two of its members, Mat and Dawn; on occasion, the group would also meet at Rick and Jenna’s house in the South East of England. At about eight o’clock in evening on the appointed day (Friday), I arrived at a row of rather dilapidated Victorian terraced houses, one of which was Mat’s home. He welcomed me in, and led me into the living room, where Jenna and Rick were waiting with Dawn and another member of the group, Ellen. Mat was in his early thirties and unemployed at the time, but did occasional clerical work; Ellen was an American woman in her early twenties, and had lived in London for about three years, where she worked as a table dancer and glamour model. She was also a close friend of Dawn, who was in her mid-twenties and at the time held a well-paid but temporary administrative post; later, Dawn obtained a full-time position as a conference organiser for a large medical supplier. Ian - a novice who had joined the IOT at around the same time as myself - arrived about twenty minutes later. He was a software designer and computer programmer, and had come to the meeting directly from work. Other than Rick and Jenna - who were again wearing black clothing

bedecked with occult symbols and jewellery - everyone was casually dressed in jeans and trainers. In fact, members of Temple Discordia were somewhat unusual in this respect, as the majority of other Chaos magicians I met did dress in a stereotypical “alternative” style similar to that of Rick and Jenna (see fig. 15).

### CHAOS MAGICIAN

Not often found at run-of-the mill occy events but nevertheless, easy to spot when you know how.

- 1 Black t-shirt with chaosphere logo. Black garb in general. And black hair
- 2 Goatees are *de rigeur* for the male of the species. Score extra points for spotting blonde roots growing through
- 3 Listen out for words such as paradigm, role-playing and Baphomet/Tiamat
- 4 Git 'ard tank boots
- 5 Git 'ard chaos warrior 'fuck off' facial expression
- 6 Chaos chicks are foxy vamps. Spot the spikey heels and stockings
- 7 Look out for books with black covers and any tome



- sporting the prefix 'Liber...' in suspect's rucksack
- 8 Chaos hands are always adorned with a chaosphere ring but black hair dye stains are also common

Fig. 15 - satirical view of a “typical” Chaos magician.

Mat occupied the ground floor of the house, which he was squatting at the time. It was almost completely bereft of carpeting and wallpaper, although the house still had electricity and running water. Mat had done a good job of making the place habitable, and had decorated the rooms he occupied in an eclectic fashion that was typical of Chaos magicians. Most notable (also a constant feature of many magicians' living spaces) was the mass of books on magic and related topics, stacked haphazardly on ad-hoc shelving, or piled against the walls of the living-room. Posters, paintings, mobiles, and papier-mâché masks were hung from the walls and ceilings, and magical paraphernalia (statuettes of pagan gods and goddesses, crystals, and dreamcatchers) cluttered every available surface. I also



noticed about six or seven images of a Chaosphere, the key symbol of Chaos magick (see below) scattered about the room.

Mat acted as Insubordinate - I found him to be jovial and prankish, and the role seemed to suit him. As MT, Rick did not initially strike me as particularly authoritarian or “dogmatic”, and Mat and Rick seemed to get on well together. But over the following months, it became apparent that tensions existed between the two.

However, the atmosphere on this particular evening appeared fairly casual and relaxed. After members of the group had introduced themselves, Rick suggested that we should begin the meeting. Dawn, the Temple Archivist, took notes throughout the evening and began by taking a roster of those present, using our magical names. I had not realised until this point that I had arrived at the inception of a relatively “new” Temple, although one which had grown out of the foundations of an earlier group called Temple Hocus Pocus.

We began with a discussion of the central topic of the meeting, mooted as “Safety First”. Rick and Jenna both spoke about the fact that some Chaos magicians refused to conduct banishing rituals as a matter of course; Jenna felt that such individuals were “most in need of banishing”. She explained that banishing was absolutely necessary due to the danger of “obsession” or possession by powerful spiritual entities or psychological forces, which she claimed could wreak havoc with the magician’s mind.

I was intrigued that Chaos magicians felt that safety was an important issue, given that the embrasure of risk and uncertainty appears to be central to the ethos of their practice. But there was often, I found, a disparity between the ways that Chaos magicians constructed their own identities in relation to others - often preferring to present themselves as “dark” and powerful figures - and the way they performed their magic. But whilst they instituted fairly standard forms of magical practice such as banishing rituals, members of Temple Discordia also attempted to depart from a “traditional” approach: for example, during the discussion Rick claimed that often a loud clap with the command “depart” - or as Mat suggested, the more aggressive “fuck off” - could often be as effective as any of the more complex

banishing rituals employed by other magicians. The key point was, according to Mat, to use whatever worked best for you.

After the discussion, Mat led us down to the house's basement, where we were to conduct a series of rituals - mainly designed to demonstrate to Ian and myself a variety of banishings. The basement was dark with red-painted walls and a concrete floor, and a sheet of thick netting obscuring the room's single window. An altar stood against one wall, and was covered in candles, pentacles and other ritual objects. Mat asked us to place any appropriate items we may have brought with us on the altar, and both he and Rick lay their ritual knives upon it.

The group's ritual activities were prefaced by a collective rendition of the GBR. Although the evening's focus was upon ritual safety, the "transgressive" and "demonic" aspects of Chaos magical practice were readily apparent. After the GBR, Dawn lead a "Tantric" pathworking or visualised journey - itself a form of "banishing" meant to divest ourselves of those traits which hindered and inhibited us. To this end of self-overcoming, the pathworking contained gruesome imagery and imaginal acts of self-mutilation:

"You extend your awareness outwards to the Four Cardinal Points. Four shapes begin to coalesce - before you, behind you, to your left, and to your right. The shapes become Four huge, black hounds, facing towards you...

The black hounds are your guardian protectors, wrathful and alert, yet you must offer them something for their vigilance.

You reach into yourself, and rip from your inner self a lump of bloodied flesh - this is your Ignorance, which you offer to the hound before you. What is Ignorance? it can take many forms - thinking we know what is real when we have no basis for such a thought. Making assumptions about things. Keeping experience at bay by maintaining a pride in our ignorance. Give your Ignorance to the Guardian Hound and watch it swallow it with one gulp.

And now you turn to the Hound on your left. You reach into yourself and pull out a lump of putrefying, rotting flesh - this is your Revulsion, which you offer to the hound. Nothing is horrible - it is our minds which make such distinctions. How many of the things which you dislike are the result of unthinking conditioning? Conditioned by revulsion we set ourselves artificial limits. You offer your revulsion to the Hound at your left, and it swallows your offering greedily.

Now you turn to the Guardian-Hound to your Right. You reach into yourself and pull out a lump of cloying tissue, which trails cords of snot



and mucus as you draw it forth. This is your Attachment, and you offer this Attachment to the hound at your Right. What is Attachment, but the false idea that we possess something? Identification with things, ideas, people, beliefs. You offer up your Attachment to the great black hound, and it rips the lump of flesh apart with relish.

Then you turn to the Guardian-Hound at your back. Reach into yourself and draw out a mass of stinking, decaying guts. This is that part of you which Clings to Life. What is "Clinging to Life" ? - it is the inability to give - to let go of a situation or ourselves; the refusal to surrender to anything or anyone. Refusal to accept that which is inevitable. Refusal to admit the obvious. Let go of this Clinging to Life and watch the Guardian Hound fall upon it with relish."<sup>14</sup>

We concluded with another banishing ritual - a kaballistic rite known as the Lesser Banishing of the Pentagram<sup>15</sup>, led by Ellen. She had found this banishing particularly powerful, but disliked some of the Judeo-Christian sentiments expressed in the rite. As a consequence, Ellen had replaced some of the traditional angelic names used in the ritual with those of Lucifer and Satan.

Earlier in the evening, Mat had reiterated the importance of utilising symbolism and imagery which appeals on an individual level. Magicians, he felt, should work intuitively rather than become entrapped within the dogmatism of a particular magical system. Jenna agreed, stating that during the Gnostic Pentagram Ritual, she visualised the lights associated with various parts of the body in accordance to her own personalised colour-scheme, one which she felt was "right" for her. Yet during both banishing rituals, the vowels and magical names were vocalised very loudly by the group, and had the effect of "objectifying" the ritual by generating a sense of collective effervescence (Durkheim 1915: 241, 246-247, 258) as our voices converged and became intertwined. Despite the importance placed on individual experience and meanings, Chaos magical ritual and symbolism is thus often imbued with collective values, and thus plays a significant role in the affirmation of Chaos magical ideals.

---

<sup>14</sup> Dawn was a close friend of Phil Hine, and later posted the pathworking (which she wrote) on Hine's web site at [http://www.phhine.ndirect.co.uk/archives/tt\\_dattatreya.htm](http://www.phhine.ndirect.co.uk/archives/tt_dattatreya.htm).

<sup>15</sup> For a "traditional" rendition of this rite, see Crowley (1973: 451-452); also Regardie (1971: 281-

### **Symbolism and Collective Meanings**

The Chaosphere - renditions of which were scattered about Mat's squat - is a black sphere with eight equidistant arrows projecting from its centre (see fig. 7 in chapter two) and is the "key" symbol (Ortner 1973) of Chaos magick. However, the symbol is not original to Chaos magick, having been derived from the fictional universe of science-fiction writer Michael Moorcock where it symbolises the cosmological principle of Chaos. The Chaosphere represents a "totemic" point of collective identification for Chaos magicians - most of the Chaos magicians I knew wore Chaospheres in the form of pendants, or decorated their clothing with Chaosphere designs. Significantly, the ring given to neophytes upon attaining the 4<sup>o</sup> of initiation was also inscribed with a Chaosphere. As previously mentioned, these initiations recognised the formal entry of prospective members into the organisation, and the neophyte is given the ring on reaffirming his or her adherence to the general principles of the IOT<sup>16</sup>. The Chaosphere was also commonly adopted by those Chaos magicians who remained unaffiliated with the IOT, as an emblem of their identification with the general "Chaos current".

The Chaosphere is said to represent a two or three dimensional (depending on whether it is rendered as a drawn symbol or as an object) cross-section of a higher-dimensional "hypercube" (Carroll 1987: 100, 198). In this respect, the Chaosphere is representative of the magician's attempt to move beyond the limitations of three dimensional, temporal existence. Beyond Carroll's explanation, many of the magicians I met seemed unsure of any other "meanings" attached to the Chaosphere. Regardless of this, each IOT Temple is required - wherever possible - to have a Chaosphere permanently on display in its ritual working space. This is supposed to be energised by members of each Temple on a regular basis in order to create a magical gateway. The Chaosphere is, therefore, commonly seen as a conduit through which the "undimensioned" power of Chaos could be engendered and made manifest within the wider world.

---

286).

<sup>16</sup> I knew of one such initiation, which was abandoned halfway through when the participants felt that the potential neophyte did not fully understand or concur with these principles.



Rick and Jenna described to me one instance when they used the Chaosphere to engender magical change. This involved the creation of randomised “psychogeographical” or “magical” maps by drawing a Chaosphere in the centre of a map of their hometown. They then drew eight other Chaospheres at the endpoint of each arrow projecting from the central glyph. Rick and Jenna visited these points on a fairly regular basis, visualising Chaospheres at each locale in order to increase the presence of the “magical current” of Chaos within their local environment. According to Rick, the result of the magical operation was that their hometown had become “weirder and more interesting”, although at the time I failed to ask in what ways this was so.

Outside of the collective dimensions of practice, the immediate aim of Chaos magick is the reification of what is called the “magical will”. In the next section, I examine the concept of the magical will in relation to another common set of magical practices termed “sorcery”. Such practices are seen to allow practitioners to arbitrarily enter into the spectacle of modern life - without become attached to its illusory veneer - in order to fulfil their wants and desires. As a consequence, I argue that the sorcery is both embedded in and reinforces practitioners’ ambivalent view of modernity, and also has important ideological ramifications in terms of the experience of the self which Chaos magicians hope to forge.

### **Part 3: Sorcery and the Magical Will**

#### **Sorcery and Sigilisation**

As novices become increasingly competent in each of the exercises outlined in *Liber MMM*, they are encouraged by their mentors to attempt them for longer periods using more complex sounds or imagery. This is necessary not only to bolster one’s self-control and discipline, but also to make the “magical will” manifest through trance states. The idea of the magical will is fundamental to most forms of Western ritual or ceremonial magic (Sutcliffe 1995: 111), and represents the magician’s ability to effectively utilise his or her imagination and intentionality to effect magical transformation. More than this, the magical will is also an

expression of one's fundamental being - and within the holistic context of magical practice it is

“also something beyond the individual, it connects each discrete being in the universe, permeates all things...By discovering their own will and living according to it magicians aim to align themselves with ultimate reality” (Harvey 1997: 89).

Reiterating these notions of interconnectedness, Jason - the Chaos magician and Thelemite who I interviewed in July 2000 - also defined the magical will in Jungian terms, as the point of complete self-realisation where the unconscious is merged with or brought into conscious awareness:

“science tells us that everything is connected...the will is about being connected to the universe...to me will is a conscious thing of every single moment...its actually the realisation of where you are now, what is controlling your every movement...what is it subconsciously that makes me [act in certain ways]?...am I in control of that, or is my subconscious in control of me?...[magical will] is about making the conscious and the subconscious work together...so there's no conflict between the two”

The magical will is thus shaped and conceptualised in a variety of ways according to the different ideologies adopted by practitioners (Greenwood 1996c). For example, while many ceremonial magicians treat the magical will as the teleological end-point of spiritual progression, Chaos magicians tend to identify the magical will with *kia* or Chaos. In this sense Chaos magicians articulate a “postmodern” ideology in which the will does not represent the realisation of one's “essential” spiritual nature; Jason, for example, was critical of magicians who were always

“going on about the “higher self”, or...the “higher genius” or whatever...no one's actually sort of thought, well, does that actually exist anyway? All world religions have this higher centre or spark of life or connection with god - no one's actually thought “do we have that anyway?”...who's to say we have this “higher self”? What is that? Where does it come from? If everything is connected, why would you have a separate piece of this “thing” in somebody? What would be the point of that?”



Jason thus came to view the manifestation of the magical will as one's self-identification with the processual impetus of the cosmos toward change and transformation; thus he told me:

“you as an individual have to be chaotic, otherwise you're not going with the will of the universe...nature, to me, is your own personal nature, and, also, the nature of the cosmos”.

Through the realisation of the magical will, Chaos magicians thus seek to become literal embodiments of the Chaos force within the world (see also Carroll 1987: 96).

For Chaos magicians, the magical will is actualised through *gnosis*. In an IOT document which I received during my training, *gnosis* was defined as:

“an altered state of consciousness...*a brief cessation of the internal monologue and a focusing of the powers of consciousness onto a single aim or symbol*” (my emphasis).

During trance, the magical will - in the form of a single-pointed concentration of one's intention in an otherwise vacuous state of mind - is thus directed or projected (sometimes visualised as a beam of light or energy) towards the desired outcome of a magical act.

The sometimes elusive and often subjective experience of learning to become a magician or sorcerer is best illustrated by my own “actualisation” of the magical will. By August 1997, close to the end of my training period, the various exercises I was using began to have notable effects and I felt that I was well on my way to “becoming” a Chaos magician. In an entry from my “magical diary” from this period I wrote:

“managed to sustain concentration on the object (lit candle) longer this time...After about 7 minutes, I felt totally detached from my body, and lost all sense of time...the flame appeared to become totally motionless, during which I felt a distinct shift away from “everyday” consciousness. It was as

if time had stopped, or that for a moment I had become totally aware of the candle as a single fragment of time”.

By the following week, I had begun using a magical mask (an object I had constructed as part of my group work with Temple Discordia) as the focus of my object concentration exercises. At this point, I felt that I had made an important breakthrough:

“At times the mask began “wobbling”, becoming very distorted, almost as if it was slipping in and out of reality. A definite improvement in actually keeping my eyes still and focused without blinking, which seems to be a result of engaging the magickal will. This is a very strange feeling when it happens, but generally it is a very lucid feeling of control, of being outside my body and manipulating it from a distance...It involves a sense of total focus and attentiveness which I haven’t felt before”.

The experience of *gnosis* was characterised by a kind of “vacuous” but single-pointed fixation upon the candle - an intense but effortless act of concentration and attentiveness which seemed to involve the totality of my being, and which no longer seemed to be a conscious act. Rather, it appeared as if the boundaries between myself and the candle had in some sense dissolved, and I experienced a feeling of participatory union with what I interpreted as *kia* or the magical will - I felt this “pouring” through me as a tangible force. This appeared to allow me to manipulate the candle inasmuch as I “willed” the flame to stop flickering and remain static, which it seemed to do for a few brief moments.

*Gnosis* is elaborated experientially as both knowing and being, a state in which the boundaries between subject and object dissolve. Through the manifestation of *kia* within consciousness, the magician participates in a personal experience of Chaos as the ontological ground of being. Although I have styled this as an intrinsically subjective experience in the above, it was one which appeared to conform to expectations raised in the various books on Chaos magick which I had been reading. Again, the apparent commonalities of experience - articulated through the various conduits of magical knowledge - often heighten the perceived objective nature of magic effects.



However, some Chaos magicians spoke of their experience of *gnosis* in a more generalised way - as pertaining to any state in which their perceptions or emotions had been altered through the effects of magical ritual. On one occasion, members of the HOD collectively experienced what was considered to be a very “powerful” *gnosis*, which seemed to last for some time after the conclusion of the group’s magical rites. As we made our way out of the wooded area in which the group regularly worked their magic, we noticed that the surrounding landscape was bathed in a faint greenish light, which did not appear to emanate from a definable source. I felt a slight sense of disorientation, not unlike being mildly drunk; another member of the group described the feeling as similar to the slight hallucinogenic effects he had experienced after taking “magic mushrooms”.

There are two broad magical modalities, which the Chaos magician seeks to master through the actualisation of the magical will: *metamorphosis* and *sorcery*. *Metamorphosis* or transmutation is the internal trajectory of the magical will to transform the self, and is dealt with later in the thesis. Sorcery represents the outward trajectory of the magical will to transform the external world.

Gerald Suster defines “sorcery” in the Western magical tradition as “the use of energies aroused through Magic for purely practical, material gain” (Suster 1988: 98). This class of magical practice includes: the creation or attraction of wealth; the attraction of a lover or sexual partner; success in an interview, exam or driving test; controlling the weather; finding lost objects; and the healing of (usually physical) ailments. As mentioned earlier, both academics and neo-pagans have tended to define Chaos magick in terms of its instrumental, pragmatic and materialistic aims. However, my own experience amongst Chaos magicians indicates that this emphasis is misplaced: practitioners do not necessarily see self-transformation as independent from “materialistic” acts of sorcery. As I demonstrate in both this and the following chapter, the two exist in an interdependent relationship linked by the experience of *gnosis*. It is through this experience that practitioners articulate a sense of wholeness, connectivity and participation with the forces which shape their social reality, and by which they come to understand and make sense of their day-to-day existence.

The simplest and most effective sorcerous technique used by Chaos magicians is the system of “sigilisation” devised by Austin Osman Spare (1913: 43-51).

According to Nevill Drury, Spare

“evolved a unique technique of inducing the trance state by means of concentrating on magical sigils and believed that in trance he could enter animal forms which had been his own earlier incarnations. By retracing this succession of ‘personalities’ Spare thought he could arrive at his ‘first form’ and then leap into the undifferentiated void of universal consciousness which he named Kia” (Drury 1982:114).

Spare also used this method for more materialistic ends, and it is this “sorcerous” aspect of sigilisation which Chaos magicians tend to utilise. During the sorcerous application of sigils, the Chaos magician forms a “statement of intent” which clearly encapsulates a given goal or desire. This statement is written down, and any repeating letters are removed from the sentence; those remaining are then recombined as a pictogram or glyph (see fig. 16) which is easy to visualise. An alternative method is to create a mantra which appears meaningless to the conscious mind.

The magician enters into trance using the methods outlined in “Liber MMM” (or those drawn from the practitioner’s own experience), thereby creating a “neurological storm” (Hine 1995: 24) which has the effect of paralysing the “internal dialogue” ordinarily occupying the conscious mind - thus allowing the magical will to emerge. At this point, the magician “charges” his or her desire by directing the magical will at the visualised image of the sigil, or by wilfully focusing upon the chanted mantra.

There are two classes of techniques by which *gnosis* is facilitated: through mental/physical excitation, or through the use of inhibitory techniques - Carroll’s exegesis of these methods in *Liber Null & Psychonaut* appears to have been directly inspired by the work of William Sargant (see above). The first class involves typically shamanic practices such as dancing and drumming in order to bring about an ecstatic or dissociative state. Sexual excitation may also be used - masturbation is generally seen as one of the most effective methods of attaining *gnosis* for acts of sorcery, and the sigil is visualised when the conscious mind is

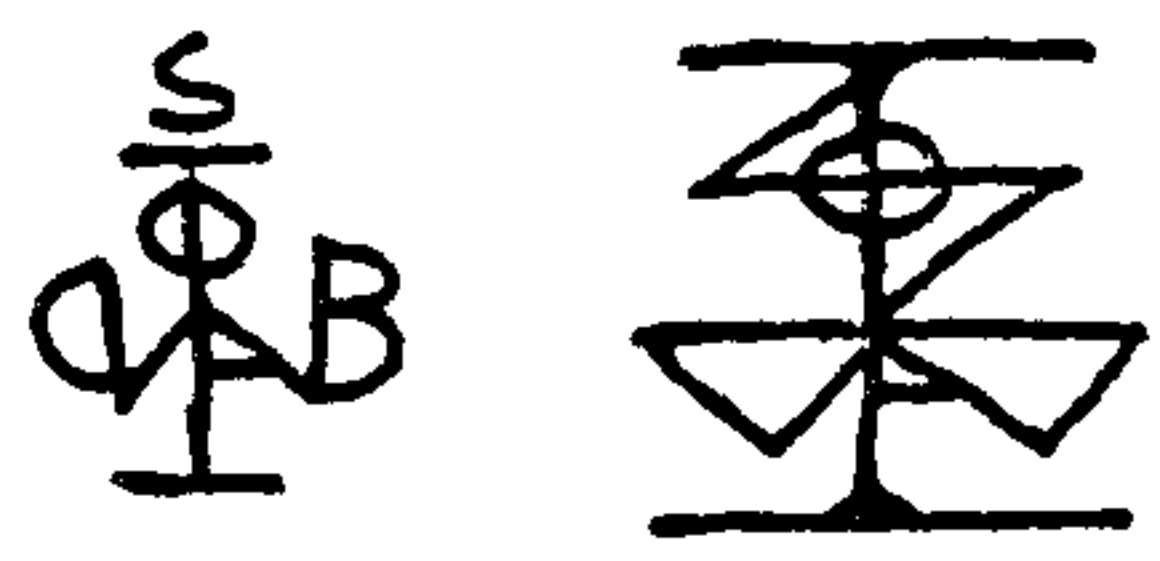


a) *Word method, I wish to obtain the Necronomicon*

I W I S H T O O B T A I N T H E N E C R O N O M I C O N

(Eliminate repeated letters)

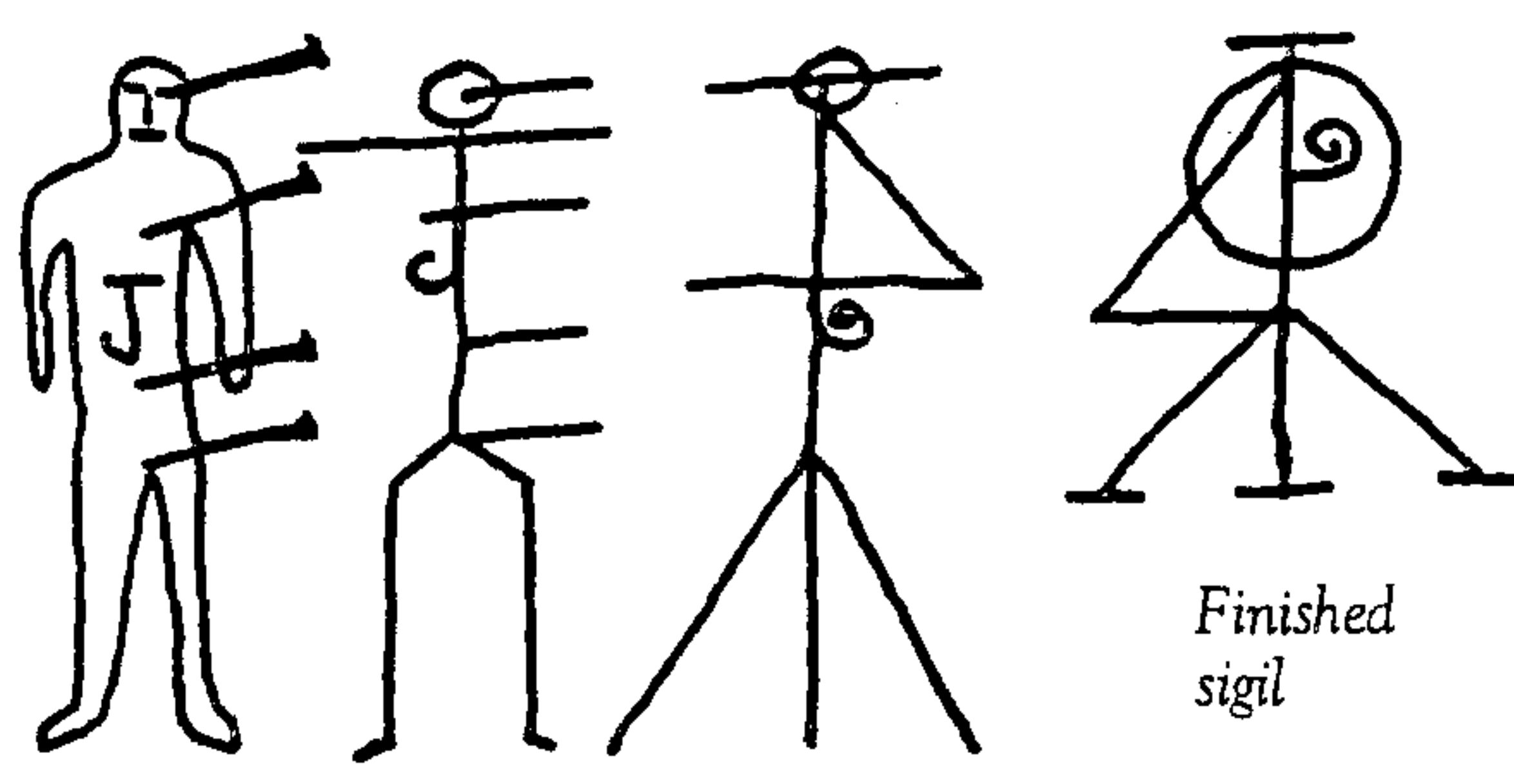
I N S H T O B A N E C R M



Letters rearranged to give pictorial sigil

---

b) *Pictorial method, to smite adversary*



Finished sigil

---

c) *Mantrical spell method*

I want to meet a succubus in dream  
 I W A H N A R M E D A R S U K U B U S I N D R E E M  
 I W A H N ' M E R D ' S U K

(Rearrange)

H A W I E M N E R K U S A D

Finished mantra

Fig. 16 - the construction of a sigil.

momentarily disrupted at the point of orgasm. The desire embedded in the sigil then becomes reified through the symbolic transference of the magician's reproductive power. The second class of techniques include meditative practices used to attain quiescence of mind. Another method is known as the "Death Posture" - a technique developed by Austin Spare. This can take a number of forms (see for example Spare 1913: 18; Carroll 1987: 68-89), but usually the magician kneels

down, and closes the eyes while using both hands to cover the nose, mouth and ears. The magician remains stationary in this position, holding the breath for as long as possible; when he or she feels close to a state of mental collapse or oblivion, the practitioner is deemed to be in a state of *gnosis* and the sigil is then visualised. A variation of this was taught at a Chaos magical workshop which I attended in London during 2000: workshop participants were instructed to stand upon the balls of their feet, arms spread wide and pushed backwards, with the chest pushed forward. Participants were also told to close their eyes and hold their breath whilst maintaining this “crucifixion” posture for as long as possible. In either case, the Death Posture is meant to limit one’s sensory experiences of the environment, and bring about a brief cessation of conscious thought as the magician teeters on the brink of a death-like state.

On returning to an ordinary state of consciousness, Chaos magicians attempt to wilfully “forget” the sigil or direct their attention elsewhere - dwelling on the sigil may cause the associated desire to become transparent to the conscious mind. Practitioners generally hold that gaining access to the unconscious - representing the untapped potential of hidden and “occult” forces and the conduit through which primal Chaos manifests - is fundamental to the success of magic. Furthermore, the unconscious is seen as especially receptive to desires embedded in symbolism, because the arbitrariness of sigils or symbols direct consciousness away from the actual content of those desires (Sherwin 1992: 20; Hine 1995: 109; Williams 1996: 183). Otherwise, the magician’s mind becomes enwrapped in “the lust of result”: the desire to achieve a stated end evokes conflicting desires through the dualistic tendencies of the human condition; these in turn can inhibit the magical fulfilment of the initial desire (Lee 1997:14-15).

### **Sorcery and Moral Ambivalence**

Other types of sorcery may entail the use of material bases to facilitate their working; these provide the sympathetic or homeopathic elements (Frazer 1922) connecting the act of sorcery to its desired effect. For example, during the 1998 section moot of the UK section of the IOT (held in a North London squat),



members of two different Temples spent some time discussing the possibility of coordinating their attempts to magically attack (or “knack”) various people who had offended IOT members (both Temples found that there was a certain amount of overlap in the names of the individuals included on their “hit lists”). Over the previous months, both Temples had apparently been applying a sorcerous technique called “napalming”: those “enemies” who appeared on their separate “hit lists” had each been ritually identified with a jelly baby. The jelly babies were then placed in a bowl, doused with rum, and set alight - the intent being to cause physical harm to the victims of the rite in accordance with Frazer’s principle of similarity.

Gerald Suster (1988) delineates the “malicious” use of magic in naturalistic and morally ambivalent terms: “Magic is like water: one can use it to drive a hydro electric power plant, make a cup of tea or boil one’s granny” (Suster 1988: 98). For Austin Spare, the reification of desire through acts of sorcery means that

“The wise pleasure seeker, having realised they are “different degrees of desire” and never desirable, gives up both Virtue and Vice and becomes a Kiaist. Riding the shark of his desire he crosses the ocean of the dual principle and engages himself in self-love” (Spare 1913: 1).

“Self-love” is the actualisation of *kia* in the mystical state of gnosis, which transcends the dualistic categories of Aristotelian logic and Western moral values. Chaos magicians’ use of sorcery practices cannot, therefore, be treated as a intrinsically linked to malicious power. As Peter Geschiere (2001: 67; see also Mitchell 2001a: 6; Parkin 1986: 9-11) notes, anthropologists often apply Manichean notions of morality in their analyses of evil, and fail to perceive the ambivalent ways in which the category of evil may be articulated by those they study; “evil” is a ambivalent power which sometimes represents cleverness rather than moral badness (Parkin 1985: 1, 13-14). Dane, for example, told me of how he dealt with other magicians who had personally threatened him with magical attack: he would simply construct a symbol which looked ominous and “evil” without even bothering to “charge” it, and leave this where his victim was likely to see it. Playing on his victim’s own paranoia and belief in the power of cursing was, he felt, a

quicker and more effective way of “warning people off” than having to bother with invoking “real” demonic powers.

Sorcery practices may also be used as a “popular mode of political action” (Rowlands & Warnier 1988: 129). On one occasion when members of Temple Discordia had met at Dawn’s flat in North London, she asked us if we would be willing to participate in some results magic. She had recently attended a street festival where there had been a visible police presence. Dawn found this intimidating and unnecessary - at the time she felt that the police were acting in a heavy handed way, looking for any opportunity to start trouble with the otherwise peaceful revellers. She had come to the conclusion that the police force either attracted individuals with a desire to assert power and authority over others, or that they had been “conditioned by the state to loose their sensitivity to other human beings”. The group assented to Dawn’s idea, and a statement of intent was formulated: “we want to engender a sense of love, fellowship and connectedness with their fellow human beings amongst the police”. Mat and Dawn formed this into a sigil which, incidentally, looked like a stylised rocket. Mat then suggested that the sigil could be charged by “launching” it. A ritual was quickly constructed, based upon what Dawn claimed was a “Tanzanian happiness dance” she had learnt from a neo-shaman friend. This would help us attain a state of gnosis, during which we would visualise the sigil. We cleared a space in Dawn’s living room, and after being taught the rudiments of the dance, we began the ritual. After ten minutes or so of dancing, Mat began counting down from ten - our signal for preparing to charge the sigil - and then screamed “blast-off!”. At this point, we visualised the sigilised rocket rising slowly into the air from the centre of the room and flying off in the direction of New Scotland Yard.

Nevertheless, acts of sorcery may involve the evocation of demonic forces for self-serving, malicious or destructive ends. In March 1999 at one of the meetings of the IOT’s London Working Group, I witnessed one such act of sorcery - instigated by Ellen after a bad experience with her then-current employer. The aim of this ritual - which Ellen had created and called the “Bad Seed Rite” - was to “call upon the power of a hundred earthquakes for vexing the creation of our foes”. The



ritual centred on the charging of some pepper seeds with noxious magical energies. A handful of seeds were then to be taken away from the ritual by each participant: Ellen told us that we could then use the seeds as magical media for cursing our enemies - she suggested crushing one or two of the seeds into a fine powder; this could then be slipped into a cup of tea or coffee and then offered to the person we wished to afflict.

The ritual began with a banishing, lead by Nathan - a young Chaos magician I had recently met. The banishing took the form of a simplified version of the Gnostic Banishing Ritual: in each of the “four quarters”, we were directed to visualise inverted pentagrams whilst chanting the following: “Abracadabra” (in the Eastern quarter), “Mumbo Jumbo” (for the Northern quarter), “Hoodoo Voodoo” (for the Western quarter), and “Heebee Jeebee (for the Southern quarter). Although this banishing ritual was somewhat comical in tone, Nathan felt that it tapped into our popular conceptions of what was “spooky”; it was thus meant to place participants in the right frame of mind for a stereotypically “witchy” act of cursing or “knacking”.

For the purposes of the rite, the “statement of intent” (i.e. the vexing of our foes) had been translated into the magical language of Enochian thus: “Lo Sin Himvo Gokyalix Axily Soddex Noxaa”. Although demonic entities were not explicitly invoked in the ritual, the fact that the intention was translated into Enochian is significant. On the one hand, it was meant to disguise the explicit intent of the ritual from the conscious mind; more importantly, Enochian is a language used by ceremonial magicians for evoking and communicating with otherworldly entities<sup>17</sup> - in this case, the implication being that malicious or demonic entities were to be called upon to “empower” the rite (a fact which Ellen later confirmed when I spoke to her after the ritual was concluded).

Twelve members of the IOT (including Ellen, Nathan, and myself) were present on this occasion, and Ellen directed us to form a circle - in the centre of which the bowl of seeds was placed. Ellen then instructed us to begin generating an

---

<sup>17</sup> Enochian was supposedly transmitted by angelic beings to the Renaissance Magus John Dee through the spirit medium Edward Kelly (Clulee 1988: 197-220). Enochian became a staple element in the magical practices of the Esoteric Order of the Golden Dawn in the late 19th Century, was

appropriate *gnosis* by giving vent to any suppressed feelings of anger or violence, thus allowing those “demonic” or malicious aspects of our selves to come to the fore. The Enochian statement of intent was then used as a mantra which we chanted whilst circle-dancing in an anti-clockwise direction (or “widdershins”). This continued for some minutes, until the “right level” of magical energy had been “raised” by the participants (this is often intuitively gauged by the magician directing the rite). When this point arrived, Ellen instructed us to converge on the centre of the circle where the bowl of seeds stood; following her cue, we threw out our arms, shouting angrily whilst visualising streams of powerful magical energy flowing from our fingertips into the seeds. The ritual thus involved the transference of participants inner “demonic” power - evoked by the use of Enochian - to the seeds. This brought an end to the rite, after which Ellen distributed the seeds between the participants, to use as we saw fit.

Such practices are akin to the Chaos magical technique of creating “servitors”. Servitors represent “thought forms”, “sub-personalities” (Hine 1991: 3) or “bud-wills”: aspects of the magician’s personality which can be “consciously created or generated, using evocatory techniques, to perform a task or service” (Hine 1995: 105). They are “created” in a manner similar to the technique of sigilisation, in as much as the task for which the servitor is created is broken down into its component letters, which are then formed into a glyph. Servitors are often “bound” into their sigil or into some other material focus (a mask or a statuette, for example). Chaos magicians may also give shape or form to the servitor by visualising an appropriate image of the entity. This may be “charged” in a variety of ways in order to waken the servitor to life - usually by visualising the sigil or an image of the servitor whilst in a state of *gnosis*, but also by transferring a part of one’s lifeforce to the entity (anointing the sigil or material focus with blood, spittle, or semen, for example). For example, Kenu-Vahag-Allahan - an amorphous, and monstrous servitor which the HOD began creating in 1999 - was linked to a collectively-formed glyph (anointed with spittle taken from each member of the group). By November 2000, this rather nebulous entity still had not yet been fully

---

utilised extensively by Crowley, and is commonly used by contemporary ceremonial magicians.



refied. Explaining this (via e-mail) to a newly-joined member of the group, Dane stated:

“As yet though, Kenhu-Vahag-Allahan has no consensual appearance, apart from the jellyfish [...] look, & though birthed in a pool of our collective spit, hasn't received any collective blood or cum”.

To the extent that they invariably involve the understanding, evocation, and mastery of one's inner drives, desires or internal “daemons”, sorcery practices are often entwined with ambivalent and internalised concepts of the demonic as outlined in the previous chapter. In the next chapter, I go on to develop this point with reference to the self-transformatory aspects of Chaos magick. There I demonstrate how Chaos magical ideas enable practitioners to both understand, and orient themselves within, an increasingly complex and uncertain social milieu. This argument is then developed in later chapters where I address the central importance of “demonic” possession to Chaos magical practice, and how this functions as a discourse on the nature and experience of selfhood in the modern world.

In this chapter, I have contested the view that Chaos magick is simply a system of techniques; with regard to the core argument of the thesis, I have suggested that it is through the ethos embedded in these techniques that practitioners seek to embrace the fluidity of late modern consumer culture and identity (a point which is demonstrated - with reference to field data and the secondary literature surrounding Chaos magick - in the next chapter). The “modernity” of Chaos magick is not only evident through this ethos, but also in the fact that practitioners apply both a “scientific” methodology and “modern” techniques of self-discipline and self-surveillance as part of their magical training and practice. In the final section, I have again shown how Chaos magical sorcery practices are embroiled in a modern and ambivalent conception of the demonic. Subsidiary - but related - to the discussion concerning the modernity of Chaos magick, I have shown in the second section of the chapter how the seemingly individualistic practice of Chaos magick generates collective meanings within a group context. This point is

developed in relation to the ways in which the intrinsically “modern” ethos of Chaos magick becomes internalised by practitioners in chapter five.



## Chapter 4

### **Sorcerer-Scientists, Postmodern Shamans, and Gnostic Rebels: The Meaning and Significance of Practice.**

#### **Part 1 - Structuring Chaos: The Theoretical Dimensions of Sorcery**

##### **Introduction**

I begin this chapter by examining the instrumental and theoretical aspects of Chaos magical sorcery practices (introduced in chapter three). With particular reference to the way Chaos magicians have applied a particularistic interpretation of post-Newtonian scientific ideas, I show that these theoretical dimensions articulate a meaningful conception of the cosmos encapsulating the uncertainties of late modernity. In the second section, I show how the theoretical aspects of sorcery are intertwined with notions of personified “demonic” forces, and demonstrate how these ideas are entrenched in the magical discourse of self-transformation or *metamorphosis*. In the final section of the chapter, I suggest that this discourse represents a response to feelings of alienation - one by which practitioners seek reintegration and a meaningful experience of wholeness; however, this search for wholeness is not a reaction to - but is again embedded in practitioners’ experience of - late modernity. This experience is examined in relation to historical and cultural influences - namely shamanism, Gnosticism and Taoism - which pervade Chaos magick.

##### **The Chaos Magician as “Sorcerer-Scientist”**

For Chaos magicians, sorcery is not simply a practical activity, but a theoretical one that informs and is informed by their worldview. Despite its individualistic and relativistic ethos, practitioners do recognise that Chaos magick does represent a “metaparadigm” or dominant system of “belief”. As such, this “metaparadigm”

incorporates a widely-used theory of sorcery derived from the works of Peter Carroll and disseminated through the IOT.

This theory holds that, once released into the unconscious, the preconceived structure of a sigil creates a patterning within the *potentia* of Chaos. This *potentia* is referred to as *aether* by Peter Carroll: a semi-material medium which

“acts as though it were a form of information exchange emitted by matter...broadly analogous to what have been called morphogenetic fields or non-local effects in physics” (Carroll 1992: 21).

Other Chaos magicians use a different (but quasi-scientific) terminology to delineate similar concepts. Rob - a Chaos magician who I met late in 1999 - felt that the *qliphoth* and other “darkside” entities were the human personifications of transmundane quantum forces. He suggested that such entities were composed of “shadow matter” or “dark matter”: a form of as-yet undetectable matter theorised by some astrophysicists (Rees 1999: 82-93) and which, according to Rob, represented the fundamental but fluctuating “reality” underlying the universe of “mundane” matter. “Dark matter” and other scientific terminology became evident in the spirit possession rituals of the Haunters of the Dark (of which Rob was a member); as a consequence, the “mystical” discourse of supernatural entities was sometimes juxtaposed with or articulated through concepts derived from popular science. In one such ritual, the possessing entity used the term *aether*, which it described as:

“the medium through which all matter has context. It is the *dark matter* between matter. It is the body beyond the body, from which we arise and to which we return and have our being” (my emphasis).

Sorcery is also “scientifically” defined as a type of “probability engineering” (Carroll 1992: 4), where the “etheric patterns from a spellcasting which sets a form for a manifestation of some event will enhance the probability of that event occurring” (Carroll 1992: 24). In this respect, magic is sometimes conceived of as the manipulation of coincidence: “The skeptic calls the type of result obtained



'coincidence'. I call it 'arranged coincidence' or 'magick'." (Sherwin 1992: 22). Although in theory the power of Chaos is without limitations, the magician is more likely to attain success if the desired outcome lies within the dominant, consensual configurations of belief (as maintained by the psychic censor). Sorcery is, therefore, more likely to be effective if it falls within the confines of "achievable reality" (Hine 1993: 5-28), or "the Zone of Availability" (Lee 1997: 40-41). An example of what this entails was provided by the Chaos magician Steve Wilson:

"Some pagans criticise results magic, saying "if it works, why don't you use it to win the lottery? Why aren't you already a millionaire?". I usually ask them "how do you know I'm not!". But the point is that using magick to win the lottery is almost impossible, for the simple reason that there are too many variables involved, in terms of the probability of your numbers coming up. And then you also have to contend with the fact that millions of other people are directing their will to the same end on a weekly basis - I don't know of any magicians whose will is so powerful that they can overcome that".

If, however, the magician is able to overcome the psychic censor - or is otherwise able to manipulate the consensual configurations of belief within the boundaries of what is practically achievable - the desire becomes reified. Chaos magicians' never claimed, therefore, to be able to conjure money out of thin air; however, those who charged or enchanted sigils for the purposes of acquiring wealth often claimed to have gained indirect access to money via offers of work or promotion; on three occasions, magicians also told me of how they had unexpectedly received substantial amounts of money from relatives subsequent to "casting" such a sigil.

As I demonstrate in the following discussion, these notions are embedded in a "scientific" conception of the chaotic or indeterministic nature of the cosmos, where magic and sorcery are concerned with the willed *structuring* of the Chaos force (Hine 1993: 2, 23). As a consequence, Tanya Luhrmann's claim that practitioners believe "[t]he universe *is* chaos, *is* confusion" (Luhrmann 1989: 96) does not do justice to the sometimes complex ways in which Chaos is conceptualised by Chaos magicians. As I show both here and in chapter five, Chaos

magicians are in fact interested in eliciting a meaningful wholeness and processual harmony through the category of “Chaos”.

Commenting on the cognitive bases of occult beliefs, Barry Singer and Victor Benassi state that

“when presented with an array of data or a sequence of events in which they are instructed to discover an underlying order, subjects show strong tendencies to perceive order and causality in random arrays, to perceive a pattern or correlation which seems a priori intuitively correct even when the actual correlation in the data is counterintuitive” (Singer & Benassi 1981: 386).

However, Chaos magicians often claim that the aim of magical practice is precisely to recognise the *contingent* nature of our cognitive models of reality.

This was aptly illustrated at one meeting of a Chaos magical group calling itself the IOU. The group had been formed in the mid-1990’s by Alan, Damien, and Jason, and also included three disgruntled ex-members of the IOT (of which Alan was one) as an alternative to that organisation. Unlike the IOT, the letters IOU did not form a magical acronym, and I was told jokingly by Alan that “they stand for anything you want them to - that’s the point!”. However, I was later informed that Alan had insisted on the name, because it asserted the primacy of the IOU over the IOT: “U” following “T” in the alphabet (thus implying that the IOU was a step ahead of the IOT). The group was non-hierarchical and non-initiatory and, after I joined, met approximately twelve times over a sixteen month period. The Haunters of the Dark also emerged as a splinter group from the IOU.

I became involved with the IOU in September 1999, after Alan made an announcement at Talking Stick to the effect the fact that the group was commencing a series of eight workshops: these were aimed at introducing newcomers to the principles of Chaos magick. I attended all eight, and found that they introduced participants to similar techniques and a system of training to those used by the IOT.

During the second of these workshops (held in October 1999), an “experiment” comparable to that outlined by Singer and Benassi was conducted: the participants



(including myself) were shown a table upon which a number of objects were arrayed, including a book, a feather, and a ball. The workshop organisers asked us, as a group, to discuss the nature of the relationship that existed between these diverse objects. A number of different theories were put forward by participants, after which we were told that the objects had in fact been randomly chosen - there was no intrinsic connections between them other than those which we had constructed in our own minds. The point being that what we felt was right and proper about the world was in fact arbitrary and contingent: there was no “ultimate order to things”. This, one of the organisers announced, was the true secret of magic: along with being able to “make things happen”, magic is equally about the re-ordering of one’s own conceptions and perceptions of the world - and the realisation that we are free to construct new and different perspectives and realities.

Practitioners view the Chaos force as an indeterminate and spontaneous source of creativity and order, not - as Lührman suggests - *confusion*. This view is derived from popularised recensions of the science of non-linear dynamics or “chaos”, such as James Gleick’s (1989) *Chaos: The Making of a New Science*:

“Those studying chaotic dynamics discovered that the disorderly behaviour of simple systems acted as a creative process. It generated complexity: richly organized patterns, sometimes stable and sometimes unstable, sometimes finite and sometimes infinite, but always with the fascination of living things.” (Gleick 1989: 43).

Chaos magicians draw on such sources to legitimise the view that an understanding of Chaos is not concerned with disorder *per se*, but with “a science of process rather than state, of becoming rather than being.” (Gleick 1989: 5).

Lührmann’s interpretation of Chaos magick is further problematised by Chaos magicians use of the “Butterfly Effect” as both an explanatory model and a scientific legitimisation of the probabilistic nature of sorcery. The Butterfly Effect - initially observed by mathematician and meteorologist Edward Lorenz - is a popular synonym for the theory of “sensitive dependence on initial conditions” (Gleick 1989: 23), or the notion that “a small fluctuation may start an entirely new evolution that will drastically change the whole behaviour of the macroscopic

system” (Prigogine & Stengers 1984: 14): thus, the perturbations caused by a butterfly fluttering its wings in Peking may effect storm systems in New York weeks later (Gleick 1989: 8)<sup>1</sup>.

Following from this, a common adage amongst Chaos magicians is “enchant long, divine short”: according to magical recensions of the theory of sensitive dependence on initial conditions, small changes in the magical *potentia* of the Chaos force (via sorcery) are more likely to achieve wide-reaching effects (or effects which diverge significantly from those determined by the consensual reality) in the long term. Thus, according to Stephen Hawking, complex and “chaotic” systems such as the weather patterns are susceptible to prediction during the early stages of their evolution, but long-term predictions are rendered problematic (Hawking 1994: 129). In a similar manner, Chaos magicians see magical divination (such as the use of Tarot cards) as likely to be effective in predicting probable future outcomes only if those outcomes are temporally “closer” to the time at which the divination was first conducted.

Reflecting the growing interest in information technology amongst Chaos magicians, Carroll’s ideas have developed into an “cybernetic” model of magic (Frater U.D. 1996: 3-4) - based on Rupert Sheldrake’s (1988) theory of “morphic resonance” - in which magic is seen as a form of instantaneous information exchange. Chaos magicians, who find their work-lives and leisure time increasingly dominated by information technologies, have found this model extremely attractive - particularly as it imbues “archaic” magical ideas with cultural relevance. Rob - an internet researcher by profession - described his own “magical” understanding of this model thus:

“the magician formulates his desire, and downloads it into the mainframe of reality. It acts like a computer virus, or similar to morphic resonance, or it creates ripples through reality which...I mean, you could see it like computer programming. We are - human beings - are the software which inhabit the mainframe of reality, which is the operating system, hardware.

---

<sup>1</sup> This type of behaviour was eventually attributed to the appearance of non-linear equations - causing small variables in the data input to generate disproportionate outcomes - in Lorenz’s calculations (Lorenz 1993: 162-163).



If you know the proper code or programming language, you can reprogram reality”.

Rob was not a member of the IOT, but was a member of the IOU and HOD, and belonged to an on-line community of Chaos magicians calling themselves the Autonomatrix. He also had a keen interest in exploring Voudou from a Chaos magical perspective, and had met an Haitian *houngon* or priest living in London to whom he hoped to become apprenticed. As with so many Chaos magicians, spirit possession was central to Rob’s magical practices, and he likened it to a system of information exchange: possession was akin to the “downloading” of another personality into one’s own “hardware” or neural network. Like other Chaos magicians, he also found it useful to treat gods, spirits, and demons as memes. The magician could wilfully allow these self-replicating cultural virii to “infect” his or her consciousness through possession. Exorcism could then be applied as a kind of “anti-virus toolkit” to rid the human operating system of the possessing entity.

As mentioned in the introduction to the thesis, contemporary Western magic has been represented as a space of unreason, a form of resistance to the limits placed upon knowledge and experience by instrumental rationality. However, according to Carroll, Chaos magick represents

“a kind of scientific *anti-science*...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.” (Carroll n.d.a.: 1).

This view permeates the daily practices of many Chaos magicians, and represents a continuation of Aleister Crowley’s conception of magic as fulfilling “the aims of religion using the methods of science” (Crowley 1909: 1; see also Harms 1999:28-29). In effect, the Chaos magician is a “sorcerer-scientist” (Carroll n.d.a.: 2) who seeks to comprehend - through self-analysis and the application of “scientific” method and theory - the “physics of evocation” (Hine n.d.a.; Lee 1997: 94-96) by which the hidden or non-empirical forces governing the cosmos, daily life, and the self may be rendered visible and made subject to control and manipulation.

### **Chaos Magick and Post-Newtonian Science**

Marcello Truzzi suggests that the emergence of this intrinsically modern and “quasi-scientific” view of the occult is indicative of an instrumental and secularising “demystification-process of what were once fearful and threatening cultural elements” (Truzzi 1972: 413; see also: Truzzi 1974b: 635; Ben-Yehuda 1985: 104)). Similarly, Carroll’s claim that the magician should approach magic in the guise of “rebel physicist” (Carroll 1996a) is mirrored in Nachman Ben-Yehuda’s argument that modern occultism is increasingly coming to resemble a form of “deviant science” whose

“various technologies spring from a quasi-scientific conceptualization of our cosmos and supposedly allow human adherents the power of enlisting different deities (or forces) to do things for them” (Ben-Yehuda 1985: 99).

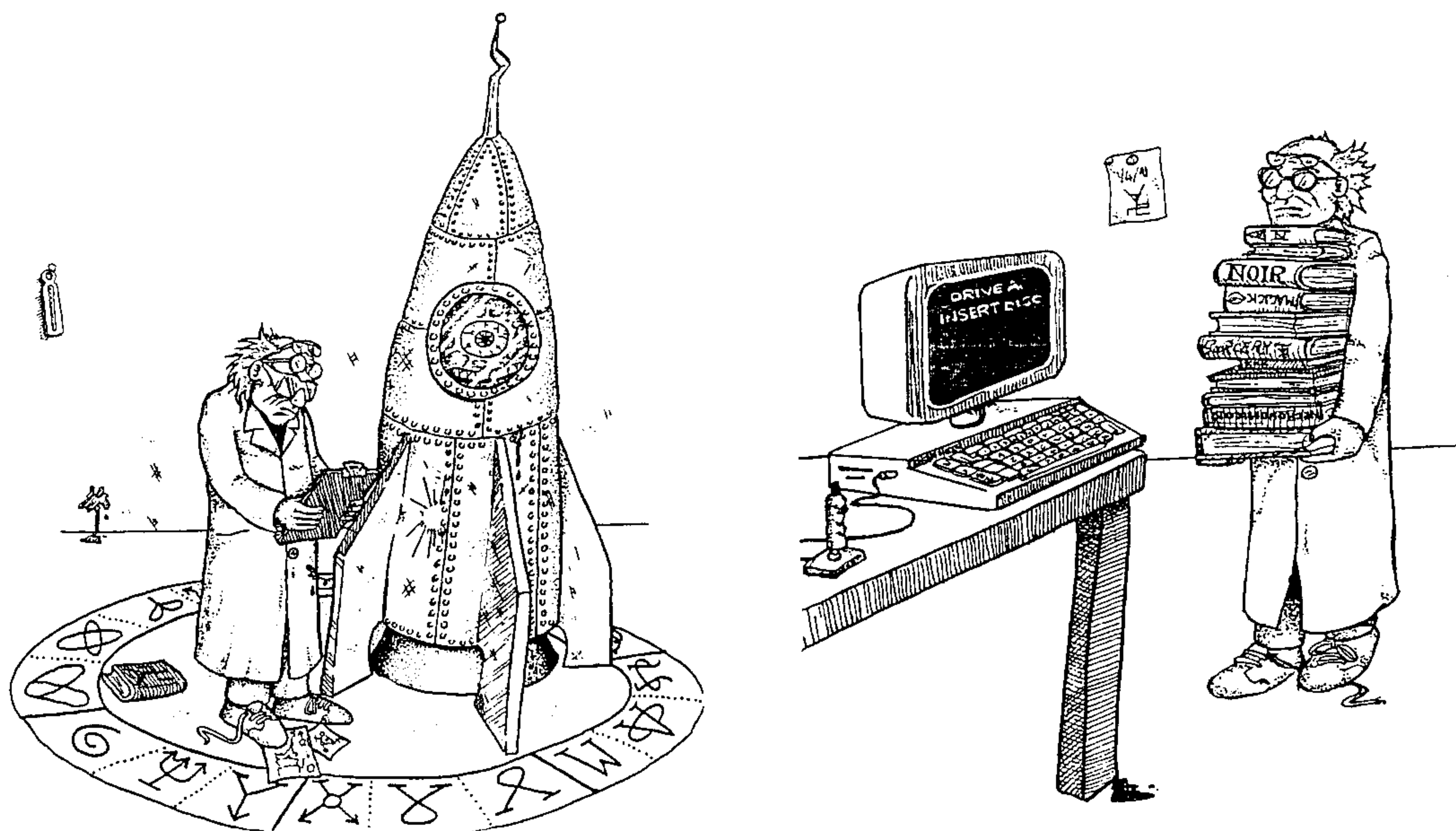
However, for Ben-Yehuda “the kind of “science” professed by these occultists is always antithetical to positivistic science” (Ben-Yehuda 1985: 99) and otherwise deemed “irrational” or “pre-scientific” in the eyes of “mainstream” scientists (see for example Sagan 1997).

Phil Hine’s (1991) booklet on the creation of magical “servitors” exemplifies this collision of “modern” science with “archaic” magic - the booklet is illustrated with cartoons of a “sorcerer” wearing a laboratory coat, and utilising modern technology alongside the traditional paraphernalia (wands, magic circles, demonological grimoires) of the magician’s art (see fig. 17). Yet Chaos magick articulates a tension between modernity - in the sense of placing trust in the objective and explanatory aspects of science - and what Lyotard treats as the “postmodern” aspects of post-Newtonian science (Lyotard 1979: 60)<sup>2</sup>: namely

---

<sup>2</sup> Singer and Benassi (1981: 391) argue that the modern proliferation of occult beliefs is in fact partly due to the postmodern relativisation of knowledge where science has increasingly been treated as “subjective”, thus undermining its value as a cognitive tool for understanding the objective





**Fig. 17 - the Chaos magician as “sorcerer scientist”.**

those aspects which appear to radically curtail the possibility of attaining objective knowledge.

The emergence and popularisation of post-Newtonian science has instigated important cultural shifts in placing limitations upon the certainties of earlier Western mechanistic concepts of the cosmos. One of the implications arising from the field of quantum cosmology is the possibility that the cosmos is “self-created” or emerges from an ontologically indeterminate and acausal basis. This view has important ramifications for traditional Western Judeo-Christian religiosity, in that it challenges theistic notions of a divinely-created universe. However, as Ilya Prigogine and Isabella Stengers observe, earlier Newtonian mechanistic models treated nature as an inanimate automaton (Prigogine & Stengers 1984: 6); echoing Weber, they claim that Newtonian science thus

“leads to a tragic, metaphysical choice. Man has to choose between the reassuring but irrational temptation to seek in nature a guarantee of human values, or a sign pointing to a fundamental correlatedness, and fidelity to a rationality that isolates him in a silent world.

The echoes of another leitmotiv - domination - mingle with that of disenchantment. A disenchanted world is, at the same time, a world liable to control and manipulation” (Prigogine & Stengers 1984: 32)

Prigogine and Stengers go on to argue that the “new” scientific paradigms of chaos and complexity offer a vision of nature as multiple, temporal and complex (Prigogine & Stengers 1984: xxvii), and indicate the possibilities of a “new dialogue with nature” in which, as Gleick suggests, “periodicity leads to chaos” (Gleick 1989: 73), and small changes in ordered, steady states generate bifurcations. Through such bifurcations or “dissipative structures” (Prigogine & Stengers 1984: 12), disorder gives rise to new and more complex states of equilibrium.

These paradigms are appealing to many neo-pagans and magicians because they afford a degree of scientific legitimacy to magic and offer a way of bridging the perceived divide between nature and humanity. It is, however, important to reiterate the fact that Chaos magicians generally derive their ideas from popular science texts; practitioners also tended to treat holistic “New Age” or “mystical” exegeses of quantum theory (Fritjof Capra’s [1976] *The Tao of Physics*, Gary Zukav’s [1979] *The Dancing Wu Li Masters* and Danah Zohar’s [1990] *The Quantum Self*, for example) as definitive and authoritative “scientific” interpretations. In this respect, Chaos magick is indicative of a New Age sensibility which, according to David Hess (1993), defines itself in relation to both the “proximate and negative Other” of mechanistic science, and to “more exotic and positive Other” (Hess 1993: 52) of “spiritualised” science<sup>3</sup>. Nachman Ben-Yehuda (1985: 85, n.13) also suggests that the popularisation of quantum theory has lent support to certain “magical” ideas concerning alternative realities. As a consequence, what Truzzi refers to as the “demystification” of the supernatural does not amount to the de-sacralisation of the cosmos, but rather a transformation of the “occult” sensibility which seeks to integrate science, religion and magic within a new synthesis:

---

<sup>3</sup> In a similar manner to Paul Heelas, Hess sees the New Age as having formed a sceptical attitude to certain aspects of modernity (i.e. orthodox science) whilst embodying the modern values of self-reliance and individualism (Hess 1993: 9).



“modern occultists...do not shy away from the supernatural phenomenon. They believe in them, want to prove their existence, and most important of all, to control them. Modern occultism offers a unique blend that traditional religion does not have - what may appear as an alternative “scientific” paradigm coupled with a “scientifically” controllable belief system...The adherents of the occult seek answers that can integrate both science and religion” (Ben-Yehuda 1989: 254)

While the elements of control and mastery important aspects of Chaos magick, the explanatory value of scientific theories as utilised by Chaos magicians is often subordinated to the practitioners’ existential requirements: despite the demystifying force of quasi-scientific models, human beings paradoxically “*need* mystery, that a full understanding of every phenomenon would place humanity in an unbearable spiritual state” (Ben-Yehuda 1985: 209). As a human conception, the Chaos force may become subject to control through theoretical models; however, the metaphysical concept of Chaos is of something which is beyond finding out through the application of rational human faculties: as I demonstrate later in the chapter, Chaos remains embedded in the fundamental mystery of the cosmos. Such are the contradictory and paradoxical notions which Chaos magicians often straddle.

Thus, the meaning and significance of Chaos magical practices are not made transparent purely in terms of their instrumentality. Furthermore, whilst representing a dominant view within Chaos magick, Carroll’s scientific approach is sometimes disputed. However, I found that members of the IOT sometimes treated Carroll’s ideas as definitive and dogmatic. This view was fostered by the fact that, for many of those involved, the IOT was their first point of contact with the world of Chaos magick; most of them had also based their conception of Chaos magick on a reading of Carroll’s work. At the time of my involvement in the IOT, Carroll (who was no longer actively involved in the organisation) had also become a somewhat mythologised, ancestral and authoritative figure amongst some of the group’s members.

Chaos magicians outside of the IOT tended to be more critical of Carroll’s ideas and the way they had become akin to a Chaos magical doctrine, although at various times members of the IOT (including Dawn, Rick, and Dane) also expressed the

view that Carroll's "scientific" approach was a form of scientific reductionism. Rick in particular felt that although Carroll's ideas were useful ways of making magic comprehensible in a modern context, they also tended to divest magic of its mystique. Geoff - a Thelemite who I met in Oxford in May 1999 - felt that Chaos magick had contributed some significant ideas to the practice and understanding of magic; nonetheless, he was also sceptical of Chaos magick's pretensions to science: rather than "de-mystifying" magic, Geoff felt that Chaos magicians' use of quantum theory tended to "overmystify magic - you can only understand half of this stuff if you have a degree in physics".

Even where scientific discourse is applied as an adjunct to "magical" thinking, the complexities and abstractions of this discourse (Prigogine & Stengers 1984: 19) mean that practitioners seek to encompass, in experiential and personally-meaningful ways, the non-empirical forces which appear to shape their lives. In the next section, I go on to demonstrate the ways in which Chaos magicians personify these forces as spirits and demons. I also show that such entities are never simply conceived of in psychologically- or scientifically-reductive terms. There, I also delineate the important ways in which sorcery, the demonic, and the self-transformative goals of Chaos magick become inseparable within practitioners' attempts to make sense out of their social and cultural environment.

## **Part 2 - The Practitioners' Experience: Sorcery, Selfhood, and the Demonic.**

### **Sorcery and Self-Analysis**

The theoretical models underlying both sorcery and other types of Chaos magical practice provide practitioners with a set of secondary rationalisations in the face of failure: that the intention behind the rite was not explicit; that the practitioner had failed to attain a deep state of *gnosis*; or that the required outcome did not accurately reflect the practitioner's "inner desires". For example, one evening after I had attended Talking Stick with Jason and Damien, the two of them decided to go to a night-club and invited me along. Discussing the possibility of purchasing



recreational drugs, they chose a club in the vicinity of Charing Cross Road as a likely spot to “score” amphetamines or ecstasy. After an hour spent approaching likely drug-dealers in the club, they returned empty-handed. Jason decided that some magic was required to nudge the probabilities in their favour, and set about a little impromptu sorcery. Between them, Jason and Damien settled on the following statement of intent: “we wish to buy drugs”. A sigil was quickly constructed from this, and drawn on a cigarette paper. This was used to roll a cigarette, which comprised the sympathetic cornerstone of the ad-hoc ritual: the hope was that a lesser narcotic might attract something more powerful. They shared the cigarette in silence while presumably concentrating on the sigil. Fifteen minutes later, Jason went off to the bar, and on returning informed Damien that someone had asked him if he was interested in buying some “speed” (i.e. amphetamines), and they quickly concluded the deal. An hour or so after taking the speed, they realised that it was having little or no noticeable effect. Damien humorously suggested that although the sigil had worked, the initial statement of intent had been too vague: it should have read “we wish to buy *good* drugs”. In this respect, the magical act had largely encompassed the requirements for success in terms of achievable reality - we were, after all, in a place where drugs were (supposedly) readily available. The failure had been due to the haphazard construction of the initial statement of intent, and neither of them had thought to fully analyse the conditions of success in terms of what they really wanted or desired.

Phil Hine claims, therefore, that

“Practical sorcery necessitates not only the ability to ‘make things happen’ in accordance with will, but the understanding of how the elemental parts of the psyche have an effect on us...bringing about changes in the world inevitably forces us to take notice of what we are about. Growth only follows changes if we can understand and apply the lessons which life shows us, and sorcery, with its emphasis on practical events directs us to face the world we live in, rather than the world as we would like it to be” (Hine 1991: 4)

This view was also reiterated in the day-to-day discourse of many of the Chaos magicians I met. In the following sections, I present four cases in which Chaos

magicians' own experiences of sorcery and the demonic is given voice, and show how the two become closely intertwined within Chaos magical discourses of magical self-analysis and self-transformation.

**Mark: "Working with Demons"**

In March 1999, I attended a talk at Talking Stick given by Mark, a magician in his forties who I had spoken to on occasion. The subject of his presentation was "Working with Demons", and he described in detail some of his own experiences of working magically with *The Goetia* (Mathers & Crowley 1997): a medieval manual of "low" or practical magic primarily concerned with the ritual conjuration of "infernal spirits" or demons. Each of the "Goetic" demons presides over specific material and temporal domains, and has the power to fulfil the magician's desires. For example, the spirit Gamori is able to

"tell of all Things Past, Present, and to Come; and of Treasures Hid, and what they lie in; and to procure the Love of Women both Young and Old."  
(Mathers & Crowley 1997: 58)

Mark's principle goal in working with demons was, therefore, to attain practical or material ends - and he claimed to have been successful in this (accumulating a new refrigerator and a computer as a consequence of his work with the demons of *The Goetia*).

He explained that during his "experiments", these demons had either been evoked through visualisation exercises, had appeared in trance-states, or had been contacted through a spirit medium who had participated in some of the rituals. Mark had also been a member of the IOT, and Chaos magical ideas suffused his approach to the subject of demons. He claimed, for example, that unless invested with the power of the magician's belief, traditional magic circles and incantations were useless for controlling and evoking demons. He also believed that the thought-processes of many pagans were powerfully shaped by Western rationalism - this, he felt, was difficult to by-pass and could be problematic in generating the belief necessary to make magic work.



Mark saw demonology as having its roots in human prehistory, and outlined a speculative model where a primeval “sorcerer” would enter the wild, sacrifice an animal and draw a triangle around its corpse. Following this, the sorcerer would enclose himself in a circle, then call forth the “spirit of the wilderness” into the triangle (using the slain animal as the material basis for the spirit’s manifestation). He also suggested that the triangle was symbolic of “the female pubic triangle” which represented a tunnel between this world and the demonic realm of “the Abyss”. Scientific discourse also entered into Mark’s conception of the demonic: he stated that, on one occasion, the Goetic demon Asmodai had spoken to him through a spirit medium, describing the Abyss as a “sparkling darkness”. This led Mark to speculate that the Abyss was akin to the “quantum void” of theoretical physics, where “particles are continually popping in and out of existence”. It was their connection with the Abyss, Mark maintained, that allowed demons to “reify probabilities” and thus manifest the magician’s wishes as reality. Although he had achieved remarkable results from his work, he also suggested that one had to be careful when working with demonic entities.

He claimed, however, never to have encountered a sense of tangible evil when conjuring Goetic demons, and felt that they represented something very different from Christian conceptions of the demonic. Nevertheless, there was some truth in various pieces of demonic folklore: namely that demons are notorious for attempting to subvert the magician’s wishes, or that they would grant one’s wish to the letter, but not to the spirit of the wish. In his experience, this was not exactly the case; rather, demons tended to grant one’s unconscious desires rather than one’s immediately stated wants; therefore magicians had to be careful of what they wished for.

Self-knowledge is fundamental to the practice of magic; and beyond the superficialities of sorcery, it is the knowledge of and ability to transform the self that constitutes the very essence of magic for many Chaos magicians.

### **Mat: Demons and “Working on the Self”**

A few months later (in June 1999), I had the opportunity to talk at length with Mat about his own systematic explorations of *The Goetia* (conducted with Ellen). By this time, he had left the IOT (see chapter five), and had also secured a full-time position in an art gallery; he also worked on a voluntary basis for a children’s theatre group, and felt that magicians had a lot to learn from the imaginative qualities which children possessed<sup>4</sup>. Although Mat once told me that he had been involved in a Christian evangelical group prior to his interest in Chaos magick, he otherwise remained close-mouthed about much of his personal history, including how he came to be involved with the IOT.

At the time, I was also trying to get to grips with what constituted the “core” or essence of Chaos magick, and was leaning to the view that this lay within the instrumentality of sorcery practices. Mat, however, believed that Chaos magicians placed too much emphasis on practical results. Based on entries in his magical diary, he estimated that ninety-percent of his attempts at practical sorcery resulted in failure. Nonetheless, he remained undeterred: “when it does work, it brings home the reality of magic, it gives me the boost I needs to keep going, so I do magic for the times it does work, when I do get a kick out of it”. Whilst some magicians saw results magic as a way of “imposing their will upon the universe”, he was not convinced that this was the case; for Mat, sorcery represented a more intuitive process. To illustrate this, he told me of a “sorceress” he knew in the North of England who rarely used results magic, but found that it always worked when she did: she seemed to intuitively pick the right time to do it, as if some part of her knew when circumstances were propitious for certain events to occur - that magic was just giving those circumstances a small boost or “nudging” events in the right direction. Mat thus believed that results magic was only a part of the equation - to attain success in magic, it was necessary to apply yourself to the real world, to day-to-day situations.

When I questioned him about his work with *The Goetia*, he mentioned that he had been watching an episode of the popular sci-fi series *Dr Who* in which an

---

<sup>4</sup> See chapters five and six.



extraterrestrial entity called Azazel - taking the form of a stereotypical horned and cloven-hoofed demon - appeared in a typical English village after being summoned by a local witch. Subsequently the witch discovered that, while having the power to call forth Azazel, she was unable to control the entity. This mirrored his own experience of working with *The Goetia*: demonic forces had no reason to obey you unless you had “worked upon the self” and gained a deep understanding of your own inner demons. Mat believed that this was a problem which Chaos magicians were generally aware of, but rarely did anything about. He also felt that many Chaos magicians were attracted to the demonic aspects of Chaos magick because they were “into it just for pushing back boundaries”. The danger of this, he felt, was that transgression often became an end in itself and was no longer treated as a “creative act”; instead, it became just another “tunnel reality” or conceptual prison.

For Mat, the conjuring of “infernal” spirits was peripheral to the way such encounters allowed him to achieve a better understanding of his own motivations and desires. His experiments with *The Goetia* were, therefore, essentially therapeutic - about working positively with evil (see chapter two): he saw the conjuration of “Goetic” entities as the externalisation of his own inner demons; through this, he learnt not only to recognise the subtle ways by which they gained purchase over his own life, but also how to command and master those demons within the cathartic psychodrama of ritual.

### **Ramsey Dukes: Personifying Demons**

During the Summer of 1999, I had the opportunity to interview Ramsey Dukes. I had first met Ramsey some months earlier at Talking Stick, where he had been promoting his humorously-titled book *What I Did in My Holidays: Essays on Black Magic, Satanism, Devil Worship and Other Niceties* (Dukes 1998) - a series of essays dealing with the demonic from a Chaos magical perspective. Ramsey was extremely friendly and open about his magical beliefs, and readily agreed to my request to interview him. His involvement in neo-paganism began in the 1970s, and he went on to write a number of texts which influenced the development of Chaos

magick (Dukes 1975, 1989); although he published work under his own name, he had also adopted a number of pseudonyms and alternative identities, including that of the aristocratic Satanist Hugo L'Estrange. As well as being a member of the IOT, Ramsey was also a high-ranking member of the Thelemic magical order, the Caliphate OTO.

Ramsey Dukes was the antithesis of the stereotypical Chaos magician: a retired school teacher in his early fifties with a passion for motorcycles, he lived in an idyllic countryside cottage (where I interviewed him). His mother lived in a nearby village - in-between caring for her, Ramsey spent his time writing and was in popular demand as a speaker at magical and neo-pagan conferences. At the time he was unmarried, but planned to move down to London where his fiancée lived.

When I questioned him about his perception of the relationship between Chaos magick, neo-paganism and the New Age, he replied:

“If you compare Austin Spare’s method, with the sort of [New Age] affirmation thing...you know Austin Spare said “some people would say ‘I’m a genius’ and by their saying it they show they’re not”, otherwise its a very dumb affirmation, you know, ““I am great, I am great” etc.”. But it’s interesting to me the way of refining that system of affirmation, where you write it down again and again and again very quickly and the mind comes up with the objections: “I’m a great financier, I’m a great financier, I’m a great financier” - no I’m not, I broke as anything. You address that objection that came up from out of your mind - I’m broke doesn’t mean I’m not a great financier, it just means I haven’t thought about why I’m broke, and until you work that one out, and then you go back to, you sort of refine it, you slightly change it: “I have the potential to be a great financier”...this actually addresses Austin Spare’s objection, and you can put the two together and you can make your sigilised wish more pointed. In other words you want to look at some of the things you know you’ve been doing”.

In this he seemed to concur with Mat’s view concerning the practical aspects of sorcery and the demonic - namely, that they involve the magician in a process of self-analysis. Similarly, Ramsey believed that one of the most effective ways of “working with the self” was to personify the forces acting upon the magician’s life:



“One way you could look at it is that a magician personifies a problem in order to deal with it and I’d say that I’d read recently confirmation that the idea that the brain’s most rapid development was through the social demands, the need to interact with other human beings so that you’ve got enormous brain capacity for dealing with the most complex things in our environment which are human beings, and so if you personify a problem, in a sense you’re tapping the biggest resource you’ve got in your brain. Whereas if you refuse to personify a problem and say it must be a simple mechanism, you’re actually reducing the processing power which you’re applying to the problem...it’s difficult to give very sensible examples so if for instance a car doesn’t start then on the whole that’s mechanical, but the worse thing is if it’s an intermittent problem - this is when it becomes complex, and sometimes it starts and sometimes it doesn’t. Now, if I personify a car which isn’t too difficult to do and I say “come on old thing, why is it you’re going temperamental?” I might notice something like it doesn’t start when I’m very angry, which if I used a mechanistic model I wouldn’t be allowed to notice that, it would be outside of the framework of observation, and that means I’ve immediately got an approach - I can go to the car and say “come on old dear, you know, I’m in quite a good mood today” and it starts, you see. Okay, so I’ve got a solution, but you might say that’s a bit shallow, but it doesn’t stop me from then saying “why does it know I’m angry?” and then I might notice that actually when I’m angry I get in the car and slam the door hard and I turn the key very viciously and possibly, that might be shaking a loose contact you see, or something like that. So in other words, personifying not only brings up new possibilities of solving a problem, it doesn’t stop one from going on and analysing later. So I argue that potentially the complex problems like, you know, “why is my life running down hill?” - to personify it and say a demon is in my life is bringing a lot of mental resources, attacking that problem at a much more subtle level than if one is trying to find some simple mechanism...So that is a definition of magick which really springs from this particular thing as to whether one personifies problems and calls them demons rather than trying to find the mechanism...calling it a demon and looking at it as something as complex as a thinking entity...allows one much more subtlety and power in one’s analysis of what is going on.”

However, Ramsey claimed that this did not necessarily imply a simple psychological reductionism:

“A person who is a traditional occultist might then say to me, “ah so you’re saying that there aren’t actually any real spirits or demons or fairies, what it is that we project, we personify, as a way of coping with problems”. My answer to that is that actually I don’t see a distinction, because I don’t see that we ourselves need be anything other than complex, evolved systems which have evolved consciousness so that when

I speak to Justin, I'm actually not being a psychopath, I've made the decision that he has probably got a human mind like me and I'm allowing there to be a demon of Justin that I'm addressing, you see, and I'm dealing with the complexity of Justin by making the same assumption that I'm saying you could make to my car or to anything else, and responses I get seem to fit that okay. Another example is that in my dreams I converse with beings, other people. When I've experimented with lucid dreamings, I've been able to apply the Turing test. In other words, I know I'm dreaming and I'm speaking to someone, and I tell myself "is this an intelligent person? Does it seem to have a conscious mind?", and it passes the Turing test. In other words I believe that the entities I meet in my dreams are spirits, they are actually conscious entities I'm addressing, and they're actually contained in my own mind. So...this process of personifying, I'm not actually laying down the law as to whether it means I'm projecting something which isn't there, because in a sense I think that, you know, that's all I do for any other human being. To me it's just as real, or I'm allowing it to be just as real".

Thus, it is also important to recognise that for Chaos magicians, the ontological status of demons and other "non-empirical forces" is variable and ambiguous - they accept that demons, spirits or entities may also represent external forces which maintain an autonomous existence beyond the confines of the human mind.

### **Rob & Damien: The (Non-) Reality of Spirits**

During 2000, Rob had begun to experience serious problems with his health; he attributed this to the Haitian *loa* which he had been evoking in a series of magical experiments as part of his investigation of the Voudou "paradigm". Just before the onset of his illness, Rob had (for a variety of reasons) been seeking to evoke the *loa* Baron Carrefour who, according to Maya Deren,

"may loose upon the world the daemons of ill chance, misfortune and deliberate, unjust destruction...Carrefour is huge and straight and vigorous, a man in the prime of his life...Every muscle of the shoulders bulges with strength. No one whispers or smiles in his presence" (Deren 1953: 101).

Rob also saw Carrefour as a kind of gatekeeper or, in his words, a "bouncer", who could be called upon to guard particular places - and those intruding into such places were likely to incur Carrefour's wrath. Rob thus believed that his illness was



the result of either inadvertently offending or in some way having “invaded the personal space” of the Baron. Despite making various offerings soon after the onset of his illness, Rob found that nothing seemed to placate Carrefour. He then decided to call upon Papa Legba to intercede on his behalf. Legba is often depicted as a lame old man, and is the *loa* who traditionally mediates between the world of human beings and that of the spirits or *les Invisibles*. Rob told me that the following morning, he was surprised to see two Afro-Caribbean men arguing outside his house; one of the men was muscular and burly, the other elderly and resting on a walking stick: Baron Carrefour and Papa Legba. Although Rob’s condition did not noticeably improve after this brief encounter with the *loa*, he clearly believed that this was at least a symbolic if not literal manifestation of his magic - that Legba was interceding on his behalf. Although Chaos magicians generally treat belief in arbitrary and sometimes abstract ways, they often “believe” in both the efficacy of their magic and the fundamental “reality” of the forces they deal with. In a talk Rob gave for the South-East London Folklore Society (a neo-pagan forum held in Greenwich), he claimed that his experience with the Voudou pantheon had led him to believe that Chaos magicians could not treat gods and spirits simply as “fictions”. An argument on his doorstep became replete with powerful and personally-significant symbolism, and became an affirmation of his magical beliefs; as a consequence, his later dealings with the *loa* were charged with a much greater degree of respect. Similar views were expressed by other Chaos magicians: some members of the Haunters of the Dark, who I became involved with during 1999, began exploring a wholly “fictional” belief system, but quickly came to accept that the forces and entities they were dealing with as part of this system were “real” in an objective and tangible sense.

However, in the eclectic world of Chaos magick, this is not always the case. Damien - a member of both the IOU and the Haunters of the Dark, and a close friend of Rob - felt differently. In a talk presented at Talking Stick (well over a year after Rob’s experiences), Damien stated that “gods and goddesses do not, in operational terms, exist”. He also went on to question the utility of magic: “Is it possible for magic to achieve anything at all other than make us feel better about

ourselves?”. Damien spoke of a friend who had conducted a ritual to bring about the end of the Gulf War - a few days later, the ground war came to an end,

“but the British and Americans continued to bomb Iraq, and the crisis remains unresolved. Magic sometimes seems so petty - its a hobby, not a purpose. There are much more effective methods of trying to change things than magic...I don’t want to be spiral dancing to cure Aunt Bessie’s flu - there are medicines for that”

Although he considered himself “pagan” in believing that the Earth should be honoured as the biosphere which supports human life, he was critical of the way that pagans had misinterpreted James Lovelock’s “Gaia” theory, and was strongly opposed to (what he perceived as) their anthropomorphic, personified view of nature. In criticising neo-paganism for being overly attached to tradition, he reiterated the Chaos magical view of the processual nature of magic: “the one direction you cannot go is back. Once any system becomes static, it disintegrates - magic is a process and not a thing in itself”. He also went on to enunciate the importance of magical self-transformation: “adopting different gods can amount to nothing more than a change of scenery if you yourself do not change in fundamental ways”. For Damien, what was at stake was not, therefore, the reality of spirits, but rather the extent to which belief in them could transform the self. Even though they may hold divergent views, Chaos magicians nonetheless pursue common goals

### **Sorcery and Metamorphosis**

Phil Hine describes trance or *gnosis* as causing experiencers “to not only “see” the world in a different way, *but to act in the light of that illumination...*A momentary flash of gnosis may shatter our beliefs, or support our suspicions” (Hine 1995: 179, my emphasis); or as the Chaos magician Robert Williams suggests,

“Once you begin to work with Chaos magic you will discover that it really does work, that is to say, you will realize that you are actually capable of manipulating your outer existence as well as your internal reality. When you reach this point, the big question will become: “Now that I can change, what am I going to change to?” This issue is more than just a



philosophical exploration; it becomes an actuality that has to be faced” (Williams 1996: 181 - 182).

Sorcery practices, whilst superficially representing a vulgar desire for instrumental mastery over the world, may also be seen to involve the practitioner in a particular existential orientation<sup>5</sup>, wherein the trajectory of the magician’s life is in accord with the trajectory of the cosmos-at-large. Significantly, practitioners commonly reported that, as they became more proficient in the practices and techniques which constitute Chaos magick, things would begin to “fall into place” - desired outcomes were seen to occur without the need to make recourse to acts of sorcery in order to facilitate those outcomes. This experience is often interpreted as the magician having become attuned to the magical inertia of the cosmos. Here, the success of sorcery reiterates the Hermetic dictum “as above, so below” or the merging of microcosmic and macrocosmic intentionalities.

For Rick, the experience of magic as something which could actually achieve empirical results was, he claimed, instrumental in enabling him to change his own life. Rick told me that, at the time he first encountered Chaos magick, he was homeless. His marginal status meant that he became prone to states of self-pitying depression, and he drank heavily as a result. It was the seeming ability to alter his experience of reality through sorcery which subsequently caused Rick to reassess both his own sense of control over his role and position in life, and the image that he had come to accept of himself as a socially marginal entity. The apparent success of his sorcery conferred upon him a sense of empowerment and self-worth; this in turn led him to re-think his life situation. His confidence grew and he found a job; later he met Jenna, with whom he eventually set up home. He also had intense imaginal experiences during states of *gnosis*, which led him to developed an interest in the visionary content of trance and dream-states. This revitalised his own neglected artistic talent as he attempted to put these visions to paper - a process which he used to exorcise a number of his own personal “demons”. In fact, the very last time I saw him (late in 2001) he was close to completing a degree in Fine Art.

---

<sup>5</sup> See for example Kapferer’s (1995) analysis of Sinhalese sorcery practices.

In other respects, success in sorcery may also lead the practitioner to a reassessment of his or her notions of morality and responsibility due to the power they see themselves as wielding (Hine 1995: 80). Although Chaos magicians often do make recourse to malicious forms of magic (see chapter three), my experience was that Chaos magical cursing or “knacking” tended to be along the lines of “causing three months minor bad luck”, rather than attempting to cause actual physical harm. For example, Temple Discordia once decided to curse two individuals who had left the IOT after claiming that they no longer believed in magic. However, the curse was not meant to cause physical harm, but to undermine the victims’ claims by causing them to experience an undeniably magical or paranormal event. In another instance, a Chaos magician of my acquaintance considered casting a death curse on a particular individual; however the fact that this might prove effective made him reconsider his use of magical power. Far from being devoid of ethical and transformative elements, sorcery practices may cause practitioners to engage in self-analytical and socialising processes which can prompt personal-transformations, and from which a personal sense of morality is evolved or reaffirmed.

Underlying the instrumental ends of their practices, Chaos magicians seek uncertainty and change through forces that motivate *metamorphosis* or self-transformation, so that the anxiety-producing uncertainties of late modernity become naturalised as an intrinsic condition of the self.

The practice of sorcery - often seen as the defining aspect of Chaos magick - is therefore intrinsically linked to a quest for wholeness and integration with the “postmodern” flux and flow of the magician’s life-world. However, it is trance or *gnosis* - rather than sorcery *per se* - which facilitates this entrance into, or union with, the otherworld of Chaos. The experiential dimension of trance in the context of sorcery - combined with the ontological affirmation of Chaos which successful results can yield - may transform practitioners’ orientation to the world: the seeming indeterminacy and confusion of life in a modern, urban environment is no longer seen as alienating, but becomes a source of empowerment and potential liberation.



Thus, rather than rejecting change, Chaos magicians draw upon popular science to legitimise a positively-valued and spiritualised conception of change as a source of spontaneous creativity - an experience of wholeness which is processual and in a constant state of “becoming” rather than “being”. This experience is approached (as indicated in chapter three and discussed in the following section) through a shamanic connection with the fluid otherworld of Chaos - the conception of which has been influenced by Taoist and Gnostic ideas.

### **Part 3 - Chaos, Postmodernity, and Wholeness**

#### **Chaos Magick as “Postmodern Shamanism”**

The ideology pursued by the IOT (and shared by many other Chaos magicians) holds that Chaos magick is primarily concerned with fostering change and “spiritual evolution” throughout the human species. This ideology is embedded in the concepts of “Chaotopia” and the “Fifth Aeon” or “PandaemonAeon” - congruent terms indicating the emergence of a new “aeon”. In Western magical historiography, an aeon is an index of magical, cosmological time. Each new aeon - heralded by certain astrological conjunctions - represents a spiritual zeitgeist lasting approximately two-thousand years. The idea has become popular within the Western magical subculture through the influence of Crowley who believed that humankind was entering the new “aeon of Horus”.

In the writings of Chaos magicians such as Carroll, Hine and Dave Lee, human culture is seen to have evolved through a cycle of five aeons, each of which are characterised in terms of dominant forms of belief. In chronological order, the first four aeons are: Shamanic, Pagan, Monotheistic, and Atheistic. Chaos magick itself represents the characteristic spirituality of the “PanDaemonAeon” or “Chaotopia” - the emergent fifth aeon. Importantly, Carroll contends that the IOT is one of the principle instruments in facilitating widespread spiritual and cultural transformation: the organisation represents a “psychohistoric force in the battle for the aeon” (Carroll 1992: 193), and stands in opposition to the forces of orthodoxy and authoritarianism which seek to delimit humanity’s potential for psychic and

spiritual evolution (Carroll 1987: 88-91; 113-115). Hine, however, views this “battle” in ambivalent terms - not as conflict but the “interplay” of the two “demonic” forces of Baphomet and Choronzon<sup>6</sup>:

“Baphomet is the encapsulation of all tendencies to change, growth and movement...Choronzon...is the Spectacle - the hydra-headed beast spreading its tentacles across the world through the web of television, advertising, and all means of transmitting information. Choronzon endlessly spawns and replicates desires as forms - styles, revolutions, fashions, identities; manifesting fears and desires until they are “more real than real”. Choronzon creates and supports the illusion of the single ego, which maintains itself by erecting thresholds and boundaries, rejecting everything which does not fit a simplified construct” (1996b: 173-174).

The Chaos magician Dave Lee defines the millenarian ideal of Chaotopia as being created from the “raw material” of “postmodern” culture (Lee 1997: 175-6) - in Hine’s terms, the interplay between “Baphomet” and “Choronzon”. Similar to Hine, Lee also describes Chaotopia in ambivalent terms: it is “neither Utopia nor its opposite. It is what Austin Spare called ‘the chaos of the normal’, seen through an illuminated eye, the eye of the sorcerer” (Lee 1997: ix). In its ambivalence or indeterminacy, Chaotopia is also an “inbetween” space: it is the magician’s realisation of the immanence of *kia* in that state which Austin Spare termed the “Neither-Neither”, or “the state where the mind has passed beyond conception, it cannot be balanced, since it implies only itself” (Spare 1913: 17) and where “there is no duality” (Spare 1913: 33). For Chaos magicians, the illuminated eye is that which sees beyond the arbitrary nature of those dualistic distinctions which separate the forces of “being” and “non-being” which the term “Chaos” encapsulates as a totality. Thus, in discussing the “hyper-real”, inbetween space which the HOD called “the Ghooric Zone”, Dane asked rhetorically:

“Could it be that perhaps this existence / non-existence thing is part of the whole [...] gnosis? In that they [i.e. the inhabitants of the Ghooric Zone] are beyond the “existence / non-existence” categorisation thing altogether? Surely in the hyper-reality [of the Ghooric Zone]...terms like “existence”

---

<sup>6</sup> Aleister Crowley famously allowed himself to become possessed by Choronzon (King 1977: 57-59; Regardie 1989: 401-410), a demonic entity attributed to the powers of dissolution.



and “non-existence” are pretty much a meaningless bunch of wank...that which doesn't live cannot die and exists as a nightmare or dream “exists””.

These varied notions of the erasure, melding or interplay of dualistic categories are also reflected in the use of the term “Thanateros” in the IOT's name<sup>7</sup>, which incorporates the Freudian life and death principles, or “the Light” (Eros, Baphomet, or the power of creation) and “the Dark” (Thanatos, Choronzon, or the power of dissolution). For Carroll (1987: 96), these dualistic forces ultimately become unified within the magician, who “aims to become a center of creation and destruction himself, a living manifestation of the Chaos force within the realm of duality” (Carroll 1987: 96).

Notional sites such as Chaotopia or the Ghooric Zone attempt to challenge or dissolve the hierarchical distinctions established within the Enlightenment project of modernity - for practitioners, such sites are reflective of an “alternative” and “postmodern” condition. According to Douglas Kellner (1992), this condition is one in which the

“autonomous, self-constituting subject that was the achievement of modern individuals, of a culture of individualism, is fragmenting and disappearing, owing to the social processes and the levelling of individuality in a rationalized, bureaucratized, medialized, and consumerized mass society” (Kellner 1992: 142).

Later in this section, I suggest that, for Chaos magicians, the “otherworld” is conceptualised as a shifting realm replete with possibilities, and is that which forms the ontological basis of the manifest, “postmodern” world. In light of this, the “postmodern” experience to which Kellner points - of fragmenting selves and the abnegation of a coherent locus of identity - was sometimes expressed (albeit obliquely) in Chaos magicians' experiences of trance and possession. The following transcript is taken from an occasion in 2001 when Dane and Damien both entered into the Ghooric Zone in search of the Old Ones - a group of chaotic entities whose indeterminate existence formed the wellspring of the phenomenal world:

Dane: They give us our selves.  
 Damien: They give us our mortality, our selves are our mortality.  
 Dane: They free us from the lie of self.  
 Damien: The lie of self is the lie of non-mortality.  
 Dane: Mortality and non-mortality pertain to the self, the words mean nothing to the dead gods who do not live and therefore cannot die...because they do not live or die, these words mean nothing.  
 Damien: That does not make the self dead, and cannot die. That does not make the self that which eternal dreams and is dead but does not die.  
 Dane: Because of the waves crashing.  
 Damien: The waves that crash are not the self. The waves that crash are the echoes of dead gods.  
 Dane: And we are the sounds?  
 Damien: We are the ripple, we are the scum that washes ashore. We are the foam, the sputum.  
 Dane: We are dead gods?  
 Damien: We are the remains of dead gods. We are made from the carbon of dead gods. The dead gods that fossilised. We are of their bodies, we are of their forms but we are not them.  
 Dane: The dead gods were the dead gods are the dead gods shall be.  
 Damien: Shall they be dead gods or shall they be new gods?  
 Dane: This is the question.  
 Damien: And what is the answer?  
 Dane: What is an answer to a dead god?

Here, the self is seemingly defined as the detritus of “dead gods”, which Dane defined (see chapter two) as those habitual beliefs, roles and behaviours which we mistakenly treat as a core self or identity. According to Kellner, as both the subject and its locus of meaning become fractured and decentred under the condition of postmodernity, “Anxiety...becomes a constituent experience of the modern self.” (Kellner 1992: 142). The Satanist Rex Monday suggests that, in response to this,

“Chaos Magic exponents seem to be advocating a “go with the flow” mentality...They offer no way out of the Postmodern cultural decay, only total immersion in the mirage.” (Monday n.d.a.: 2)

This view does highlight an important point: that an attempt to mediate the “postmodern” experience of anxiety lies at the root of Chaos magical practices.

---

<sup>7</sup> I.e., The Illuminates of Thanateros.



Damien, for example, described how he often situated himself at the centre of the “chaos” which constitutes the contemporary consumer landscape by

visualising all things around me (both animate and inanimate) merely as brief tangible manifestations of an endless swirling primordial chaos with myself in the centre...Good to do whilst walking down the street or shopping or something like that.

The Chaos magician Ed Richardson also suggests that:

“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 organized religion...Magick stands to benefit from many of the effects of post-modernity...As post-modernity implies a depthlessness we are free to drop ideas or paradigms which are of no more use to us. This is all useful in the process of deconstructing the self...By fragmenting the self and being selves instead we are open to change and therefore more adaptable” (Richardson 1999: 5-6)

A similar notion is arguably articulated in the question posed at the end of Dane and Damien’s dialogic exploration of the Ghooric Zone: “shall they be dead gods or shall they be new gods?”. Ultimately, it is through continual shedding and restructuring of “dead gods” - those components which constitute the illusion of an intractable self - that Chaos magick attempts to answer this question; in doing so, it also constitutes itself as a strategy for adapting to and subverting the confusing, anomic experience of “postmodernity”.

The encounter with the “postmodern” otherworlds of the Ghooric Zone or “Chaotopia” - described as “the realm of manifestation of all desire” (Lee & Strutz 1993) - adds the weight of supernatural legitimacy to the Chaos magical ethos. Rather than resisting the mystifying effects of the spectacle, these sort of ecstatic and imaginal journeyings appear to actively engage with (rather than reject) the dissonance, fluidity and fragmentation of late modernity.

As a modality of neo-shamanic practice, Chaos magick represents a body of “archaic” techniques for accessing this otherworld. Carroll, for example, argues that Chaos magick involves the rediscovery of “shamanic knowledge and power”

(Carroll 1987: 169), situating shamanism as the archaic or “pre-modern” origins of Chaos magick (Carroll 1987: 8). But such contact and communication with the otherworld occurs in order that the practitioner may come to understand the underlying patterns of a late modern or postmodern reality: Chaos magick represents a form of “postmodern shamanism” (Siobhan Houston quoted in Sutcliffe 1995: 127) through which to translate that into a pattern of living in the world (MacLellan 1995: 142-143):

There exists, therefore, a complex (and sometimes cyclical) arrangement of the pre-modern, the modern, and the postmodern within Chaos magick (Harms 1999: 9). Thus, the fifth, emergent aeon “represents a return to the consciousness of the first [shamanic] aeon but in a higher form” (Carroll 1987: 89) wherein “[t]he techniques of magic will be the hypersciences of the future. The origins of these arts lies...is to be found in Shamanistic cultures” (Carroll 1987: 111)<sup>8</sup>. Similarly, the *Templum Nigri Solis* (1996) - a coterie of Australian Chaos magicians - claim that the emergence of new information technologies has provided a theoretical model for reframing cosmology in terms of a cybernetics (see also Frater U.D. 1996); in adopting this information model, Chaos magicians have provided a “mirror of the Shamanic Age, where knowledge was free to those who wished to reach out and interface with it directly” (*Templum Nigri Solis* 1996: 207). In a cultural milieu increasingly dominated by the internet, Chaos magick’s appeal lies in its embracing of ideas such as “techno-shamanism”, “virtual magic” and “cyber-sorcery”. Here, cyberspace and technological embodiment are seen to have magical potential in both eroding and expanding the boundaries of the self: through the internet, the magician may become a non-localised entity which, with shamanic aplomb, is able to shapeshift and explore new modalities of consciousness and identity. However, it was my experience that these notions remained firmly embedded in the realm of theoretical possibility than practical reality: amongst the Chaos magicians I worked with, new information technologies were rarely used for

---

<sup>8</sup> Nevill Drury (1982: 77-81) also considers the cosmology and magical practices developed by Austin Spare - the founding father of Chaos magic - to be firmly grounded in the shamanic tradition; see also Vries (1992),



explicitly “magical” purposes, but simply as a means of communication (i.e. e-mail) or as a source of information (i.e. the internet).

Comparisons between Chaos magick and non-Western shamanic practices are not, however, unproblematic. In her study of New Age shamanism in the United Kingdom, Merete Jakobsen (1999: 203) found that neo-shamans were often members of the caring or therapeutic professions; they saw shamanic practice as concerned with healing, and preferred to think of entering into relationships with otherworldly spirits rather than attaining mastery over them (1999: 186, 218-221). This conception of shamanism is, as Jakobsen argues, not entirely compatible with that found in contexts such as Greenland, where shamans often enter into conflict with morally ambiguous or malevolent spirits in order to gain control of a dangerous environment. As a consequence, neo-pagan and New Age conceptions of shamanism have often presented a romanticised view of indigenous practices, ignoring the violence and mistrust implicit in the “ambiguities of the shaman’s role” (Forbes Brown 1989: 8). Furthermore, Jane Atkinson (1992) has problematised the term “shamanism” (as used by both anthropologists and New Agers) as a constructed category - an ideal type which does not accurately reflect the distinctiveness and multiplicity of indigenous beliefs and practices defined as “shamanic”.

However, Chaos magical practice does echo elements of shamanic practices as defined by I. M. Lewis (1971), such as the mastery of spirits or “demons”, and entrance into controlled trance states. Other “shamanic” modalities of Chaos magick (and the Western magical tradition as a whole) involve: encounters with otherworldly, imaginal realms replete with rich mental imagery; interactions with spiritual entities through lucid dreaming and trance; the creation of “fetches” in the form of “artificial” entities and spirit guides drawn from the unconscious of the magician; and shapeshifting as a modality of self-transformation.

Chaos magicians also occasionally use hallucinogenic drugs in order to facilitate “chemognosis” (Carroll 1987: 147-150) although, as mentioned in the introductory chapter, this tends to occur on an individual rather than group basis. Thus, at a lecture given at the Ananke symposium at Conway Hall in April 1999, the Chaos

magician Dave Lee talked about the relationship between the ingestion of psychedelics in a variety of indigenous shamanic contexts, and their application in modern magic for healing, achieving inspirational states, and as a “microscope onto consciousness” to be used in the reflexive transformation of the self. He did, however, qualify this by suggesting that drugs should be used judiciously within a magical context, as they tended to confound the magical will. Other Chaos magicians saw their involvement in the sado-masochistic subculture as having a magical or shamanic relevance - pain induction being a way of achieving “endorphin highs” or a “heavenly state”.

Susan Greenwood (2000) points out that one of the main “shamanic” aspects of the contemporary magical subculture lies in the way magic facilitates encounters with the otherworld through altered states of consciousness. For Chaos magicians, the merging of the individual will or intentionality with that of Chaos in trance or *gnosis* is the process by which practitioners enter a shamanic mode of consciousness in which, according to neo-shaman Gordon McLellan (1995), is revealed the shaman’s “connection to the pulse of the...world in all the running stream of change” (MacLellan 1995: 145); Phil Hine describes this as the projection of the magician into the mythic time of the “Pandemonaeon - a future which seethes with possibilities, any of which may become manifest, according to individual will and prowess” (Hine 1993: 26).

Another example of how Chaos magicians approach this experience of the “postmodern” otherworld occurred in July 1998 when Julie - one of the Chaos magicians involved in the Black Mass - presented a talk on *kia* at a public IOT symposium held at Conway Hall in central London. During her presentation, Julie referred to *kia* as the *fluid ego* - the identity-forming mechanism which exists in the human psyche but which has its ultimate origins in Chaos. She emphasised the *inbetweenness* of the fluid ego, that it was not open to rational analysis and attempted to demonstrate the peculiarities of *kia* experientially, by leading the audience in a pathworking exercise. We were asked to relax and close our eyes, and to imagine ourselves floating in a kind of vertiginous nothingness; here, we were buffeted and tossed uncontrollably by the “black winds of unmanifest Chaos”. She



encouraged us to let go of the fear of ego-loss, and to allow our sense of self to be moulded at whim by Chaos. Afterwards, she told the audience that the key to successful magic was to achieve the realisation that our intractable sense of self was illusory - that magicians had to allow their sense of personal identity to become mutable in the face of the rapidly changing world they live in. Here, the two conceptual levels of selfhood outlined in chapter three can be seen as dialectically coexistent within Chaos magicians' view of modernity. It is *kia* or Chaos which ultimately underlies and powers the conglomeration or colony of multiple selves and identities underpinning the "illusion" of an egoic self<sup>9</sup>. Practitioners are encouraged to uncover "the void at the core of an identity which is freely able to move into any desired set of social relations, without becoming trapped or identified entirely within them" (Hine 1996a: 127-128) - enabling *kia* to manifest the full range of its potential within the "dualistic" realm of empirical reality. Again, this gives credence to the view that the Chaos magical mindset is not simply *contra* - but evidences an ambivalent approach - to modernity: Chaos magicians like Dane recognised that they were "in the world, but not of the world"; similarly a Chaos magician going by the magical name of Frater Abaddon suggested that the goal of magic was "to manipulate and experience the world without becoming caught up in it". Thus, while there is a desire to transcend the limitations of one's social conditioning, Chaos magicians also recognise the need to adapt to the world (by negotiating with one's "daemons", and through *metamorphosis*) or at least to manipulate, through sorcery, the consumerist spectacle in ways which fulfil one's own wants and desires.

In the following section, I examine these notions of wholeness and ecstatic union with Chaos in relation to the interpenetration of Taoist concepts within the cosmology of Chaos magick. Following this, I examine this quest for wholeness in terms of the "Gnostic" sensibility informing Chaos magick. However, reiterating Dane and Frater Abaddon's comments above (and points made in chapter one), I

---

<sup>9</sup> Dave Lee draws a distinction between "classical mind" and "quantum mind", the latter of which he identifies with *Kia* (Lee 1997: 147): "Classical mind" is a scientific model of the mind, in which memory and identity are creations of the brain's neural circuitry; "quantum mind" is non-localised "mystical" consciousness.

show that this quest does not represent a search for otherworldly transcendence, but the realisation of wholeness as that which is immanent within the world.

### **“The Tao of Chaos”: Chaos as an Ontological Signifier**

The term “Chaos” is generally used by Chaos magicians to signify an *a priori*, mindless, impersonal and inchoate force. Due to its intangible nature, this “foundational” reality is often represented by practitioners in highly obscurantist and mystical terms: thus Dane described it as

“where the mind that is not mind is. It is outside the words, and beneath it is the sound which becomes the words. The form of words slice the spaces into form and the nothingness takes form and we see what we see”.

In effect, the function of language is to structure the experience of Chaos and make it comprehensible to human minds. The linearity of language only refracts - but can never give a concrete expression to - the formless “nothingness” that is Chaos. Thus, to treat Chaos as a concrete thing-in-itself is, in Derrida’s (1974: 11) terms, to mistake the signifier for some essential meaning or “thing”. Nonetheless, the term “Chaos” is often used as an analytical tool to signify the nominal supramundane ontological foundation underlying the perceived structure and order of the phenomenal world:

“The “thing” responsible for the origin and continued action of events is called *Chaos* by magicians. It could as well be called *God* or *Tao*, but the name *Chaos* is virtually meaningless, and free from the childish, anthropomorphic ideas of religion.” (Carroll 1987: 28).

Carroll’s comparison of Chaos with Tao is a significant move in delineating the conceptual contours of Chaos. In 1978, Carroll and Ray Sherwin placed a public notice of the formation of a Chaos magical order - the “Illuminates of Thanateros” - in the neo-pagan journal *The New Equinox*, where the influence of Taoism is made relatively explicit: “The IOT represents a fusion of Thelemic Magick, Tantra, The Sorceries of Zos [Austin Spare] and Tao” (Carroll & Sherwin n.d.a.: 1). This



Taoist conception is also mirrored in Austin Spare's own terms: "[o]f name it has no need, to designate, I call it Kia - I dare not claim it as myself. The Kia which can be expressed by conceivable ideas, is not the eternal Kia" (Spare 1913: 7).

The Chinese cosmological concept of Tao represents the eternal, unconditioned and indescribable "source", uncreated and without prior cause. It does not create because it is without purpose or intentionality, but is the "animating principle" within all forms that are themselves latent in Tao (Palmer 1991: 3-5, Cooper 1972: 14). Tao underpins a transitory vision of the phenomenal world as impermanent and in a state of perpetual flux (Cooper 1972: 16-17) - a notion which is strongly manifest in Carroll's conception of Chaos. The Taoist response to this is *wu wei* - the path of non-action or the "watercourse way", in which harmonious ideal of human action should be effortless, spontaneous, and involuntary (Cooper 1972: 78) - comparable to flow of water which carves a path through the most resistant materials (Welch 1957: 35).

Chaos magick, like Taoism, emphasises the "natural flow" of things, of attunement with the flux of the cosmos as manifest within the magician's own life. This is particularly evident in the central place occupied by magical trance in Chaos magick, by which the practitioner seeks to operationalise the "magical will", and thus realise his or her ontological identity with the inchoate, fluctuating force of Chaos or *Kia* - as in Julie's notion of the *fluid ego*, and in Damien's everyday practice of visualising himself at the centre of swirling Chaos whilst shopping or walking, described above.

Many of these ideas surrounding a harmonious attunement to Chaos were also articulated by Jason who, when I interviewed him (in July 2000), was about to embark on a foundation course in Art and Design at a London college. He told me of his initial experiences in magic at the age of thirteen, when he and a friend decided to invoke Baphomet into one another in an ad-hoc ritual, based on entries from Doreen Valiente's (1973) popular book *An A to Z of Witchcraft Past and Present*. This was partly as a result of experiences of rejection and harassment at the Catholic school they both attended, largely due to their perceived status as "outsiders" amongst the other pupils (see chapter one). At this point, Jason began to

feel that Christianity, in practice if not in principle, was hypocritical: the notion of Christian forgiveness seemed completely absent in his treatment at the hands of fellow pupils - treatment that was, he felt, also implicitly condoned by his teachers.

Jason believed that by the very act of practising magic,

“you are putting yourself on the outside of society, once you start down that road you know that you’re never going to fit back in again, you know that there is just no way you can go back”.

His later experiences of Chaos magick had also shown him that

“The universe is in chaos, and we are part of that, we are part of that ever evolving thing...we’re changing all the time, we’re constantly mutating into something else...I’m not the same person I was ten days ago, or ten hours ago or ten minutes ago...If you see things as constantly evolving and changing and mutating, how can there be something that is in the middle of that that is “true”, that is unchanging...if I say that it is my true will to be an artist forever, that is such a defining thing. How can that possibly mutate and grow into something else?...The will of the universe is to shift and change and morph and grow, so why should we be fixed, because that would not be living in harmony with the rest of the universe, seeing it as one big fractal.”

Wholeness, through identification of the magical will with Chaos is, therefore, a positive goal; Chaos, for many practitioners, is “good chaos” (Lloyd Smith 1996: 36) - a space for spontaneity, growth, change and creativity. In light of the “postmodern” attributes and goals of Chaos magick, it also represents a site where

“the subject has disintegrated into a flux of euphoric intensities, fragmented and disconnected, and that the decentred postmodern self no longer experiences anxiety...and no longer possesses the depths, substantiality, and coherence that was the ideal and occasional achievement of the modern self” (Kellner 1992: 144)

Jason also went on to reaffirm the positive content of his magical experiences with Chaos, claiming that they had broadened his awareness - of himself, his environment, and the people around him:



“I think I’ve come to a better understanding of myself. I don’t feel so swamped by things, when things do go wrong. Also, I think I have a wider perception of things - for example, if I look at a plant, I don’t see the plant and its roots and its leaves, I see the atoms in the plant moving about, so its almost like a way of tapping into beyond what you see already - you have more an understanding of your own universe, and I think it also helps you to have more an understanding of other people... you realise when you start doing magick that that is only your perception, you’re changing your universe...I think it helps you to understand that everyone does have their own perception, and everything is perception, and that enables you to be a little less dogmatic about other people”.

Jason’s comments evidence elements of shamanic visionary consciousness along with the secularised view of magic that is typical of Chaos magicians - of being able to see beyond into the otherwise intangible world of atomic forces which lie behind our sense of the real. These comments also stand in stark contrast to Jason’s earlier statement that the practice of magic is alienating. Such views are not, I suggest, necessarily contradictory. Magic is only alienating in that it distances the magician from the mores of the wider society - mores that are themselves perceived as sources of alienation in imposing artificial constraints upon the self.

As Jason’s words indicate, the notion of the magical will is (like *wu wei*) distinct from the notion of will as rational intentionality. Richard Sutcliffe suggests, therefore, that “Left-Hand Path” traditions such as Chaos magick are “less about exerting one’s egoism than about transcending the ego in order to align oneself with the harmony of the cosmos” (Sutcliffe 1995: 124). For Chaos magicians, the magical will is manifest in the realisation of the practitioner’s identity with that of Chaos: where the magician’s “will becomes the will of the universe in some particular aspect” (Carroll 1987: 55), and is thus “assisted by the momentum of the universe and seems possessed of amazing good luck” (Carroll 1987: 49). The realisation of the magical will is, in this respect, similar to Nietzsche’s notion of the “will to power” as the pervasive and intrinsic property of life that strives for “becoming” and “overcoming” (Nietzsche 1978: 137-138; Morris 1991: 78).

In Taoist cosmological thought, the act of creation arises spontaneously out of the interplay of *yin* and *yang* as the “primordial pair of opposites, a complementary dualism that formed the underlying dynamic of all phenomenon” (Morris 1994:

102). According to Carroll, a similar dualism is encompassed within the intermediary force of *aether*<sup>10</sup>, which is described as “dualistic matter but of a very tenuous, probabilistic nature...by which the “non-existent” chaos translates itself into “real” effects” (Carroll 1987: 29). Dane also defined aether as “dark matter” or that which “provides the matrix of all form”; whilst in the HOD possession ritual cited at the beginning of the chapter, it was described as “the medium through which all matter has context”. Thus the concept of Chaos takes on a dual aspect: as the mystical, ineffable primal void, and as *aether* or “dark matter” - the undifferentiated substance and primogenitor from which the dualistic world of tangible phenomena arises<sup>11</sup>.

### **Gnosis, Kia, and Wholeness**

*Gnosis* is the mystical state in which Chaos becomes embodied as a non-linguistic, experiential reality. The concept of *gnosis* is derived from the historical Gnostic sources which, as discussed in chapter one, have influenced Chaos magick. It is, however, important to disaggregate the concept of *gnosis* from Gnosticism *per se*: within the broader patterns of Western esoteric thought *gnosis* pertains to

“a specific modality of consciousness (the imaginal). But gnosis is far more than just a cognitive process of the intellect; it is ontological knowledge, an activity which involves the whole existential being...Through gnosis, there is a collapse of the traditional subject object dichotomy that has become entrenched in the structure of Western ontology. This is because ‘to know’ through gnosis implies that the

---

<sup>10</sup> The term *aether* is derived from the work of the 19th Century magician Eliphas Levi (1995), who refers to “ether” as “The Great Magical Agent [which] is the fourth emanation of the life-principle” (Levi 1995: 67).

<sup>11</sup> The yin principle is “the primordial chaos of darkness from which the phenomenal world emerged into the light of creation, but this chaos is not to be equated with the Tao, which is pre-chaos” (Cooper 1972: 31), and resembles *aether* in this respect. Chaos magicians have also compared their own cosmological concepts with those of *Nun* in ancient Egypt, and *Absu* in ancient Mesopotamian cosmology (see for example Soror Ennana n.d.a.1, n.d.a.2) - both terms refer to concepts of chaos as a “sea” of undifferentiated matter from which the phenomenal world was formed, and which in various ways also threatened the divine order of the cosmos (Cohn 1993a). A similar concept of chaos is also present in the Platonic and neo-Platonic thought which informed Renaissance Hermetic magic: for Plato, Chaos is conceived of as formless matter which is cosmogenically shaped by a demiurge or divine creator (Plato 1970; see also Armstrong 1947; Russell 1946: 157; Cornford 1937: 202). However, Chaos magick, unlike Platonic philosophy, does not envision an idealised *a priori* realm of transcendental and absolute essences or forms.



knower becomes immersed to the point of identity with that which is known” (Sutcliffe 1995: 119).

For Chaos magicians, *gnosis* is the experience of *kia* as that “unity which appears to the mind to exert the twin functions of will and perception”(Carroll 1987: 28). The term *kia* was originally coined by Austin Spare who, as previously mentioned, described it as “the “Neither-Neither”, the unmodified “I”” (Spare 1913: 7) - a state of consciousness that is totally unmediated by dualistic tendencies of human thought. Nevill Drury defines *kia* as the “undifferentiated void of universal consciousness” (Drury 1982:114), and can therefore only become manifest through the dissolution of the subject-object dichotomy within the mystical state of *gnosis*. *Kia* “confers self awareness but does not seem to consist of anything itself”(Carroll 1987: 28), and is not therefore definable as a core self; it does, however, present itself ontologically as the root of human consciousness from which a sense of self emerges.

From this ontological basis of Chaos, practitioners postulate uncertainty, ambiguity, fragmentation and change as inescapable conditions of being-in-the-world. However, through the unity of will and perception experienced in trance as *kia*, Chaos magicians contend that we are able to shape our own reality through our perception of it (Hawkins 1996: 30). Because both perception and world view are shaped by cultural beliefs, the contours of reality are relative and changeable through the implementation of new belief systems (i.e. “paradigm shifting”).

Susan Greenwood (1996b: 289) defines the Chaoist conception of evil as embedded in the concept of dualism, and there *is* a pronounced Gnostic dualism apparent in Chaos magick. During the period of my fieldwork, the sci-fi film *The Matrix* was released. The film portrays the humanity as unknowingly imprisoned within an hallucinatory existence of “the Matrix”: a virtual reality constructed by artificial computer intelligences who use human bodies as an energy source. Neo, the film’s protagonist, is a socially-disenfranchised computer hacker who begins to question his everyday perceptions of the world, and is eventually “awakened” out of a state of false consciousness by Morpheus (a renegade hacker and “computer terrorist”). Despite its high-tech gloss, the film reiterates ancient Gnostic themes

which resonate powerfully with Chaos magicians' quest for wholeness within the false reality of an alienating existence. Soon after its release, I found that Chaos magicians began to make use of the film's imagery and terminology, referring to their mediated and socially constructed perception of reality as "the Matrix", and comparing their own sense of alienation to Neo's feelings that things are not quite as they seem. In one scene in the film, Neo encounters a group of children who have been taught to distort and control "the Matrix". One boy is bending spoons, seemingly through the power of thought. When Neo asks the boy how he is able to do this, the boy states that it is simply a case of realising that "there is no spoon". This quote became the epithet to a number of e-mails I received from Chaos magicians in the ensuing months. The notion that "there is no spoon" reflects Chaos magicians' belief that the sorcerous manipulation of the conditions of this world are only possible if one is "illuminated" to the illusory nature of the seemingly real. Sorcery can only be effectively enacted once the magician comprehends - through *gnosis* - the underlying rules by which the experience of reality is conditioned.

Some of these ideas were explored in the fourth of the IOU's workshops (held in South London in January 2000), when a Chaos magician called Dean presented a typically hybridised Chaos magical ritual which included elements of Sufi mysticism, Gnostic cosmology, *Star Trek*, and countercultural ideology. Dean told us that many types of Gnostic cosmology were concerned with escaping from the clutches of the Archons - servants of the Demiurge, or the false god whose ignorance brought the world of matter into being. The Archons acted as "prison warders", and attempted to ensure that the "divine spark" remained imprisoned within the corrupt, material cosmos - forever alienated from the wholeness or "divine fullness" of the Pleroma, from whence it came. He likened the Archons to the character "Q" from the *Star Trek* television series - omniscient, all-powerful but ultimately lacking in wisdom. He also compared Gnostic cosmology to contemporary conspiracy theorists' belief that the mass of humanity has fallen unknowingly under the manipulative control of unseen forces. The Archons, he claimed, fed off our emotions, and were intent on maintaining humanity's status as



subdued cattle - typically through the soporific effects of television and the media. He told us that in some Gnostic systems, matter was believed to be constituted from the decaying flesh of dead Archons, so that their essence permeated our being and was the medium by which they were able to control our actions - such as “when you’re watching television and you know that you could be doing something better with your time”. In effect, the Gnostic symbolism was a mythical idiom used to express the degree to which our awareness was mediated by social conditioning and institutionalised systems of social control.

Participants were directed to take it in turns to stand on one leg whilst spinning in a counter-clockwise direction with arms outstretched, whilst chanting “I am the one and only, I am the soul of souls” in order to invoke their magical will. The rest of the group stood in a circle firing toy guns at the person spinning, whilst shouting “Imposter out! Imposter out!”. By attaining *gnosis* through the disorienting spinning, we could cast out the Archons and attain a brief glimpse of our “authentic” selves.

Hildegard Van Hove notes that scholarly exegeses of New Age and neo-pagan notions of transcendence are hindered by an understanding of the term which remains entrenched within Christian theological conceptions. Where Christian theology generally treats materiality as undervalued and subordinate to a non-corporeal higher reality, New Age conceptions of the transcendent view it in terms of “immanence”:

“The first [the transcendent] refers to a reality that transcends everything else, that is outside the world; the second [the immanent] refers to such a reality inside the world. The inside reality is called immanence. To put it in contradictory terms: the Higher reality can be beneath...The problem is solved, however, if we are willing to skip the spatial ‘inside-outside’ connotation. The ‘Higher’ reality is that which transcends and forms the foundation of everything else, without it necessarily being ‘above’ the world. It is higher in importance, not in space. Furthermore, this reality does not have to take the form of a god.” (Van Hove 1996: 189-190)

Although Van Hove recognises the “profane” self-developmental aspects of the New Age, he also views the self-authenticating project of the New Age as “compatible with the quest for higher realities” (Van Hove 1996: 191) - inasmuch

as this authentic self finds its fullest realisation within the “higher reality” which, if spatial concepts are disregarded, is also foundational to and interpenetrative with the phenomenal world.

In this respect, the Gnostic aims of Chaos magick seek only to “transcend” the alienating conditions of modern existence. As a consequence, the “authentic self” iterated in the IOU ritual described above was not meant to stand as one’s “true” or core self; rather, it was treated as a “paradigm” or idiom by which practitioners could enunciate a sense of self unshackled from the highly mediated character of daily life. Through such techniques, Chaos magicians hope to experience the meaningful, foundational wholeness of Chaos. Paradoxically, Chaos magicians seek this wholeness within the very inauthenticity of the “postmodern” spectacle, recognising “postmodernity” as edifying the “Chaoist” approach. Typically, Chaos magick’s bricolage-like appropriation of the media’s dazzling array of images without essence is itself taken as a refraction of the endless and inessential transformations of the underlying Chaos force.

In this chapter, I have delineated the multiple contexts and meanings of Chaos magick. In the first instance, I have shown that Chaos magick is imbued with a distinctly modern character which treats the practice of magic as a rational, theoretical, “scientific” activity - though one which is often couched in the personalised and seemingly “traditional” idiom of the “demonic”. While Chaos magick *is* partly concerned with mastering nature through the use of supernatural power, it is equally directed towards the transformation of the self *via* the mastery of one’s “inner” demons. In this respect, practitioners’ concept of magic has been shaped by popular explications of post-Newtonian science, which stress holism and the processual nature of the cosmos. Importantly, these notions resonate with those holistic ideas embedded in neo-pagan thought - ideas which hold that transformations of the environment necessarily entail transformations of the self.

Thus, in both the second and final sections of the chapter, I have shown that Chaos magick cannot be defined in purely instrumental terms. Even the vulgar pragmatism of sorcery involves, through experience of *gnosis*, a potentially transformational connection with the foundational otherworld of Chaos.



Furthermore, in the final section of the chapter I demonstrate that Chaos magicians are equally concerned with imbuing the cosmos with existential meaning as much as they are concerned with its manipulation. In this respect, I have highlighted a significant overlap between intellectualist and symbolist positions in determining the significance and “rationality” of magical acts - a point which is discussed in more detail in the concluding chapter of the thesis.

Chaos magicians apply secular, internalised conceptions of evil which, as I argue in chapter two, have come to influence Western moral evaluations. In the final section of this chapter, I have suggested that Chaos magicians attribute this evil to those internalised social forces which structure individuals’ habitus (Greenwood 1996b: 286) - forces which alienate them from the transformative wholeness of Chaos. However, Chaos magicians’ conception of evil is also a highly ambivalent one - indeed, the perception of “demonic” entities as intrinsically evil is treated by Chaos magicians as embedded in the moral dualism indicative of the “Old Aeon” of Christianity. This ambivalence is mapped onto practitioners’ quest for meaning and wholeness, which is also shaped by the very causes of their alienation: namely, the belief that late modern or postmodern consumerist spectacle is in some respects a phenomenal reflection of the Chaos force. Although Chaos magical practices are often couched in “traditional” magico-religious idioms (i.e. shamanism), here I have continued to demonstrate the ways in which Chaos magick does in fact represent an outcropping of late modernity.

In the next chapter, I examine the role of the demonic in the context of the spirit possession practices utilised by Chaos magicians. There I show that practitioners’ ambivalent conception of the demonic has important consequences in the way power is both contested and maintained within Chaos magical groups. Following this, I present further evidence of the ways in which this notion of the demonic is deeply indented within the late modern conception and experience of the self.

# **Chapter 5**

## **Embodying Chaos: Possession, Power, and Selfhood.**

### **Part 1 - Demonic Possession: Structuring the Disorderly**

#### **Introduction**

In this chapter, I examine the social and cultural significance of possession by demonic or disorderly spirits within the IOT. This theme is then developed in chapter six in relation to the practices of another Chaos magical group, the Haunters of the Dark.

The first and second parts of the chapter discuss the role played by spirit possession in the ordering of power within the IOT. In the first section, I examine the significance of spontaneous “demonic” possession in terms of the problematic structures of power manifest within Temple Discordia. In the second section, the discussion moves from the particular to the general, and addresses the role played by “institutionalised” possession in the wider context of the IOT. There I argue that possession practices play an important role in affirming and internalising the Chaos magical ideology amongst participants. Furthermore, I suggest that despite the libertarian thrust of this ideology, possession and acts of magical “transgression” often reinforce existing asymmetrical gender relations amongst Chaos magicians.

The theme of the demonic’s relationship to practitioners’ concept and experience of selfhood permeates the first two sections; in the third part of the chapter, I therefore go on to examine the use of trance and possession in the project of “self-making”. In treating both the body and the human subject as the locus of therapeutic, self-transformational but disciplinary practices, I argue that possession becomes a site of “governmentality”. I examine how, through the therapeutic aspects of trance and possession, the ideological project of Chaos magick both reifies and is an outcropping of late modern or postmodern consumer culture.



### **Blood on the Temple Floor**

Late in July 1997 I received an e-mail from Rick, in which he expressed concerns about a meeting held by members of Temple Discordia two weeks earlier at Mat's home. Mat, Dawn, Ellen, Ian and myself had been present at this meeting, although Rick and Jenna were unable to attend. The gathering had been mooted as an informal social get-together, with the aim of discussing possible ideas for future magical rituals.

On the evening of this meeting, Mat had prepared a number of papier-mâché masks which he handed out to those present. These were to be the focus of a group of magical "servitors", each of which would fulfil a particular magical function to be used in later group rituals: my mask, for example, was to be used to facilitate contact with spirits and entities from the otherworld; Dawn's mask would protect the group from unwanted attention; Mat's would be used for divination purposes. At our next meeting, Mat hoped that we could collectively devise a ritual in which the "spirits" of the masks could be awakened through the transference of our individual magical power. The ritual, Mat felt, could also be used to magically bind the individual masks together so that each formed a facet of a collective entity. This, he hoped, would forge closer links between individual members within the recently-formed Temple, and also provide a focus for group magical work. The function of each masks reflected some aspect of an information gathering process, so Dawn devised a sigil based upon the astrological symbol of Mercury (the messenger of the gods in Roman mythology) to inscribe upon each mask, and which would act as a unifying focus. After Mat had explained the rationale behind the construction of the masks, we spent the rest of the evening painting them.

In his e-mail Rick claimed that this meeting had been "theoretically illegal": Mat had not informed Rick of his intention of conducting "magical business" (our mask-making activities) which in any event should not - according to IOT protocols set out in a document known as the "MT's handbook" - be undertaken without the MT being present. Rick therefore felt that not only had his position as MT had been undermined, but that the aim of forging the masks into a collective entity had been invalidated due to his and Jenna's absence.

The following week, Dawn telephoned me to say that she had recently spoken to Rick. Dawn told him that she felt the goddess Eris had “encouraged” us to make the masks, whose creation thus constituted a form of divine inspiration. For Dawn, the legitimacy of the mask making had been further compounded by the fact that, during their conversation, Rick had informed her that both he and Jenna had made similar masks during the group’s earlier incarnation as Temple Hocus Pocus. Dawn interpreted this as a “meaningful coincidence” which lent weight to her belief that our “illegal” actions had been motivated by Eris. When I asked her how she felt this would impact upon the group, Dawn claimed to be unconcerned and said that Mat and Rick had already worked things out between them. However, she also told me that

“sometimes weird stuff happens, and you just have to go with it. If you can’t deal with that, you need to ask yourself why you’re into Chaos magick in the first place. The Temple is, after all, called “Discordia” [another name for the goddess Eris], and Eris doesn’t work in conventional ways. I let Rick know that””.

By this time, it was clear that the Temple was divided into two broad camps: Dawn, Ellen and Mat, who were largely unconcerned about IOT protocols and who represented the more free-spirited, “chaotic”, and unstructured elements of the group; Jenna and Rick, on the other hand, appeared to value a more structured approach that was in accord with established IOT guidelines. This division was influenced by pre-existing sets of relationships: Mat and Dawn had at one time been romantically-involved with one another (and remained close friends), while Rick and Jenna had been living together for the past four years. Ellen was very friendly with Dawn (they often went clubbing together at weekends), and had also worked closely with Mat during his magical explorations of *The Goetia*. This cluster of relationships was also affected by geographical location: Mat, Dawn and Ellen all lived in the same area of London. Rick and Jenna both lived and worked outside of London, and as a consequence were rarely able to meet socially with other members of the Temple. The emergence of such cliques was typical of other regionally-based IOT Temples, whose participants often comprised of members



from across the UK (two other London-based Temples included members from the North of England, the Midlands, and the West coast of England).

Ian and myself both held rather liminal positions within Temple Discordia at the time, as we had both only been involved with the group for about three months. Although I was beginning to feel close to Mat, Dawn and Ellen, I also felt a loyalty to Rick who was acting as my mentor. As a result, I attempted to remain non-committal during the ensuing problems. This proved less difficult than I expected: as novices (and not formally recognised as members of the IOT), neither Ian nor myself were consulted in any significant way concerning the matter of the mask-making. In fact Rick told me that he held me blameless, as I had not been made fully aware of group protocols relating to such matters.

### **Embodying Chaos: Possession and the Transference of Magical Authority**

The following week (August 1997), Rick again e-mailed me, this time to say that the Temple was meeting at his and Jenna's house over the coming weekend to discuss some important business.

After I arrived on the evening of the meeting, Jenna drove Ian and myself to a nearby off-license, where we bought beer and wine to accompany the evening's proceedings. While a number of magical organisations prefer participants to remain sober before and during magical ritual, the consumption of alcohol was acceptable at many of the Chaos magical events I attended (although I heard a number of anecdotal accounts of IOT members being ejected from ritual gatherings because of drunkenness).

Jenna had prepared us a meal of home-made vegetarian pizza, and we sat eating and chatting for about an hour in the living room. The domesticity of the scene stood in contrast to the magical paraphernalia which filled the room - in particular, a number of paintings which Rick himself had executed. Rick had developed an interest in Haitian Voudou, and most of the paintings depicted Baron Samedi - the skull-faced Voudou *loa* who presides over the spirits of the dead.

At around eight o'clock that evening, Rick called the meeting to order. Without further ado he announced his intention to stand down as Master of the Temple in

favour of Mat; he would then take on the role of the Temple's Insubordinate in Mat's place. The transference of power was finalised through two short rituals. I was unable to observe the first ritual, in which Mat was "ordained" as the new MT: this ritual was only "open" to 3<sup>o</sup> members and above, and so Ian, myself and Ellen (a 4<sup>o</sup> member) waited in the kitchen while this was conducted. The group then reconvened in the living room, where we formed a circle, with Rick kneeling before and Mat at the centre:

"Mat: Will you test me as my Fool, so that all may understand?

Rick: I will.

M: Will you test me as my Jester, if none else will criticise?

R: I will.

M: Will you test me as my Chaplain, that no fault lie unremedied?

R: I will.

M: Will you test me as my Confessor, lest I neglect my own progress?

R: I will.

M: Will you test me as my...oh, I've forgotten the next bit.

R: Will you test me as my Inquisitor, if I exceed my authority?

M: Yeah, that bit.

R: I will (laughing).

M: Then how will you be known?

R: As your Confessor Chaplain.

M: Then take this necklace my Chaplain Confessor...

R: Confessor Chaplain!

M: Sorry (also laughing). As my Confessor Chaplain?

R: I will"<sup>1</sup>

Mat then placed a short piece of rope formed into a hangman's noose around Rick's neck<sup>2</sup>. The ritual was concluded - and Rick's status confirmed - after the rest of the group directed a raucous barrage of obscene sounds at him in recognition of his new status. At the time I was surprised at how quickly and readily Rick had relinquished power, as I found him headstrong and fiercely opinionated. However, Mat's failure to remember the specifics of the ritual, and Rick's ability to correct him seemed to allay any remaining tensions that remained within the group.

---

<sup>1</sup> See Carroll (1992: 212-3) for a generic version of this ritual.

<sup>2</sup> I failed to discover the ritual significance of this. It is possible that the hangman's rope is emblematic of the Insubordinate's symbolic power of life and death over the MT.



When a member of the IOT takes on the office of Insubordinate, he or she is required to choose a title combining two of four roles. As indicated in the ritual dialogue above, each role (i.e. Fool, Jester, Chaplain and Confessor) has a specific ritual function. Rick's choice of title appeared to represent a structural inversion of the group dynamic: the roles Rick adopted were designed to test Mat for the very failings to which he himself later admitted, and which led to Mat's replacing Rick as MT.

As the new MT, Mat instigated a short drinking ritual, which he hoped would encourage the group to bond. This involved the passing round of a horn filled with beer; each person then had to make an outrageous boast, or recount an amusing anecdote, before drinking from the horn. This brought an end to the group's ritual activities, and the rest of the evening was spent drinking and talking. The group chatted about their recent week-long stay in Glastonbury, which I had been unable to attend. Rick said that he hadn't really enjoyed his time there, because the landscape embodied an extremely strong feminine force which, as a man, he had found incomprehensible. Dawn and Ellen, on the other hand, both felt strongly attracted to the healing powers of the sacred site. However, Ellen also mentioned that certain areas in and around Glastonbury seemed to emanate a "serpentine" power - one which she found both frightening and characteristically "slimy". This, she believed, was a result of malign, "reptilian" extraterrestrial influences - probably a result of various UFO sightings which had occurred in the area over the years. Rick, Mat and Jenna disagreed with Ellen's characterisation of extraterrestrials, arguing that such entities were representative of powerfully transformative "extra-dimensional" forces. Jenna hoped that contact would be made with aliens, as she felt they might aid the "evolutionary current" of the planet. In response, Rick said that humanity was doomed. This was not, he claimed, of any great concern: the life-force of the planet would continue to manifest in widely different ways. He believed that it was important for Chaos magicians to accept this view, and look beyond the confines of their own existence.

Rick had been drinking heavily throughout the evening, and by about ten o'clock his mood had noticeably darkened. At one point, he sat next to me on the sofa and

told me about a recent trip to Wales. He had been out walking in the hills one evening and had encountered a groups of “dark fairies”: amorphous, shadowy forms lurking amid a flock of sheep, a scene which he likened to Goya’s painting of the witches’ sabbat.

Rick had briefly alluded to this experience in an earlier e-mail, where he had described the *Tylwth Teg* or “Little People” as “dark, sensory and shape shifting entities”. In the e-mail, Rick also mentioned that in one section of Kenneth Grant’s *The Nightside of Eden* (1977), the author discusses Amprodias (one of the demonic entities inhabiting the Tunnels of Set); there Grant also describes the “fairy folk” as

“phantoms that appear in the form of sylphs; elementals associated with air or aethyr. Like the fairies and sprites of children’s’ tales they are, more often than not, depicted as diaphanous and beguiling creatures. But in the aspect in which they manifest on the negative side of the Tree, they haunt the awful chasms of inner space where they appear in semblances of utmost horror which obsess the magician and sometimes drive him literally out of his mind. They then invade the vacated space and, like leeches. drain the blood of the mind into their own organisms. This is the origin of the myths concerning magicians imprisoned in outer space, their minds secreted in transparent cells that float through the gulfs of the void like immense bubbles, increasing in size and luminosity as the invading sylphs draw more and more vital energy from the fluxes that have attacked the unwary intruder on this path...The highest initiations alone can confer immunity from these vampires that sail on scintillant wings. Fairy lore has disguised these creatures with charming veils that conceal the horror of their pursuits and contacts with the denizens of alien systems of consciousness in the nethermost regions of the cosmos” (Grant 1977: 159-160).

Rick went on to say: “Incidentally I worked a little with the sigil of this tunnel denizen before going to Wales and this [his encounter with the fairies] I presume was part of the result. A dream was also had in which Amprodias appeared”. Rick’s work with the denizens of the Temple of Set proved to be significant in the aftermath of the transference of power which had occurred that same evening and, as discussed in the final section of this chapter, delineates important dimensions of Chaos magicians’ use of the demonic in the production of selfhood.



As I sat talking with him, Rick's memory of the encounter with the fairy-folk seemed to evoke associations with the destructive aspect of magic as an agent of transformation. He told me, drunkenly, that he was happy to be free of his commitments as MT: "I just want to get on with being a magician, and not have to teach or to prove myself. I want to become the centre of a storm of magickal power". He also spoke in a meandering way - for about twenty minutes - about how Chaos acted as the force for destruction and dissolution, and repeatedly told me that "everything is DNA" and that "everything has to fall apart".

As the evening wore on, his behaviour became more aggressive: at one point, he snatched a crystal out of Jenna's hands because he felt that it was sucking the life out of him. He was also very insistent on people answering virtually meaningless or vague questions; later in the evening he suddenly grabbed my hand and began feeling the contours of my palm, refusing to explain his actions. Rick's drunken behaviour was clearly worrying Jenna, and soon after midnight she persuaded him to go to bed. As she helped him up the stairs to their bedroom, Rick became verbally abusive towards her, then began to shout repeatedly "I want everything to fall apart". This was followed by the sound of something heavy falling, then an inarticulate reptilian hissing which seemed to issue from Rick. (Later, Jenna told the rest of the group that Rick had fallen to the floor, and begun writhing like a snake; soon after, he tried to attack her by clawing at her face, but luckily she had escaped injury). Mat, Dawn, Ian and myself remained downstairs in the living room (the stairs down from the first floor of the house led directly into this room), but could hear Jenna calling upon various deities to cast out the entity which had apparently possessed Rick. When she eventually invoked the Norse deity Odin, Rick became audibly distressed and pleaded with her to stop; nonetheless, she continued to call upon Odin until Rick fell silent. Soon after, we heard the sound of Rick vomiting in the upstairs bathroom; Jenna then came downstairs to find Dawn, Mat, Ellen, Ian and myself huddled fearfully on the floor as a result of this unexpected and frightening turn of events. She told us that whatever had possessed Rick had been successfully banished. Ellen tried to distract us from our fear, as she was concerned that this might "feed" the entity: in a display characteristic of the

often absurdist or “Discordian” approach of Chaos magicians, she began a rousing chorus of “The Sun Has Got His Hat On” in an attempt to invoke the sacred solar powers, and banish the darkness.

### **The Aftermath of Possession: Structuring Disorder and Legitimising Power**

Mat, Dawn, Ellen, Ian and myself eventually bedded down in sleeping bags on the floor of the living room. We slept fitfully, fearing a recurrence of Rick’s possession, and awoke early the following morning well before Rick and Jenna were up and about. Dawn, Ellen, Ian and myself were interested in finding out more about what had happened between Mat and Rick prior to the evening’s events. Mat was, however, unwilling to discuss the matter in detail, although he did state that when internal conflicts begin to disrupt the workings of a Temple, the best strategies were those which avoided and diffused confrontation. As a consequence, he believed that the Insubordinate’s role should not be exercised in public: this could cause the MT to “lose face” in front of other members of the Temple, leading to resentment and “violence without resolution”. Mat’s approach in this matter appeared to contradict the stated role of the Insubordinate, which is to publicly ridicule the MT; however, other Chaos magicians I spoke to within the IOT claimed that similar problems were resolved in equally discrete ways within their own Temples.

When Rick eventually appeared, he was extremely apologetic and clearly embarrassed about the previous evening’s events, but opened up the topic for group discussion. His main concern was to identify the possessing entity, and to try and understand the significance of these events for the group. Mat had asked those of us who had attended the “illegal” meeting to bring our mask’s along to the meeting at Jenna and Rick’s house, although he never made his intentions clear on this point. I had been charged with making a mask whose function was to facilitate the invocation of spirits during Temple rituals. During the previous evening, Rick had asked to see my mask, and he left it lying on a small table by the side of the living room sofa. That morning, Mat noticed the mask and suggested that this might have been a factor contributing to the possession. He also noted that he had seen Rick



handling a drum the previous night - one which had been used in previous IOT rituals involving the Voudou *loa* of the Petro *nanchon*: a group or “family” of aggressive and dangerous spirits<sup>3</sup>. This, Mat believed, may have also been a causal factor, and might explain the nature of the possessing entity. Rick, however, felt that because the entity was afraid of Odin, it was probably associated with the Nordic pantheon - possibly a troll spirit. He also noted that the last thing he remembered was talking about the dark fairies, and wondered if this might have been the source of the possession; Ellen thought it significant that the possession had occurred after the group had been talking about extraterrestrials: she felt an aura of “dark power” during the possession that was similar to the serpent-like extraterrestrials she had sensed in Glastonbury. At this point, Mat realised that the group had failed to perform a banishing ritual after the conclusion of the previous night’s activities, and he believed that it would be providential to do so now in order to dispel any remaining “negative energies”. After we quickly performed the Gnostic Banishing Ritual in the living room, Dawn suggested that we carry out a divination in order to ascertain the significance of Rick’s possession. Rick then produced a pack of Tarot cards and dealt the Death card, along with the Prince of Discs surmounted by the Ten of Swords, followed by the Princess of Wands. After a short discussion, in which various interpretations of the cards were offered, a generalised interpretation of the cards was agreed upon: transformation (Death); affliction (Ten of Swords) upon responsibility (Prince of Discs), and instability (Princess of Wands). In effect, the possessing entity had sought to destabilise the group by undermining Rick’s position as MT; this intention had, however, been negated, and had instead positively transformed the Temple. Mat commented that the entity’s terrifying manifestation was probably a result of its frustration at failing to undermine the group’s solidarity.

Meanings generated through the collective interpretation of ambiguous statements helped to construct and sustain the worldview of the group (see Schieffelin 1985). Furthermore, those collectively meanings had been arrived at through a shared symbology, but without impinging on the subjective dimensions of experience (in

---

<sup>3</sup> See for example Deren (1953 61-62), Metreaux (1959: 86).

terms of what various members of the group “felt” the entity to be) - which, as discussed in chapter three, are recognised as an important source of authoritative knowledge by magicians<sup>4</sup>. Tanya Luhrmann (1989: 154-5) points to the fact that contemporary magical systems of knowledge - tarot cards being a case in point - are subject to a wide variety of meanings and interpretations. The “fuzzy” nature of such system also allow scope for the articulation of subjective meanings within “roughly demarcated boundaries” (Luhrmann 1989: 156). Dawn, for example, saw the Princess of Wands (instability) as indicative of the new “Discordian” or Erisian direction of the Temple - one which valued disorder as a source of creative inspiration. This view was tacitly supported by Ian who, during the discussion, claimed that his aim as a magician was “to be at war with the universe and at peace with myself”. Eastern religions and philosophies had, he believed, missed the point in their denial of the material world:

“The material world is there to be experienced and enjoyed. Inner peace doesn’t mean you have to reject conflict or emotions, because detaching yourself from those experiences just becomes another form of repression and denial”.

Ian’s notion of being “at war with the universe” entailed the imposition of his will upon the environment in order to force it to conform to his own wants and desires. He also suggested that a state of inner peace meant the acceptance of conflict and emotion as vehicles of self-transformation. In this way, the conflicts occurring within the Temple were again presented as a force for positive change. Rick himself believed that the Ten of Swords, placed upon the Prince of Disks, was indicative of the fact that the possessing entity had been responsible for his “dogmatism” in considering the previous meeting “illegal”. Mat suggested that this almost certainly meant that the possessing entity had been plaguing Rick at a

---

<sup>4</sup> While symbol systems often function as the locus of socially identifiable meanings, the ambiguity or “multivalency” (Turner 1967: 50) of symbols allows for the tacit application of subjective meanings to those symbols (Obeyesekere 1981: 123-124); or as Luhrmann suggests, “idiosyncrasy is possible only within convention (Luhrmann 1989: 156).



subconscious level for some time (an analysis which Rick later confirmed - see below), thus absolving Rick of blame<sup>5</sup>.

The next time I saw Rick was almost a month after his possession experience, when the Temple reconvened at Ian's flat in West London. Here Rick told us that he had identified the entity in question. He had been looking through a series of magically-inspired drawings - executed a few years earlier - and was struck by the sketch of a dark, shadowy being which he identified (in Jungian terms) as his "shadow self". The discovery of the drawing led to the sudden realisation that it was this shadow self which had possessed him. The experience was, Rick believed, cathartic - it had forced him to recognise his own shortcomings as both a human being and as a magician. The encounter with his own "shadow self" enabled him to reflect on the categories of his own socialised experience (Boddy 1988:16), making him aware of the hidden forces operating within his own psyche. In identifying the possessing entity as ontologically inseparable from his own selfhood, Rick proclaimed himself author of events and reclaimed a sense of personal autonomy from the restrictive limitations of his role as MT. Yet in recognising the unconscious power of the entity in influencing his actions, he was not wholly responsible for the problems affecting the group.

The interpretive fluidity manifest in the disorderly intrusion of "demonic" power leant support to the different interests of group members. For Mat and Dawn, the series of events proved to be particularly gratifying - they both saw the possession and the new structure of power as manifestations of the goddess Eris, who creates transformation by sowing discord. Rick, on the other hand, was able to extract himself from a position of power without "loosing face" - a position with which, according to his remarks the previous evening, he was deeply dissatisfied. I do not mean to imply that Rick had employed possession as a conscious strategy, or that other members of the group had intentionally used the possession to further their

---

<sup>5</sup> The context of Rick's possession thus invites comparisons with I. M. Lewis' (1971) classic functionalist approach to ecstatic trance. The demonic and morally ambivalent or "alien" nature of the possessing entity is particularly significant in light of the role Lewis attributes to spirits encountered in "peripheral possession cults". In these contexts, affliction by alien and amoral spirits is the cause, not the result, of anti-social behaviour, and subsequently functions to legitimise and further the interests and status of subaltern groups and individuals..

own interests. But the vagaries involved in the interpretation of magical experience allowed members of the group to organise and construct both knowledge and experience in ways that seemed to fit with their own particular needs.

Michael Lambek (1981) thus claims that possession and other altered states of consciousness

“provide a medium for the transmission of messages that are not apparent in the ordinary everyday world of “unaltered” consciousness. They help to establish the meaning and meaningfulness of culture by providing controlled experiences of what it is not” (Lambek 1981:183).

Rick’s possession acted as the catalyst by which a number of “hidden” messages, undercurrents and tensions - concerning the nature, use and structure of power within the IOT - were given voice. Through the personalised idiom of demonic possession, the “hidden” forces threatening to disrupt the Temple were made tangible. In this respect, Lambek claims that possession represents the “power to impose order, even while engaged in an active contemplation of disorder” (Lambek 1981:183) - as Jenna told me after Rick’s possession, “if you’re a Chaos magician, sometimes you have to throw everything up into the air, and see what new patterns emerge”. The discourse of chaos and dissolution that was embodied in Rick’s possession provided an interpretive opportunity to structure disorder into new and collectively validated, meaningful patterns.

However, the interpretive multivocality of Chaos magical practice also obscures the workings of power, including the seeming contradictions of practitioners’ claims that Chaos magick effectively represents a “system of no systems”. The incursion of the disorderly described above also had long term, disruptive consequences for members of Temple Discordia.

### **The Ambivalence of the Demonic**

On the day after Rick’s violent possession, Jenna drove Ian and myself to the train station. Reflecting on the night before, she spoke of the different types of possession or “obsession” a magician might experience: there was negative obsession, characterised by Rick’s experience; but there was also obsession by



one's personal "demons", during which the magician would become overwhelmed by an idea. In this latter case, "possession" could inspire new forms of creativity.

These ambivalences were clearly articulated within the context of Temple Discordia. On the night of Rick's possession, Rick, Mat and Jenna had, for example, disputed Ellen's representation of extraterrestrials as "evil". Mat had referred to a book entitled *The Dark Gods* (Roberts & Gilbertson 1985), and to the work of ufologist John Keel (1971), to suggest that contact with such forces had the potential to transform human consciousness. In fact, both Keel and the Roberts and Gilbertson volumes represent these forces as malevolent and inimicable to the human species (although Mat felt that this view had been distorted by the Christian moral sensibilities of the authors). On the train journey back from Rick and Jenna's house, Ian spoke to me at length about his own interest in pursuing the "Luciferian" doctrines of the Temple of Set as a route to self-empowerment, and suggested that he would like to undergo an experience similar to Rick's possession as part of his own "psychological re-alignment". In contrast to this, Dawn stated at the next Temple meeting that such demonic forces were best avoided as dangerous and psychologically damaging, although both herself and Ellen found the "demonic" aspects of the Hindu goddess a source of female power. Ellen was attracted by the transgressive aspects of contemporary forms of Satanism as a way of exploring her own liberation from Christian sexual mores; but she also found the intrusiveness of Rick's possession terrifying, and something she wished to avoid.

Towards the end of 1997, Rick and Jenna both resigned from the IOT. At the time, Rick explained over the telephone that he felt his possession experience was partly the result of "gnostic burnout" - a term commonly used by Chaos magicians to describe a state of mental fatigue resulting from long periods of intensive magical practice. As a consequence, he felt he needed to take a break from magic. Furthermore, both he and Jenna had both come to feel that the IOT was no longer functioning effectively as a magical order: too many of its members seemed more interested in using the organisation to pursue power and status; Rick believed that the abuse of power had become "institutionalised" in the IOT and, because of the

requirements of his position as MT, he had come perilously close to using his power in a self-serving manner.

The ambiguous feelings surrounding the demonic contributed to further breaches in relations between members of Temple Discordia. Mat and Dawn felt that Ian and Ellen's interest in Satanism was somewhat at odds with the more "playful" disorderliness of Eris; in particular, they took umbrage with Ian, deeming him too interested in using magic for "Satanic", egoistic ends. Mat also felt that Ian was extremely arrogant - Ian having claimed that his attempts at results magic always succeeded. As a result of these tensions, Dawn had an argument with Ian early in March 1998, and he promptly resigned from the IOT. I was not present during the argument, which Dawn refused to discuss with me, and I was unable to contact Ian to hear his side of the story. Some months later, Ellen - who had been visiting Dawn when the argument took place - told me that Dawn had purposely provoked Ian into leaving (although she also refused to reveal the particulars of the argument). As a consequence, her relationship with Dawn soured, and Ellen eventually left Temple Discordia (although she remained a member of the IOT).

Having shown how concepts and experiences of the demonic mediate, address and disrupt the workings of power amongst Chaos magicians, I move on to a more generalised analysis of the use of "demonic" possession - and the transgressive power of magic - as often gendered conduits of power and ideology within the IOT. In the next section, I demonstrate how the self-transformational ideology of Chaos magick becomes internalised through possession by Baphomet - the "carrier" of that ideology. Consequently, I also show that when individual and subjective experiences of this power are not in alignment with collective representations, group relations may be further disrupted.



## **Part 2 - Possession and Ideology**

### **Possession as a Conduit of Magical Power**

As discussed in chapter two, the figure of Baphomet is a central symbolic idiom in the practices of Chaos magick. The “Mass of Chaos B”<sup>6</sup> (Carroll 1987: 130-132) is a ritual regularly performed by Chaos magicians, and involves spirit-possession by Baphomet. This ritual is, in fact, a pre-requisite for the attainment of the third degree of initiation in the IOT: although fourth degree members are nominally considered part of the organisation, their position is not fully cemented until they have attained the third degree of initiation. In allowing themselves to become possessed by Baphomet, Chaos magicians affirm their commitment and their feeling of personal attunement to the Chaos “current”. These possession experiences are structured according to certain ritual formulae, and also according to the implicit expectations of participants. As a consequence, possession in these instances becomes partially institutionalised and imbued with ideological force.

I witnessed possession by Baphomet on a total of five occasions during my sojourn with the IOT, two of which formed part of publicly performed rituals (including the Black Mass conducted in April 1998, and described in chapter two).

A common piece of advice offered to Chaos magicians about to undergo possession is “fake it ‘til you make it””: the extent to which the participant can enwrap his or herself in the performance of the role was often deemed more successful in inducing “authentic” possession than the use of ritualistic incantations and paraphernalia. However, I often found that the formulaic recitation of liturgy, and collectively-shaped expectations concerning the nature of Baphomet often affected the group’s judgement as to whether the possession was indeed “authentic”.

The very first time I witnessed the Mass of Chaos “B” was at a meeting of the London Working Group, and occurred in February 1998 (approximately six months after Rick’s possession, and two months before the Black Mass). About twenty IOT members participated in the meeting, including Mat, Dawn and Ellen. The group gathered in a large and airy rehearsal room on a Sunday evening, the walls of which

---

<sup>6</sup> The “B” stands for Baphomet.

James had bedecked with black cloth banners embroidered with Chaospheres. A table covered in black cloth was moved to one end of the room to represent an altar (upon which candles and other pieces of magical paraphernalia were placed), and we began with a Gnostic Banishing ritual in order to sanctify the room and facilitate the shift from “everyday” to “magical” consciousness.

James, who organised the London Working Group, then told us that it was his intention that the performance of the Mass of Chaos “B” should form a regular part of these meetings; on this occasion Mat had volunteered to take on the “role” of Baphomet.

Before the onset of the rite, candles were lit, participants donned black robes, then assembled in a circle surrounding Mat. James was presiding over the ritual, and began by making a statement of intent which was then repeated by those present: “It is our will to invoke Baphomet for magical power and knowledge”. Such statements effectively bind the magician’s will to the specified intent, and are particularly important within group rituals, where they are meant to mobilise and direct the group’s collective magical will towards a common aim. In doing so, the statement of intent is meant to counter the subversion of magical energies raised towards personal ends. Within ritual, Chaos magicians thus see words as having a sympathetic link with the things they signify and, as mentioned in chapter three, the failure of a particular ritual to achieve its stated aim is sometimes attributed to the vagueness of the statement of intent.

After the statement of intent had been collectively vocalised, the group began circling Mat widdershins (anticlockwise), at which point he began spinning slowly on the spot. After a few minutes of this, Mat began chanting in a low voice:

“Ol Sonuf Varosagai Gohu  
Vouina Vabzir De Tehom Quadmonah  
Zir Ile Iaid Dayes Praf Elila  
Zirido Kiafa Caosago Mospelch Teloch  
Panpira Malpirgay Caosagi  
Zaza Zazas Nasatanata Zazas.”



This is the preliminary invocation of Baphomet, and is written in “Enochian”, a magical language which also constitutes a complex magical system for invoking and communing with angelic, otherworldly or “extraterrestrial” forces (see chapter three).

Carroll translates the first five lines of the above invocation as:

“I reign over you saith  
The Dragon Eagle of the Primal Chaos  
I am the First the Highest That Live In the First Aether  
I am the Terror of the Earth the Horns of Death  
Pouring Down the Fires of Life On the Earth” (Carroll 1987: 130-1).

The final line “Zazas Zazas Nasatanata Zazas” is supposedly untranslatable, although some magicians claim that the words open the gate to Hell when spoken - a significant point in light of the fact that Baphomet is identified with (but is not *identical to*) the Christian Devil (see below). In esoteric terms, the words form the magical formula by which the gates to the “First Aether”, or the otherworld of Chaos, are opened - thus allowing Baphomet ingress into the magician’s consciousness.

Whilst Mat continued to repeat this invocation, the rest of the participants took up the chant of “Baphomet, Baphomet”, while thrusting out their arms in the direction of Mat. At this point, participants were supposed to visualise the outpouring of magical energy as streams of coloured light, whilst projecting a mental image of Baphomet onto Mat in order to facilitate his possession. This continued for about five minutes, and ceased when Mat spoke the ritual litany which indicates the onset of possession by Baphomet:

“In the first aeon, I was the Great Spirit.  
In the second aeon, Men knew me as the Horned God,  
Pangenitor Panphage.  
In the third aeon, I was the Dark one, the Devil.  
In the fourth aeon, Men know me not, for I am the Hidden One.  
In this new aeon, I appear before you as Baphomet,  
The God before all gods who shall endure to the end of the Earth”.

The group had ceased circling, and waited expectantly for Mat/Baphomet to speak. He walked slowly and solemnly around the inside of the circle before asking “why have you called me forth?”. James replied that the group had done so in the hope that Baphomet would transfer some its magical power and knowledge to the participants. Mat, however, remained silent. After a minute or so of silence, James asked Baphomet to bless a goblet of wine, passing it to him. Mat then held it aloft saying “In the name of the Old Ones, who exist beyond time and consciousness, I bless this sacrament so you may partake of their power and knowledge”. Through Mat, Baphomet told us that this would be a painful experience, and dared us to drink from the cup. Such blessings formed a common part of the possession rituals I witnessed, and is believed to infuse the wine with the power essence of the possessing entity. In this instance, the participants were then able to partake of this power as the goblet was passed around the group. Each member of the group sipped from the goblet, and honoured the god with exclamations of “Hail Baphomet”.

Following this, James asked Baphomet to release Mat’s consciousness and allow it to return to his body. This marked the end of the Mass (this instance was one of the shortest possession rituals I witnessed), and James applied a lustration of cold water to Mat’s face, asking him to recite his name and address to ensure that he had returned to an ordinary state of consciousness. A number of other short rituals were performed after the Mass of Chaos “B”, and the evening was concluded with a rendition of the Gnostic Pentagram Ritual.

As the group was preparing to vacate the room, I asked Mat about his possession experience. He told me that the rite was important for him in overcoming his own fear of death: the incarnation of Baphomet within his own body had led him to understand that the process of life never ends, but continually evolves and transforms into something new. This was the power and knowledge which Baphomet - as a manifestation of the universal life force - offered. But, Mat continued, Baphomet also unifies the polarities of creation and destruction immanent in nature. With this came the realisation that magic is both destructive as well as creative, painful as well as pleasurable - hence Baphomet’s claim that drinking from the cup was a source of pain. In Mat’s eyes, magic was primarily



concerned with the spiritual and psychological transformation of the self, and pain or emotional upheaval was unavoidable as the magician is forced to abandon prior beliefs and attitudes through acts of metamorphosis. For Chaos magicians, to ignore or repress such fears is to remain enslaved to one's own "personal demons".

As Mat's account suggests, possession speaks to those undergoing the experience in profoundly personal ways. But the resolution of Mat's own existential fears was also articulated through possession in ways which affirmed the Chaos magical ethos: that flux and change are intrinsic to existence and to the life of the cosmos. Thus Michael Lambek (1996) argues that through possession,

"[c]ollective forms are internalized by individuals and become self-transforming. Likewise, individual intentions are externalized and given form through the voices and acts of the spirits and the careers of their hosts" (Lambek 1996: 238).

As a form of "institutionalised" possession, the Mass of Chaos "B" gives voice to personal subjectivity and agency of actors, but in ways which are at least *partially* structured by the collective ethos of the group. As the liturgy of the Mass implies, the manifestation of Baphomet represents the reification of the "new" or fifth aeon, and so possession by this entity effectively transforms the participants into carriers of the magical "current" or *zeitgeist* of Chaos magick. Within the IOT and other Chaos magical groups, the perceived authenticity of that personalised experience also rests upon the degree to which the possession attains validity in the eyes of the collective. Although Baphomet is believed to manifest as an autonomous entity, the deity is always expected to repeat the above litany to indicate its presence. As a result, the group's broadly millenarian ideology is reinforced through the "performative" or "illocutionary" force of ritualised speech (Austin 1962: 99; Rappaport 1979: 188-197; Tambiah 1985: 78-81; Bloch 1989: 32). This is not to deny Chaos magicians' subjectivity and personal agency within the context of possession<sup>7</sup>; in the case of Rick's possession, individual members of the group

---

<sup>7</sup> Catherine Bell (1992: 208-223), for example, disputes this view that ritual is the instrument and transmitter of ideology to suggest that the subordination of the body and liturgical statement made within ritual do not necessarily reflect the subjectivities of the participants.

interpreted events in ways reflective of their own subjectivities; but such interpretations were presented in ways which allowed the group to maintain its cohesiveness, if only for a short time. However, inner perceptions and experience are also structured by institutionalised expectations that possessing spirits conform to type. Subjectivities and intentions which become externalised also become problematised if they do not conform to collective expectations. As I show in the following section, expectations surrounding possession performances are embedded in gendered assumptions and power relations within Chaos magical groups; and when Baphomet displays “atypical” behaviour, the perceived authenticity of possession may be brought into question.

### **Gender, Possession, and the Demonic**

In March 1998 (a month after Mat’s possession), I attended another meeting of the London Working Group, at which the Mass of Chaos “B” was again performed. On this occasion Annie, a Chaos magician in her mid-thirties had volunteered to undergo possession. Upon its manifestation, the entity expressed annoyance at the fact that the floor of the room had not been properly swept. The ensuing dialogue between Baphomet and the rest of the participants became somewhat confused, particularly as the possessing spirit began making seemingly-nonsensical statements, such as:

“the aliens, the ones coming from the sky - their colour is purple. If you see them as purple then you will know them and everything will be all right. But no one can see for seeing. The clues are all around you, but you cannot see for seeing”.

On this occasion James, who was again presiding over the Mass, began the ritual with a recitation of Aleister Crowley’s infamous poem “Hymn to Pan”. The poem is commonly used by Chaos magicians when Baphomet or Pan are invoked, and is replete with sexual and phallic imagery:

“I am numb  
With the lonely lusts of devildom.



Thrust the sword through the galling fetter,  
All-devourer, all begetter;  
Give me the sign of the Open Eye,  
And the token erect of thorny thigh” (Crowley 1973: 126)

Pan is often represented by pagans in masculine, phallogocentric terms which would seem to differentiate the deity from the supposedly-androgynous Baphomet. However, the two are often treated as identical by Chaos magicians. Baphomet, like Pan, is often depicted with an erect phallus (or with the phallus obscuring the female genitalia, as in fig. 18) - thus asserting the deity’s masculine nature. Furthermore, in the preliminary invocation of Baphomet, the deity speaks of itself as “Pouring Down the Fires of Life On the Earth”. Baphomet is thus



**Fig. 18 - a “phallogocentric” illustration of the “androgynous” Baphomet.**



represented as a promethean figure - importantly, the creative force of fire is often symbolically associated with the magician's wand or rod, which in turn is associated with the phallus. As a magical implement, the wand is a conduit and extension of magical power, but specifically of masculine magical power<sup>8</sup>.

Baphomet also represents the power of destruction as well as creation, and Crowley's "Hymn to Pan" also contains references to the violent aspects of male sexual power:

"I rave; and I rape and I rip and I rend" (Crowley 1973: 127)

These destructive, phallogentric aspects of Baphomet were brutally portrayed in the Black Mass depicted in chapter two, and on a number of occasions Dawn articulated concerns about the way Baphomet was generally represented in the IOT's rituals. She eventually raised the issue of the deity's gender in the internal IOT newsletter she edited. Dawn found, however, that most of the members of the organisation were unsympathetic or unresponsive to her views. This act was one among a number of others which brought her into conflict with the higher echalons of the IOT (of which the majority were men), who felt that she was using the newsletter to promote views which were not in accord with the "ethos" of the organisation. This conflict eventually led to her being invited along to a convocation of third, second and first degree members early in October 1998. Due to my status as a fourth degree member, I was unable to attend; but the following week, I went to visit Dawn at her flat in North London, when she told me that, during the convocation, Dave and James had asked her to publicly apologise for her "misdemeanours" to the entirety of the IOT membership. Believing she had done nothing wrong, Dawn refused and subsequently tendered her resignation. Mat acted

---

<sup>8</sup> Crowley, for example, claims that "voluntary sterile acts [masturbation] create demons, and (if done with concentration and magical intention), such demons as may subserve that intention." (Crowley 1914: 389). Here Crowley is almost certainly referring to male masturbation - throughout his work, Crowley generally refers to the penis as the active force, while the vagina is taken as the passive receptacle of male creative power. Although Chaos magicians never seemed to make any qualitative distinctions between the power of male and female orgasm as a source of magical power, the anointing of sigils with seminal fluid in the creation of servitors and demons was generally conceived as imbuing the entity with life-force and vitality.



as Dawn's "second" at this meeting, and was disgusted at the way she was treated. About a week after Dawn left the IOT, Mat also resigned. I remained in contact with Dawn and Mat for sometime afterward, and both of them expressed feelings of anger at the turn of events, but also regret at having been forced (in their eyes) to leave the organisation. Although Temple Discordia had recently taken on Guy (a nineteen year old drama student who was being mentored by Dawn) as a new novice, it was at this point effectively defunct as a functioning magical sodality.

In July 1998 - a few months prior to Dawn's decision to leave - members of the IOT presented a public ritual in central London, involving the incarnation of the female deity Eris. David, a freelance artist in his early-twenties, had volunteered to undergo possession by the goddess. In preparation, he donned a flowery ankle-length skirt, had a pair of gauzy butterfly wings strapped to his otherwise naked torso; he also wore a heavy layer of make-up to emphasise his femininity.

At the onset of possession, David ran around the hall, shrieking in a shrill voice to the great amusement of the onlookers - a performance which appeared to equate the "Discordian" aspects of Eris with stereotypical notions of the irrational and hysterical woman, and which offered little more than a parody of female identity.

The same "feminine irrationalities" marked by David's performance were also implicitly flagged in Annie's seemingly nonsensical discourse during her own possession. Those present at Annie's possession were also somewhat perturbed by the domesticity of Baphomet's initial comments concerning the untidiness of the Temple - this concern with a "stereotypically" feminine activity did not seem to fit well with Baphomet's implicit masculinity, and after the rite it became clear that some of the participants were not wholly convinced that Annie had been possessed.

Chaos magicians do, therefore, tend to essentialise gender in stereotypical ways. The gender divisions amongst Chaos magicians also influenced the different ways by which men and women conceptualised the demonic. Ellen and Dawn, for example, viewed demonic forces as dangerous and worthy of avoidance, whilst Ian, Rick and Mat were more inclined to embrace demonic power as a transformative magical force. Throughout the two year period (1999 to 2001) I spent with the Chaos magical group known as the Haunters of the Dark (HOD), its members

consisted only of men, (although on a rare occasions female friends of the group did participate in their rituals). Although separate from the IOU (whose membership comprised of eight men and five women), five members of the HOD were also involved in the IOU. Just over a year after the formation of the HOD, the IOU effectively expired. This was due to a number of factors, but was partially influenced by the fact that the men had found their own particular magical niche in the HOD. The female members of the IOU subsequently founded an informal but exclusively female magical group known as the “Moon Group”, dedicated to the exploration of the feminine aspects of magic (as far as I was aware, the Moon Group was not explicitly Chaos magical in orientation).

Although they did not instigate an explicit policy of excluding women, the HOD found that women were generally uninterested in the often confrontational approach the group took towards the practice of magic - with members actively courting wild and sometimes violent possession by alien and demonic beings. As a result, an explicitly masculine discourse dominated the HOD, which was reified in the invention of the comical deity “Nob Tugoff”. Members of the HOD would talk of “invoking Nob Tugoth” as a half-joking euphemism of magical masturbation conducted as part of solitary magical workings. Subsequently, this formed part of the male sexual banter which became the staple preliminary to group discussions of a magical nature.

### **Sexual Transgression and Power**

Chaos magicians and other “Left-Hand Path” practitioners view their own conceptions of sex and sexuality as libertarian in nature - a view shaped by a general interest in Crowley’s recension of sexual magick, and also the work of Wilhelm Reich (see chapter one). However, the magical allure of sex often lies in its application in “dark” or transgressive ways, which also tended to reify patriarchal conceptions of feminine sexuality amongst Chaos magicians.

Peter Carroll (1987: 25, 96) posits light and darkness as arbitrary symbolic categories resulting from the manifest condition of duality (see chapter four). Tanya Luhrmann points out that the notion of chaos permeates Western neo-paganism,



where it is identified as “darkness: the deep, the destructive, the angry, primordial, irrational” (Luhrmann 1989: 99). But in its generalised form, neo-paganism seeks a balance between the light and the dark. Alternatively, many of its practitioners find Chaos magick appealing because it is seen to articulate a symbolic schema which privileges the inchoate, pre-conceptual void or abyss, darkness, and the demonic. Sexual “magick” is often associated with the “darkside” of magical power, and is seen by Chaos magicians as an effective technique in overcoming restrictive and socially-indentured mores, and for evoking demonic power. During one of their possession rituals, the *Haunters of the Dark* attempted to call forth a particular entity through the vaginal opening of Zoe - a twenty year old film student who was the partner of Damien. Despite the sexual nature of the rite, Zoe was asked by Dane (who was overseeing the ritual) to remain fully clothed throughout; he also stressed that there should be no physical contact between herself and Damien (who, it was hoped, would become possessed once the entity had been called forth). The “magical” use of the female genitalia - particularly during menstruation - is, according to Kenneth Grant (1973: 149; see also Grant 1977: 204-206) part of an ancient Tantric tradition of accessing “magical gateways” to the world of demonic or extraterrestrial powers. Although magicians often see this as privileging the unique magical power of women, it implicitly reflects Aristotelian and later Christian notions of women as associated with evil, disorder, and the irrational (Larner 1981: 92-93), and also objectifies the female body in terms of its magical function.

Practitioners’ libertarian view of sexuality is also problematised by the sometimes oppressive and restrictive forms of social organisation which Chaos magicians themselves create, and ritualised sexual transgression was also sometimes used in the subtle exercise of power. I often found that implicit asymmetrical gender relations - which undervalued women’s autonomy - formed a significant part in the way women were subtly coerced into taking part in such rituals.

On occasion, members of the IOT would conduct rituals naked (or “skyclad”). This was generally viewed as forming an important part of the processes of

deconditioning oneself from the mores of the wider society. Although I was on the premises on two occasions when such rituals occurred, I never participated in or witnessed them. As a man, I was never reproached for failing to take part in skyclad rituals, or even asked why I did not wish to do so by others in the group. (I was, also, on another occasion, openly praised by members of the Haunters of the Dark for flatly refusing to participate in breaking into a derelict hospital, where the group wished to conduct their possession rituals). In all these instances, my refusal was treated as an assertion of my own (masculine) autonomy and the manifestation of my “magical will”.

Female members of the IOT, on the other hand, generally felt that they should participate in skyclad rituals unless they had a valid excuse. On the occasion of the first of these rituals, Annie felt that she had to inform the group that she would not be participating because she was menstruating, and felt uncomfortable at the prospect of appearing naked in front of others because of this. On the second occasion, Ellen reproached me after the ritual for not informing her of my non-participation: she told me that it would have been easier for her to refuse to participate if she had known someone else was dropping out of the ritual. Later, Ellen also told me that she generally disliked participating in skyclad rituals - she felt that men often used such rituals as an excuse for voyeurism; but she often felt pressured to take part, because the men in the group could not or would not distinguish between her job as a table dancer and glamour model, and her life outside of work.

These gender relations appeared to reaffirm and essentialise roles which, as Nancy Chodorow (1978) suggests, become socialised through child-rearing: in social contexts where women are the primary child-carers, mothers are more likely to treat girls as extensions of themselves, whereas boys are seen as different and separate. As a result, girls are more likely to value feelings of relatedness, whilst boys value their separateness and individuality.

Drawing on the work of both Chodorow and Carol Gilligan (1982), Susan Greenwood (1995; 1996a; 2000: 171-175) suggests that many women neo-pagans are attracted to Wicca because it stresses a feminised concept of the magical will as



relational to divine nature, whilst Thelema and Chaos magick emphasise autonomy and mastery over the cosmos. Feminist thought was strongly present amongst women involved in Chaos magick (who constituted roughly a quarter of the practitioners I knew) - both Ellen and Dawn considered themselves feminists - but the implicit masculinisation of magical discourse within the IOT often meant that, in Dawn's case, such voices of protest were effectively silenced.

Chaos magicians also tend to denigrate Wiccan stereotypes of the Goddess as a pale and romanticised representation of nature and femininity<sup>9</sup>. In its place, Chaos magicians revere the Crowleyan concept of Babalon: the unrestrained divine whore or "scarlet woman" (Crowley 1969: 622; Grant 1972: 134-136; see also Puttick 1998: 118). As a consequence, Chaos magicians often emphasise an equally-romanticised version of femininity liberated from the sexual mores of Christianity, which is selectively mapped onto female members. Rather than being an empowering image for women involved in Chaos magick, this stereotype appears to do little more than articulate male fantasies of a sexually-available, uninhibited and insatiable woman.

### **Trance as a Space of Transgression**

Despite the problematic gender relations outlined above, instances of explicit sexual coercion amongst Chaos magicians appeared to be rare - or were not made readily visible; in general, the "magical" aspects of sexual transgression were enacted ideationally and imaginally - particularly in group contexts<sup>10</sup>. Dane, for example, told me of a technique he had developed and termed "loathsome sexual gnosis" - the overcoming of the one's sexual conditioning by evoking otherwise distasteful images to achieve sexual arousal: "try bringing yourself off while thinking about having sex with Richard Nixon or Margaret Thatcher" Dane remarked laughingly. For Chaos magicians, it is important to raise one's own subconscious fears and desires into conscious awareness, otherwise the magician is

---

<sup>9</sup> Ronald Hutton (1998: 97) and Diane Purkiss (1996: 32-35) both suggest that feminist conceptions of the Goddess are, to an extent, grounded in patriarchal fantasies of the nurturing mother.

<sup>10</sup> As in the case of Zoe's ritual participation outlined earlier in the chapter - no nudity or actual sexual contact occurred. Dave Lee thus claims that forms of sexual transgression and group sex, "are unfortunately rare, even amongst left-hand path magicians" (Lee 1997: 77).

in danger of remaining enthralled to them: “If you can’t even conceptualise doing something that is otherwise unthinkable, you remain a prisoner of you’re own thoughts” Dane added.

Dane’s comments concerning the ideational and conceptual uses of transgression were illustrated in a workshop run by the IOU in mid-2000. Those attending the workshop gathered on a Friday evening, at the venue (a community centre in South East London) which the group regularly used. As we sat in the bar, Jason - one of the IOU organisers - told us that he would be leading the first ritual of the evening, which was designed to take us through the first steps in our own sexual deconditioning. At this point, he mentioned the fact that no one was expected to participate, and that no one should be afraid to refuse to do so. Soon after, Jason led the group into the room set aside for ritual activities, at the front of which stood a television and video player. He then explained that the working involved a trance-visualisation exercise, during which we would be confronted by our deepest sexual fears and desires. At various points throughout his initial presentation, he informed us that the ritual would not involve nudity or any form of physical contact: nonetheless, he stressed the fact that if anyone had any reservations concerning the rite, they could leave the room. Jason’s reiteration of the “explicit” nature of the rite had a two-fold effect: on the one hand, it afforded participants the opportunity to withdraw from the ritual if they felt uncomfortable; on the other hand, it also reinforced participants’ feelings of fear and apprehension. Jason later admitted that he had purposely played upon this in order to push us into a state of *gnosis*. After inserting a cassette into the video unit, he switched on the television screen, which was filled with static. He then began leading us through the visualisation. At the culmination of the exercise, we were asked to imagine ourselves in a candlelit hallway, at the centre of which stood a podium. This represented the darkest recesses of the psyche, and Jason asked us to think about the worst sexual act we could imagine whilst approach the podium, upon which rested an object or symbol - we were then told to visualise the very first thing that came into our minds. He told us to hold this symbol or object in our mind’s eye, and at a given signal, to open our eyes and project an image of the symbol onto the television screen.



Jason counted down from five, and we opened our eyes. At the time, I fully expected to be confronted with a video assemblage of scenes depicting bestiality, rape, murder, necrophilia, cannibalism, etc. However, the screen remained filled with static.

The point of the ritual had not been to shock us with external representations of sexual deviance, none of which, Jason believed, would live up to our own fears or expectations. Rather, its aim had been the magical evocation and reification of our own worst imaginings. This, Jason hoped, would help us to understand how “normal” and socially-sanctioned patterns of sexuality and behaviour had become internalised. Once we learnt to recognise how our own consciousness and desires were subject to social control, we could then begin to figure out how to free ourselves from the oppressive forces which determine our sense of “paramount reality”. Jason concluded by telling us that the symbol we had seen could now be used in other visualisation exercises, as a magical gateway which would allow us to explore and - implicitly acknowledging Freudian psychoanalytical notions - bring to conscious awareness the hidden forces or “daemons” which shaped our beliefs, assumptions and behaviours.

For Chaos magicians, “transgressive” encounters with the demonic through trance and possession play a fundamental role in the process of self-transformation and self-construction. In the first part of the following section, I show that those attracted to Chaos magick often feel marginalised and alienated from the wider society - a fact which may predispose practitioners to trance experiences (or one which makes such experiences appear highly attractive). However, for many Chaos magicians, the trajectory of this therapeutic and self-constructive project is at least partially shaped by the collective ethos and ideology of Chaos magick. In the second part of the next section, I also argue that the shared values of Chaos magicians emphasise a particular conception of the self - one which reifies many of the social, cultural and economic values of late modernity.

## **Part 3- The Context and Meaning of Possession.**

### **The Psycho-Social Context of Trance**

According to Levy, Mageo and Howard (1996), “[t]wo conditions are necessary for full possession to flourish: people who are psychologically disposed to dissociation, and a cultural environment that makes conventional use of possession episodes” (Levy, Mageo & Howard 1996: 19). Here I will deal with these two claims sequentially.

In the first case, the Chaos magicians I encountered were often individuals marked by emotional fragility. Certainly, most of the magicians I knew had undergone some form of therapy during their lives, usually as a consequence of emotionally-fraught relationships with family (especially parents)<sup>11</sup> or partners. As an indication of this, four out of the twelve Chaos magicians with whom I was in regular contact during the final six months of my fieldwork were experiencing emotional problems. Two of these individuals were not only undergoing counselling, but had also been prescribed Prozac for depression - in both cases, related to the breakdown of long-term romantic relationships. One of these individuals also sought relief from his emotional turmoil through self-harming. The two other Chaos magicians drank and took drugs to excess on a regular basis: in one case, this was because the magician in question was grappling with an incurable and life-threatening illness; in the other case, because of relationship problems and recent unemployment. As suggested throughout the thesis (especially chapters two to four), Chaos magical forms of trance and possession offer a method of locating, making explicable and dealing positively with the “dark” or “daemonic” forces which threaten to disrupt their lives; as Sian Reid (1996) also argues, the “darkside” of magic is attractive to such individuals because it “assigns positive value to the pain they have experienced” (Reid 1996: 156).

Such problems were exacerbated by feelings of alienation. Virtually all the Chaos magicians I met felt that they had little in common with the people they

---

<sup>11</sup> Edward Moody found that many of the Satanists he encountered came from dysfunctional family backgrounds (Moody 1974), whilst Shelly Rabinovitch (in Reid 1996: 147) found a high incidence of “dysfunctional upbringing” (Rabinovitch quoted in Reid 1996: 147) - involving alcoholic or drug-dependent parents, or had suffered physical, sexual or emotional abuse at the hands of family members (Rabinovitch quoted in Reid 1996: 147-149) - amongst Canadian neo-pagans.



worked or interacted with on a daily basis. As a result, some of the magicians I spoke to saw participation in the magical subculture as an important opportunity for social interaction with like-minded people. In the few instances when I observed practitioners in the company of non-magicians (usually work-colleagues), their conversation rarely strayed from the topic of magic into the familiar territory of the everyday. When a recent football match was being analysed by a group of Chaos magicians, the discussion would invariably turn to how football could be treated as a magical paradigm, or how it functioned as a system of control, or how successful a particular magician's sorcery had been in ensuring his team would win. Chaos magicians tended to be quite selective when choosing non-magical friends, who were generally individuals which Chaos magicians thought "interesting" because they had a detailed knowledge of various "subcultural" or "non-ordinary" domains - including drugs, role-playing games, comics, "alternative" music, and ufology. These non-magicians usually had an interest in and were non-judgmental about their friends' involvement in magic.

Thus, the counterpoint to this dissatisfaction with the mundanity of daily life was that the discourses of magic, the otherworldly, and the fantastic formed an almost obsessive interest for Chaos magicians - outside of magic, the genre of sci-fi film and literature was probably one of the most common areas of discussion amongst practitioners. The influence of science fiction upon Chaos magick was introduced in the first chapter, and is dealt with at length in chapter six; but for now, this interest in the fantastic may, I suggest, represent an index of the degree to which contemporary magicians are psychologically "fantasy-prone" (Wilson & Barber 1983). Significantly, such a fantasy-prone disposition - which often involves states of dissociation - may emerge as "a means of coping with childhood trauma, or as a result or early encouragement of fantasy by significant adults" (Greyson 2000: 324). Chaos magick is certainly attractive because it offers a framework in which fantasies could be actualised and enacted as "realities", often through trance and imaginal journeys upon the "astral plane" - even more so than other forms of neo-paganism, whose beliefs and traditions tend to be embedded in recognised cultural mythologies. Chaos magicians would often claim that characters from *Star*

*Wars* or *Star Trek* could be considered as being equally “real” as Isis, Horus, or Hecate - often to the chagrin of neo-pagans who felt that Chaos magicians were thus undermining the historicity and validity of their own beliefs.

This brings me to the second point: the degree to which Chaos magicians’ cultural environment conventionalises trance. Although such states are widely pathologised in the context of the wider culture, trance and the incarnation of spirits maintain a marginal niche within the Western magical subculture. As discussed in chapter three, training to be a Chaos magick is built upon a core of techniques whose specific function is to facilitate trance or *gnosis*. In this respect, it is important to recognise practitioners’ own agency - beyond their “disposition” to trance - in actively seeking out such experiences. Such techniques as are used by Chaos magicians also maintain historical connections with other culturally-recognised movements involving trance practices, including Spiritualism, and the Surrealist movement (Choucha 1991: 121).

The assumption that trance necessarily involves dissociation is, however, questionable: Vincent Crapanzano suggests that anthropologists have used the category of possession in ways which do not necessarily reflect the semantic variability of equivalent terms used in the cultures studied - possession metaphors may be used to describe a variety of emotions and behaviours which do not necessarily entail dissociation (Crapanzano 1977: 10). For some Chaos magicians, trance and possession maintained concrete links to “mainstream” culture - being a controlled extension of non-dissociative and culturally-normative altered states of consciousness. Dane, for example, told me that:

“What people fail to see is that possession is like going to the cinema. When you watch a film or read a book and, like, get totally engrossed in it, it’s the same as possession. It’s like, you become totally overshadowed by the experience and lose sense of yourself and you enter another world or reality. So if someone asks me “why do you let yourself get possessed”, I’d say, at least with possession by a spirit or a deity, you know what to expect, you know from the nature of the entity what it’s going to be like. With, like, a film, you don’t always know what to expect - you could unleash any sort of fucking madness into your own head without knowing what sort of shit that could dredge up.”



Broadly speaking, this conception of trance - along with their interest in science fiction - is linked to Chaos magicians' experience of their cultural environment: namely that late modern or postmodern consumer culture which Mike Featherstone (1995) characterises as

“the disorienting melee of signs and images, stylistic eclecticism, sign play, the mixing of codes, depthlessness, pastiche, simulation, hyperreality, immediacy, a melange of fiction and strange values, intense affect-charged experiences, the collapse of boundaries between art and everyday life, an emphasis upon images over words, the playful immersion in unconscious processes as opposed to detached conscious appreciation, the loss of a sense of reality, of history and tradition; the decentring of the subject” (Featherstone 1995: 222).

As suggested in chapter four, it is the arbitrary and utilitarian immersion into the “hyperreality” of consumer culture which lies at the core of the Chaos magical ideology<sup>12</sup>. Thus, as Paul Heelas (1994; 1995) suggests, New Age movements are themselves reflective of the detraditionalised utilitarian self of late modern or postmodern consumer culture, where practitioners seek “spirituality” through the consumption of “experiential trips” into mystical realms. Similarly, Zygmunt Bauman suggests that

“postmodern cultural pressures, while intensifying the search for ‘peak experiences’, have at the same time uncoupled the search from religion-prone interests and concerns, privatized it, and cast mainly non-religious institutions in the role of purveyors of relevant services. The ‘whole experience’ of revelation, ecstasy, breaking the boundaries of the self and total transcendence...has been put by postmodern culture within every individual’s reach, recast as a realistic target and plausible prospect of each individual’s self-training, and relocated as the product of a life devoted to the art of consumer self-indulgence.” (Bauman 1998: 70)

In emphasising “paradigm shifting” or the bricolage-like sampling of any number of magico-religious traditions, Chaos magick can be considered as the ultimate

---

<sup>12</sup> It is possible that this immersion in “depthless” consumer culture offers a respite from emotional problems; the problem here, however, is that of the double-bind (Laing 1961: 144-148; Bateson 1972: 206-207): the paradox of seeking wholeness within a spiritually empty milieu (one which creates feelings of alienation and emotional turmoil in the first instance).

outcropping of the narcissistic (i.e. Lasch 1978) “self-spirituality” of globalising consumer culture.

While the psychological dispositions of practitioners *are* probably important factors in both facilitating trance, the socio-cultural context plays a significant part in determining its emotional appeal<sup>13</sup>. As a consequence, I argue in the next section that while trance and possession have, for Chaos magicians, a definite therapeutic value, these experiences are firmly located in practitioners’ experience of the social and cultural milieu of late modernity. There I show that the mobilisation of such practices is invariably related to the production and management of selfhood within the confusing array of late modern consumer culture - a point which is also developed in the next chapter.

### **Altered States of Consciousness and the Production of Selfhood**

Before he left the IOT, I had a number of discussions with Rick concerning his experience of demonic possession. During one conversation, he told me that he felt a need to explore the deeper significance of his encounter with the demonic. The recognition of his own failings resulting from this encounter was itself a valued source of self-knowledge, and he began a series of intensive “psychic” explorations in order to confront his “shadow self” and integrate it into his conscious mind<sup>14</sup>. This involved sojourns within the imaginal spaces of the Tunnels of Set - which, following Kenneth Grant, Rick believed to be mystically identical with the magician’s own unconscious “nightside”. Each of the twenty-two Tunnels is represented by a particular symbol (as set out by Aleister Crowley [Grant 1977: 138] - see fig. 14 in chapter two); to “enter” the Tunnels, Rick focused on the requisite sigil prior to sleep: this facilitated a state of lucid dreaming during which he underwent a number of significant encounters with the denizens of the Tunnels. Before leaving the IOT, Rick gave me a copy of an article he had written describing the significance of his dream experiences in the Tunnels. During one such dream, he found himself

---

<sup>13</sup> Erika Bourguignon (1973: 12) has also demonstrated in her comparative study of altered states of consciousness that trance is a universal psychobiological capacity of human beings.

<sup>14</sup> Although Rick did not mention Jung in this context, I assumed he was drawing on the Jungian



“making love and performing sexual feats with an older woman and the experience was rather enjoyable to begin with but she then began to stick her fingers up my rectum - quite enjoyable to start with - but then severe panic flooded through me. A deep male voice then said forcefully and malignantly, “Stick it up your arse with broken glass!” and I couldn’t see the woman anymore. I was paralysed, but lucid. Something heavy was pressing on my whole body, stopping it from any movement, I was being raped by a broken bottle. It didn’t actually hurt but I could feel it cutting into my entrails and damaging my body internally. I tried to move and struggle but it was near impossible. I found it difficult to regain consciousness and pull myself out of the dream. I can recall calling out physically but it sounded muted and far-off. Eventually, after much struggling, I pulled myself out of the dream. My stomach muscles ached considerably”

As mentioned in chapter two, Tanya Luhrmann (1989) has suggested that, for many neo-pagans and magicians, the encounter with chaos “is the keystone of the therapeutic arch” (Luhrmann 1989: 105). Rick, however, believed that this erotic nightmare was the result of psychic attack, possibly by one of the demonic inhabitants of the Tunnels. This act was not, he believed, necessarily malicious in intent, but part of a self-exploratory and “initiatory” trajectory towards which he was being pushed by the Tunnels’ inhabitants. In this respect, Rick’s felt that his encounters with the inhabitants of the Tunnels of Set were not simply about the confrontation of his own fears:

“It seems to me that too much emphasis has been placed upon the psychiatric approach in an attempt to palm nightmares off as merely “subconscious fears and guilt coming to consciousness”...By utilizing these night-side excursions so much can be gleaned about oneself that the “coming to terms with one’s fears” scenario can be viewed as merely one facet of a much larger whole”.

Vincent Crapanzano (1977) suggests, therefore, that the idiom of possession does not necessarily pertain to the pathological exteriorisation or projection of fears and desires, but is an experience in which the possessed individual - often experiencing identity problems - undergoes “an initiation into a (new) symbolic

---

concept of “individuation” (Jung 1954: 10-11, 20; von Franz 1964).

order” (Crapanzano 1977: 13). Possession is, for Crapanzano, “ a powerful rhetorical strategy for the definition of self and world” (Crapanzano 1977: 19) - one which is to be understood in terms of “context-specific rules of identity formation” (Crapanzano 1977: 20). Similarly, Charles Stewart (2002) argues that the cultural significance of erotic dreams and nightmares becomes obscured if treated in terms of the Freudian psychopathology of repression. Such experiences may instead be considered as epistemic indices of self-making: where erotic dreams and nightmares were attributed to the action of demonic forces in medieval Europe, the control of such experiences articulated a specific and culturally congruent model of the moral construction of the self. In the modern period, Stewart suggests that similar oneiric experiences have instead been utilised by Westerners as part of

“a project of erotic self-fulfilment exactly the converse of those encouraged by early ascetic practice, Victorian precepts, or the post-Victorian inner worlds of Malinowski and Freud.” (Stewart 2002: 298)<sup>15</sup>.

Both Crapanzano and Stewart appear to arrive at broadly similar conclusions: that the experience of altered states of consciousness is intrinsically linked to culturally-indented or context-specific ways of articulating the self.

Although Rick found the earlier stages of his erotic nightmare “rather enjoyable”, my aim here is not to suggest that Chaos magicians’ encounters with the demonic are primarily oriented to erotic self-fulfilment. Following the broader contours of Stewart’s argument, I do, however, suggest that such encounters with the disorderly demonic can be taken as an index of ways of self-making in relation to practitioners’ experience of late modernity. Whilst Stewart and Crapanzano both avoid the analytical reduction of trance and dream experiences to the conventions of Freudian psychology, such practices nonetheless elicit broader psychotherapeutic functions - in attempting to liberate the self from its alienated state, and in the production of “better” or more “fulfilling” selves consonant with - and adaptive to the uncertainties of - the consumer culture of late modernity. As suggested in chapter four, encounters with the demonic articulate an experience of disorderliness

---

<sup>15</sup> Stewart’s discussion similarly reflects the epistemic shift of moral agency and conceptions of the



and fluidity which are constitutive of a “new” processual order. The initiatory trajectory of Rick’s experiences in the Tunnels of Set pointed to a “larger whole”: the completion of the self - not as essentialised being, but (as I demonstrate in the next chapter) through a return to the primordial continuum of consciousness which lies through the doorway of the demonic, and which exists beyond categorical distinctions of being and non-being<sup>16</sup>.

In helping to construct selves better adapted to the condition of late modernity, the therapeutic aspects of Chaos magical practice are also discursive practices concerned not only with the cure of souls, but with “governmentality” (Foucault 1991): primarily through the constitution of the human subject as both an object and subject of knowledge (Foucault 1977; see also Morris 1991: 435).

Janice Boddy counters this view by suggesting that the often marginal and suppressed nature of spirit possession is itself an indication of how such experiences are seen to “threaten the reproduction and maintenance of docile bodies, work and gender disciplines, and the like” (Boddy 1994: 20). Similarly, Jane Salomonsen (1998) claims that amongst feminist witches, trance “is an aid to healing and becoming dispossessed from oppressive culture and imagery, and is a means to dispense with time and remember through the body” (Salomonsen 1998: 153). These elements are certainly evident in - if not fundamental to - the ethos of Chaos magick. However, the efficacy of magical practice in the context of the IOT is undoubtedly dependent upon bodily discipline, on the control and internal reproduction of imagery, and the mastery of spirits. In the case of institutionalised possession by Baphomet, possession does not subvert but rather enforces the maintenance of “docile bodies” and “gender disciplines”, at least to the extent that the collective valorisation of experience is dependent on the mimetic reproduction of the characteristic “masculinity” of the deity.

Baphomet is the carrier of the ethos of the IOT; by implication, possession plays a significant role in the interiorisation of the core values and assumptions of the organisation. Thus, William Sargant (1973) claims that the public enactment of

---

demonic from external to internal sources as outlined in chapter two.

<sup>16</sup> In this respect, Peter Carroll suggests that schizophrenia and identity problems arise when the separate components of the multiplicity of selves are isolated from one another (Carroll 1996b: 191)

trance and ecstatic states “reflect and serve to confirm the beliefs of bystanders or observers...[and] tend to confirm or inculcate these same beliefs in the possessed persons themselves” (Sargant 1973: 53; see also Crapanzano 1973: 103). However, the induction into networks of power is, as I think Nikolas Rose correctly states, enacted far more subtly within the therapeutic discourse pervading such practices:

“while many associate behavioural techniques with manipulation and control, their practitioners stress their potential for enhancing skills of ‘self-management’ and helping clients gain control of their feelings and behaviour; they see them as consonant with profoundly humanistic values” (Rose 1990: 230),

The therapeutic discourse of the “New Age” - of which Chaos magick broadly forms a part - is thus indented in the dominant cultural values of Euro-American modernity (Hess 1993: 14; Heelas 1995: 153): utility, efficiency, individual responsibility and self-reliance (van Vucht Tijssen 1995: 21). Consider, for example, Phil Hine’s claim that “Chaos magick can be understood as the discovery and application of effective techniques and scripts to maximise human design for living” (Hine 1993: 123). In Chaos magical discourse, these values transform the Christian moral idiom of the demonic from supernatural evil into the ambivalence of secular psychology (as discussed in chapter two). Thus, “working” with spirits or “daemons” becomes a method of self-management, of enhancing the adaptability and utility of the self in practitioners’ daily lives - either by dealing with inhibitory complexes which reside within the magician’s unconscious, or by using “daemons” as idealised models of the self. In the latter case, Dave Lee (1997) claims that through possession,

“we are seeking to bring into our nervous system a perfect (or at least improved) role model for one of our personas. Or indeed to assemble a ‘new’ personality for some new function. These selves are then available so that we can access and act from whatever self is the most effective in every situation we find ourselves in. The use of samples is a kind of parallel in music to this modelling of personality traits we desire. Flexibility is one of the cornerstones of power” (Lee 1997: 132).

---

- i.e. seen as distinct and separate and not a part of this continuum.



The practices utilised by Chaos magicians in reshaping the self are, therefore

“implicated in the extension and reshaping of psychotherapies far beyond the psychiatry of mental illness, to provide a way of promoting the capacity to cope in accordance with social norms among new sectors of the population and in new institutional sites” (Rose 1990: 237).

Other “therapeutic” practices adopted by Chaos magicians include “life coaching”, and more widely, Neuro-Linguistic Programming (NLP). NLP was created by the linguist John Grinder and mathematician Richard Bandler in the 1970’s, and is based on the Whorfian notion that linguistically-framed assumptions at least partially shape our beliefs about ourselves and the world. Over half of the Chaos magicians I knew had attended NLP workshops or had some training in NLP, which was attractive to practitioners partly because its central ideas are couched in a pseudo-scientific lexicon, but also because it mirrors a number of the core assumptions of Chaos magick (see Lee 1997: 129-131): that “[w]hat we believe deeply affects what we think and how we act” (O’Connor & McDermott 1996: xiii); that the self is multiple or “schizophrenic” (Lee 1997: 131); that self-change is dependent upon attaining “rapport” with the unconscious levels of mind (O’Connor & McDermott 1996: 43). As with Chaos magick, these assumptions are coupled in NLP with results-oriented approach which seeks to transform unproductive and inhibiting behaviours through “programming” the mind.

Practitioners of NLP tend to emphasise its use as a therapeutic tool in improving self-understanding, promoting better communication and positively transforming one’s actions and behaviours. NLP is, however, probably one of the most widely employed types of managerial/motivational seminar within the corporate sector<sup>17</sup>: its therapeutic value thus appears subservient to economic ends in motivating and enhancing the productivity of the workforce<sup>18</sup>. Similarly, Chaos magicians’ use of sorcery for practical ends is, as Elizabeth Puttick recognises, an equivalent of New Age “prosperity consciousness” (Puttick 2000: 210; see also Heelas 1991a, 1992).

---

<sup>17</sup> Ian McDermott, “a Certified Trainer with the Society of NLP” lists an impressive range of corporations and business organisations who have employed his services, including British Rail, The Metropolitan Police, the BBC, Sainsbury’s, Shell, and ICI (O’Connor & McDermott 1996: 159).

<sup>18</sup> The name “Neuro-Linguistic Programming” has in fact been trademarked by Richard Bandler.

To this extent, both the New Age and Chaos magick do, I suggest, have the potential to implicitly endorse capitalistic values by attempting to “spiritualise” them.

The therapeutic foundations of Chaos magical practices are not, therefore, simply a “response to the psychic damage wrought by capitalism” (Rose 1990: 215), but allow practitioners to engage in the production of selfhood in ways which mediate identity problems generated by the plethora of lifestyle-choices available within the context of modernity:

“Selves dissatisfied with who they are can engage in therapeutic projects to refurbish and reshape themselves in the directions they desire. The psychotherapies provide technologies of individuality for the production and regulation of the individual who is “free to choose” (Rose 1990: 228).

As quoted earlier, Dave Lee claims that the self-flexibility obtained through possession is “one of the cornerstones of power”. In the next chapter, I show how possession - as an encounter with the radical “otherness” of profoundly discordant forces - represents for Chaos magicians a form of empowerment. Through the ambivalent and fragmented nature of the demonic, Chaos magicians are able to manage the fragmented or multiple subjectivities characteristic of the “postmodern” experience of the self. The experience of possession thus “creatively resituates individuals in a profoundly alienating or confusing world” (Boddy 1994: 422) - one subject to “disembedding mechanisms” (Giddens 1990: 22; 1991: 17-20) which have eroded family ties and communal bonds - “traditional” social ties which have subsequently been replaced by “noncommittal lifestyle enclaves” (van Vucht Tijssen 1995: 20). I go on to argue that this resituating of the self is accomplished through the interiorisation of the uncertainties characteristic of late modernity - in effect, the embodiment of the disorderly demonic elaborates the “creativity” of choice and consumption over and above the anxiety which this plethora of lifestyle-options otherwise generates. This is accomplished through the “spiritualisation” of fluidity and uncertainty, where the mystical immersion in the hyperreal spectacle becomes a signifier of ontological Chaos.



In the first and second sections of this chapter, I demonstrate the ways in which possession by the demonic is used to both contest and affirm existing relations of power in Chaos magical groups. In the second section I also show how possession experiences may be shaped by the collective expectations of such groups and may, subsequently, act to internalise and reify the ethos of Chaos magick. This ethos, I suggest, represents at least a partial embracing of late modern or “postmodern” consumer culture. This line of enquiry is followed in the final section of the chapter, where I reiterate my core argument: that Chaos magick is an outcropping of late modernity. There I show how the therapeutic dimensions of magical trance and possession form part of a wider set of disciplinary practices used by Chaos magicians; such practices are, I argue, oriented to the production of an adaptive and utilitarian self - one which is “free to choose”, and thus ably fulfils the requirements of late modern society for consuming subjects.

## Chapter 6

### **“Alien Selves”: Late Modernity, Otherness and Uncertainty.**

#### **Part 1 - Chaos Magick and the “Lovecraftian” Milieu**

##### **Introduction**

This chapter explores the practice of “Lovecraftian magick” as a further attempt by Chaos magicians to mobilise the imagination as a potent “apocalyptic” weapon in reconstructing the self. In the first section, I return to issues raised in chapter five - namely practitioners’ preoccupation with fantasy and the imagination. This is examined in relation to the popularity of the work of science fiction writer H. P. Lovecraft, which forms the basis of a “paradigm” widely used by Chaos magicians. Superficially, Chaos magicians approach the science fiction genre in the same way they would any other extant cultural mythology: as a set of ideas and representations that can be appropriated as the basis for belief. However, the way in which Chaos magicians often apply science fiction as a magical idiom also differs markedly from their treatment of other source material. For Chaos magicians, the genre represents a publicly-recognised fiction - one that is generally perceived as distinct from and somehow less “real” than established cultural mythologies. Thus, the reification of science fiction as a “reality” from which concrete magical results can be obtained forcefully articulates one the central claims of Chaos magick: that “Nothing is True, Everything is Permitted” - there are no absolute or ultimate configurations of “reality” other than those which the magician creates for his- or herself. Here I show that the significance of science fiction for Chaos magicians lies not only in its content, but also in the way it can be used to contest the quotidian, rational assumptions of the wider culture.

In the second section, I look specifically at the way in which such a paradigm was forged by a group of Chaos magicians calling themselves the Haunters of the Dark. There I focus specifically on the role played by possession and trance in constructing and reifying the “Lovecraftian paradigm”. In the final section, I argue



that if myths speak of origins, then the interest in Lovecraft's fictional mythology is a reflection of wider anxieties produced by the experience of late modernity where indeterminacy - like Lovecraft's fictive deity, the "blind idiot god" Azathoth - reigns supreme. Importantly, I also claim that possession by Lovecraft's chaotic creations affirms a sense of self that is able to mediate such anxieties. As a consequence, I suggest that such practices also constructing an experience of the self that is adaptive to post- or late modern consumer culture.

### **Role-playing, Science Fiction, and the Imagination in Contemporary**

#### **Occultism**

By October 1998, Temple Discordia had been dissolved, although I continued to meet informally with Mat, Dawn and Guy. At Mat's suggestion, the four of us began playing a role-playing game called *The Call of Cthulhu*, and would meet weekly at his flat in North London for this purpose; typically, a single game would stretch out over four or five sessions.

Role-playing games have lengthy and sometimes complex rules, but are largely played out through the imagination and shared dialogue of the players. In *The Call of Cthulhu* game, one player would take the role of "game master" and construct a "scenario" or loose storyline; the other players' would then "enact" the scenario through the personae of stereotypical "pulp fiction" characters<sup>1</sup>. Invariably, such scenarios pitted these alter-egos against malign occult forces which sought to destroy the world. Game-play encouraged the marshalling of players' skills and abilities, and the occult forces arraigned against the players were more likely to be defeated through the recitation of an incantation discovered in some ancient tome than by the use of conventional weaponry. In fact, the most important skills in the game were academic and magical in nature - a character's ability to read Latin or Sanskrit, to ferret out an obscure book, or cast spells often proving more decisive than being a crack-shot with a pistol. Although similar to the immensely popular *Dungeons and Dragons* game, *The Call of Cthulhu* differs from its famous antecedent in emphasising problem solving over the slaying of Tolkeinesque orcs

---

<sup>1</sup> A private-eye, or an "Indiana Jones"-style archaeologist, for example.

and dragons.

However, one important feature of *The Call of Cthulhu* game is its background of existential horror. The game presents a world under siege by impossibly powerful entities whose ascendancy - and the consequent destruction of humanity and all terrestrial life - is assured. The players' alter-egos also encounter profound existential conundrums: as they attain greater knowledge of the forces confronting them, they become privy to a privileged view of reality: that universe is utterly indifferent to human beings, and their attempts to stem the flood of otherworldly horror are ultimately meaningless. The sense of isolation and alienation of their game alter-egos becomes more pronounced as the game progresses, and is represented by the characters' slow descent into madness as they lose "sanity points".

During the 1970s and 1980s such games (especially *Dungeons and Dragons*) became a key element in the anti-cult/anti-satanic discourse of the Christian Right in North America (Best 1991: 101; Martin & Fine 1991). A new folklore emerged in which role-playing games were held responsible for teenage suicides and for inducting impressionable youngsters into demon-worship. There is little evidence to suggest that playing such games encourage - or are directly linked - to involvement in the occult; however, as indicated in chapter five, role-playing and sci-fi are attractive to individuals who place a high value upon fantasy and the imagination. In her journalistic study of neo-pagans in North America, Marion Adler (1979) found that many neo-pagans' religious views "were part of a general visionary quest that included involvement with poetry, art drama, music, science fiction and fantasy." (Adler 1979: 22). Neo-pagans and Chaos magicians are individuals who express feelings of disenfranchisement in a world dominated by the instrumental rationality of western capitalism, and who consequently seek a re-enchantment of the world by making recourse to the imaginary. They are often, as Adler suggests, individuals who have undergone intense imaginary experiences as children<sup>2</sup>. Damien - a member of both the IOU and the Haunters of the Dark - remarked, for example, that "as I child, I was very keen on role-playing games. I

---

<sup>2</sup> See my comments concerning "fantasy-prone" personalities in chapter four.



still am, but now I call it “ritual””; he went on to explain that his interest in the two activities lay in the way they engaged and facilitated explorations of his own imagination.

Engagement with the imaginal, and the development of participants’ abilities to sustain realistic visualisations are central aspects of magical practice (Ivakhiv 1996: 244); by using the imagination as a psychic gateway, otherworldly realms and beings are experienced by magicians as living realities<sup>3</sup>. The imaginal entrance into fantastic worlds, the adoption of new and exciting or exotic personae, the ability to master occult powers and supernatural beings means that role-playing games are appealing to some pagans. In fact, virtually all the Chaos magicians I encountered had played *The Call of Cthulhu* - unsurprising, given the mood of dark, existential horror which permeates the game, alongside the notion of uncovering secret or “blasphemous” knowledge which radically transforms the recipient’s consciousness and perception of the world.

### **H.P. Lovecraft and the Cthulhu Mythos**

*The Call of Cthulhu* role-playing game is itself somewhat peripheral to the concerns of this chapter: what is significant is the attraction that the game’s fictional universe holds for Chaos magicians and other practitioners of Left-Hand Path magic.

*The Call of Cthulhu* game takes its inspiration from a fictional mythology created by the American science-fiction and horror writer, Howard Phillips Lovecraft (1890 - 1937; see fig. 19). This mythology - popularly known as the “Cthulhu mythos” - has since been utilised by many magicians, including a London-based group of Chaos magicians calling themselves the Haunters of the Dark (hereafter referred to as the HOD). This group effectively used the Cthulhu mythos a framework for contacting a group of monstrous extraterrestrials known in Lovecraft’s work as the

---

<sup>3</sup> This idea finds its expression throughout the history of Western magic (Faivre 1994: 12-13; Sutcliffe 1995: 117): in the mnemonic practices of Renaissance magic (Yates 1966), and later in work of 19th Century magician Eliphas Levi (1995: 43). Arguably, the imagination has also been a key constituent in a variety of cross-cultural magico-religious and mystical practices) - particularly those cultures whose religious modalities have been treated as “shamanic” (Noll 1985). Roy Rappaport has also argued that the development of language consequently allowed humans the capacity for envisioning alternative moral worlds (Rappaport 1999: 17) - by extension, science fiction and role-playing would constitute literary and oral exemplars of this linguistic function.

“Old Ones” or “Great Old Ones”.



**Fig. 19 - Howard Philips Lovecraft.**

Originating in a series of loosely-connected stories, the Cthulhu mythos outlines the history and nature of the Great Old Ones, who are described by the Lovecraftian magician “Zebulon” as

“trans-dimensional entities...who, “when the stars are right”, can enter into our world via psychic or physical gateways. The Great Old Ones represent an ‘Elder Lore’ which antedates human civilisation and, to human perception, are both immensely powerful and alien. In the tales of the Cthulhu mythos, there is a worldwide network (or conspiracy) of cults who worship the Great Old Ones and seek to speed their return to the Earth” (Zebulon, n.d.a.: 1).

The eponymous Cthulhu (a mountainous squid-like extraterrestrial entombed beneath the Pacific Ocean - see fig. 20) is perhaps the best known of Lovecraft’s Old Ones; others include Yog-Sothoth, Nyarlathotep, and the aforementioned Azathoth. Typically, these entities are depicted as vast, slimy and amorphous



creatures. As fictional constructs, they are emblematic of Lovecraft's pessimistic view of the cosmos as intrinsically meaningless and alien to human sentience (Joshi 2001: 130-132, 244-246). The Old Ones are extraterrestrial forces of cosmic



**Fig. 20 - The Great Old One Cthulhu.**

magnitude whose existence predates humanity by billions of years. They inhabit chaotic, liminal dimensions beyond the rational and ordered universe of human perception and morality, and their mere presence invariably results in madness or death. In Lovecraft's fictional cosmos, the Old Ones' eventual return to our world will "liberate" humanity from the moral constraints of good and evil in an ecstatic holocaust heralding the end of all terrestrial life.



### **Lovecraftian Magick within the Occult Subculture**

The initial attraction of the Cthulhu mythos for Chaos magicians lies in the fact that it expounds an antinomian worldview and cosmological indeterminism similar to their own ethos; furthermore, the underscoring of the precariousness of modernity's rationalising and objectifying thrust by transforming a body of recognised fiction into a "reality" and viable system of belief - the practice of "paradigm shifting" - also appeals to Chaos magicians. In this respect, the attraction of Lovecraft's fictive universe also lies within the writer's own methodology in constructing his tales, which Lovecraft explicitly treated as potential hoaxes. In effect, Lovecraft intermingled historical fact with the fictional aspects of his mythology in order to create a sense of authenticity. For example, Lovecraft (1927) wrote a short essay tracing the roots of the *Necronomicon* - a fictional tome (supposedly written by the "Mad Arab" Abdul Alhazred) dealing with the forces of the Cthulhu mythos. There Lovecraft places the book in a "real world" context, claiming that it was translated into English by the Elizabethan magus and mathematician John Dee. This blurring of boundaries between fact and fiction has led some occultists to make the assumptions that Lovecraft was drawing on a genuine body of esoteric lore when writing his stories<sup>4</sup>. Exacerbated by a number of "scholarly" essays contained in one published version of the *Necronomicon* (Hay 1978; see also Hay & Turner 1995), a new mythology has emerged - primarily within the internet - explicitly linking Lovecraft's fiction to Crowley's magical philosophy<sup>5</sup>.

The practice of what I call "Lovecraftian magick" does not form a discrete subcultural niche. Rather, the Cthulhu mythos represents an amorphous mytho-fictional resource that is drawn upon in an eclectic fashion by various groups and individuals. The influence of Lovecraft's fiction upon contemporary occult subcultures is constituted within a complex genealogy, and only a summarised version is presented here - one which encompasses some of the salient features

---

<sup>4</sup> Lovecraft was in fact both an atheist (Joshi 2001: 60) and a "mechanistic materialist" (Joshi 2001: 131). See also Lovecraft (1995: 133-203).

<sup>5</sup> Lovecraft knew of Crowley (Lovecraft: 1976: 120), but there is no evidence to suggest that Crowley had read Lovecraft's work. See the volume by Harms and Gonce (1998) for a discussion of these myths.



and ideas which groups such as the HOD have used in the construction of magical practice.

One of the central figures responsible for bringing Lovecraft's work to the attention of the occult world is, again, Kenneth Grant. Grant was a member of the Crowley-led Ordo Templi Orientis (OTO), and, according to non-academic historical studies of contemporary magic (Suster 1988: 215, King 1989: 166; Koenig 1991), claimed contact with extraterrestrial forces (originating from a planetary body existing beyond Pluto) during the 1950's. This eventually led Grant to suppose that Crowley's writings contained a system of contacting pre-human, extraterrestrial forces identical with Lovecraft's Old Ones - a take on Crowley's magical philosophy which appears to have been instrumental in his expulsion from the OTO (now known as the Caliphate OTO). Grant went on to established the Typhonian OTO, a group which has sought to systematically explore connections between Lovecraft's fiction and the occult systems of both Spare and Crowley.

In June 1999, I wrote to Kenneth Grant asking about Spare's magical interest in Lovecraft. In reply, Grant stated that "HPL had no influence on Austin Spare, who only became aware of his work only when I lent him, late in his life, one or two of HPL's tales. On reading them, he declared him to be "one of us""<sup>6</sup>. However, Grant (1994: 17, n.4) notes that at least one piece of Spare's artwork was inspired by reading Lovecraft; he also suggests that the work of both Spare and Lovecraft echo identical magical themes, and argues that they were similarly inspired by the same "magical current" originating in the Old Ones (Grant 1971; 1973: 95; 1975a: 18; 1975b: 167).

Lovecraft's fiction became popular in North America in the 1970s<sup>7</sup>, when it began to assert an influence within occult circles (Lachman 2001: 39-58). This period saw the rise of Anton LaVey's San Francisco-based Church of Satan, and LaVey's (1972) *The Satanic Rituals* contains a number of Lovecraftian rituals. Later, the Temple of Set, led by ex-Church of Satan member Michael Aquino, also incorporated the Cthulhu mythos into their own recension of Satanism (Harms &

---

<sup>6</sup> The intimation being that Spare recognised Lovecraft as a magician. Spare first read Lovecraft's work sometime after October 1954 (Grant & Grant 1998: 102, n.116).

<sup>7</sup> Over a million paperback editions of Lovecraft's work had apparently been sold in the USA by

Gonce 1998: 111), as has the Order of the Nine Angles (see Long & Myatt 1998) - a more recently formed neo-Nazi Satanist group (Goodrick-Clarke 2002: 215-223). It was during the 1970s that Grant began to relate his findings in a series of books known collectively as the "Typhonian Trilogies" (Grant 1972, 1973, 1975b, 1977, 1980, 1992, 1994, 1999, 2002). In these volumes, Grant suggests that by opening psychic gateways, magicians can allow the primal, atavistic forces of the Old Ones to gain purchase in the human mind, subsequently forcing humanity to attain cosmic consciousness and evolve into a hybrid, "alien" or space-borne species<sup>8</sup>.

The work of Grant and LaVey have had a formative effect on the ideas of later Lovecraftian groups including the Esoteric Order of Dagon (EOD), a North American magical order styling itself as "an occult Order descended from the Sirius-mystery cults of ancient Egypt, Babylon and Sumeria" (EOD 1987: 1). The EOD emerged in the late 1980s as one of the first organisation (with approximately forty-eight members spread across North America and the UK [EOD n.d.a, 1990, 1992]) dedicated solely to an occult exegesis of Lovecraft's fictional myth cycle. The two strands of LaVey and Grant's work have also merged within Chaos magick to form a concept of evolving awareness and emancipation from the "human" condition through contact with "primal" cosmogenic forces. Thus, a Chaos magical group called the Lincoln Order of Neuromancers state in one of their on-line publications:

"The twentieth-century is busy resurrecting the titans - the primal "builders" of the cosmos who appear in creation myths under various guises - the Giants of Norse mythology or the Greek titans for instance. Once these titanic forces have completed their work, they are cast out or banished from the ordered cosmos, which is then populated with all manner of entities.

The titans are ever-present, lurking at the borders of "reality". These forces, both destructive and creative, continually appear in literature as the theme of conflict between reason and raw, primal nature. The "High Priest" of such mysteries is the author H.P. Lovecraft, whose "Great Old Ones" seem to hold a continuing fascination for occultists...

The myth-cycle of the titans represents the catabolic forces which propagate change in any system - whether the scale be universal or

---

June 1973 (Joshi 2002: xiii).

<sup>8</sup> For a brief summary of this view, see Grant (1973: 37).



subatomic. They are held to be dormant or asleep in that they are in equilibrium. However, when a system evolves to a certain degree of complexity it becomes increasingly unstable, which can eventually lead to either evolution - the system "evolves" to a higher-order of complexity, or collapse - systems crash. It is at such crisis-points that the titans once more become active - when a great deal of instability needs to be built up, so that the evolutionary "leap" may be made.

The development of nuclear technology has led to a sudden increase of access points where the spheres meet between our ordered reality and the primal chaos of the titans. The gateways have been opened, and the evolution of all entities within the biosphere (both organic and elemental) is being affected.

As the power of the titans returns, a new priesthood has arisen to worship them - the power obsessed politicians and their numerous satraps. Like the inbred wizards of the Cthulhu Mythos, they believe that the titans can be controlled, and that they possess the spells to bind and chain the nuclear forces without danger. Unfortunately for them (and us), the titans are utterly amoral, not being sentient as we know it. Our only point of interface with them is through the so-called Dragon Brain, with its pre-verbal atavisms and instinctual drives.

Titan-Gnosis is the name we have given to the evolution in consciousness that the titans are generating in Human beings as their stirrings ripple through our mind. The awareness grows that Human survival surpasses all boundaries - both ideological and cultural; that it is necessary to live within nature rather than laying waste to the environment. It seems that as the titans stir in death's dream, the closer we are to "awakening" in larger and larger numbers.

The tricky point about the titans is that for the moment, we need them if the evolutionary leap is to be made successfully. Their return is generated the incoming current which has been variously conceptualised as the 93, Ma'at, or KAOS current. In the final analysis, the names and attendant symbolism are not that important - they are but facets of the same process.

Magicians and other visionaries who are aware of Titan-Gnosis and its effects are now actively working as transducers for these energies. Evocation of titanic energies into one's own space-time lattice is a dangerous enterprise, yet there are those who may seemingly do this with impunity. The use of names, sigils, and chants are only partially helpful, since the 'names' of the titans form the fabric of our reality itself." (Lincoln Order of Neuromancers, 1986: 1)

The extraterrestrialist project visible in Grant's work has also been coupled with a similar project found in the writings of Timothy Leary, Robert Anton Wilson and William Burroughs (see chapter one). These sources have been used by practitioners to explore potentially new systems of "offworld magick" in response

to a perceived biological necessity of embracing the “space age” and making an “evolutionary” the leap into outer space. Such notions articulate the concerns, anxieties, expectations and dreams of practitioners with regard to the cultural consequences of modern space travel and exploration: the awareness of human beings’ own cosmologically “marginal”, decentred and uncertain position within the universe-at-large, for example. Chaos magical groups - and thematically-related organisations such as the now-defunct Association of Autonomous Astronauts<sup>9</sup> - have also sought, by magical means, to reclaim the exploration of outer space from the economic grasp of multinational corporations and state-controlled space agencies: the aim being, according to a talk given by Damien at Talking Stick, to avoid “colonisation, in the sense of reproducing what’s “down here” “up there” - I don’t want to see McDonalds on the Moon”. In contrast to the materialism underlying much of Chaos magick, this “extraterrestrial” project does reiterate Gnostic themes of escape from an alienating, materialistic and economically-driven existence into cosmic plenitude.

The apparent increase in the popularity of Lovecraft’s work during the last decade is, in part, due to the popularity of *The Call of Cthulhu* role-playing game. Since 1985, Chaosium<sup>10</sup> (the company which produces the game) have continued to publish a series of thematic anthologies collecting together the diverse stories defining the Cthulhu mythos. At the present time, over twenty volumes of this series have appeared - one of the most recent additions being *The Book of Dzyan* (Maroney 2000): a fabled occult text written in the prehuman past, from which Madame Blavatsky claimed to derive the central tenets of Theosophy, and which Lovecraft alluded to as one of the “forbidden” or “blasphemous” texts of the Cthulhu mythos. Significantly, the Chaosium volume of the same name departs from the earlier format of the series in that it contains an extended analysis on Blavatsky’s mystical writings in relation to their possible influence on the Cthulhu

---

<sup>9</sup> The Association of Autonomous Astronauts (AAA) was not a Chaos magical group per se, although its members drew inspiration from the same sources as Chaos magick. At UnConvention 2000 - an annual symposium organised by the popular paranormal journal *Fortean Times* - members of the AAA spoke about their adoption of magical and Chaos magical techniques in their attempts to “get off planet”.

<sup>10</sup> The name “Chaosium” appears to have been inspired by the work of fantasy author Michael Moorcock, and bears no direct relation to Chaos magick.



mythos - indicating some of the ways by which the boundaries between science-fiction and occult discourse have been eroded.

The growing interest in Lovecraft's work amongst Chaos magicians led Phil Hine to publish *The Psuedonomicon* in 1994 - a booklet which has since been reprinted, and remains a popular practical guide to "paradigmatically" forging the Cthulhu mythos into an individualistic system based on Chaos magical principles (see also Hine 1993: 94-106). To give some further indication of the popularity of Lovecraft's fiction as a form of occult discourse, the 1980s and 1990s precipitated a minor explosion of occult texts dealing with Lovecraftian themes, including *Nameless Aeons*, *The Black Stone*, *Liber Koth*, *Nox Anthology*, *Polarion*, *R'lyeh Text*, and the Typhonian OTO's journal *Starfire*<sup>11</sup>. A plethora of Lovecraftian groups can now also be found on the internet - Chaos magick websites such as the *Fifth Aeon Egregore* (Hine 2002) and the *Chaos Matrix* (Chaos Matrix 2002) acting as major repositories of on-line Lovecraftian magical material.

Having examined the broad historical and cultural background of Lovecraft's fictive milieu, I go on to demonstrate how the HOD formulated many of these ideas into a magical belief system or "paradigm". I begin by describing the formation of the group, then detail their use of possession and trance practices in an attempt to encompass the "alien" as a "new" model of selfhood. In the final part of the section, I examine notions of transgression as a method of looking beyond human morality, and suggest that their transgressive practices largely remain ideational.

## **Part 2 - Forging the Lovecraftian Paradigm**

### **Making the Old Ones Manifest**

By June 1999, Mat and Dawn had both moved from their previous addresses and I eventually lost touch with them. Nonetheless, a few months later I found myself playing *The Call of Cthulhu* with members of the aforementioned Haunters of the

---

<sup>11</sup> See for example: Simon (1977); Hay (1978); Roberts & Gilbertson (1985); Sennitt, Smith & Blake (1990); Grant (1992, 1994); Hine (1993; 1994); Mitchell (1994); Staley, Lowe & Taylor (1994); Hay & Turner (1995); Sennitt (1997); Harms & Gonce (1998); Smith (1999); Walker (1999).

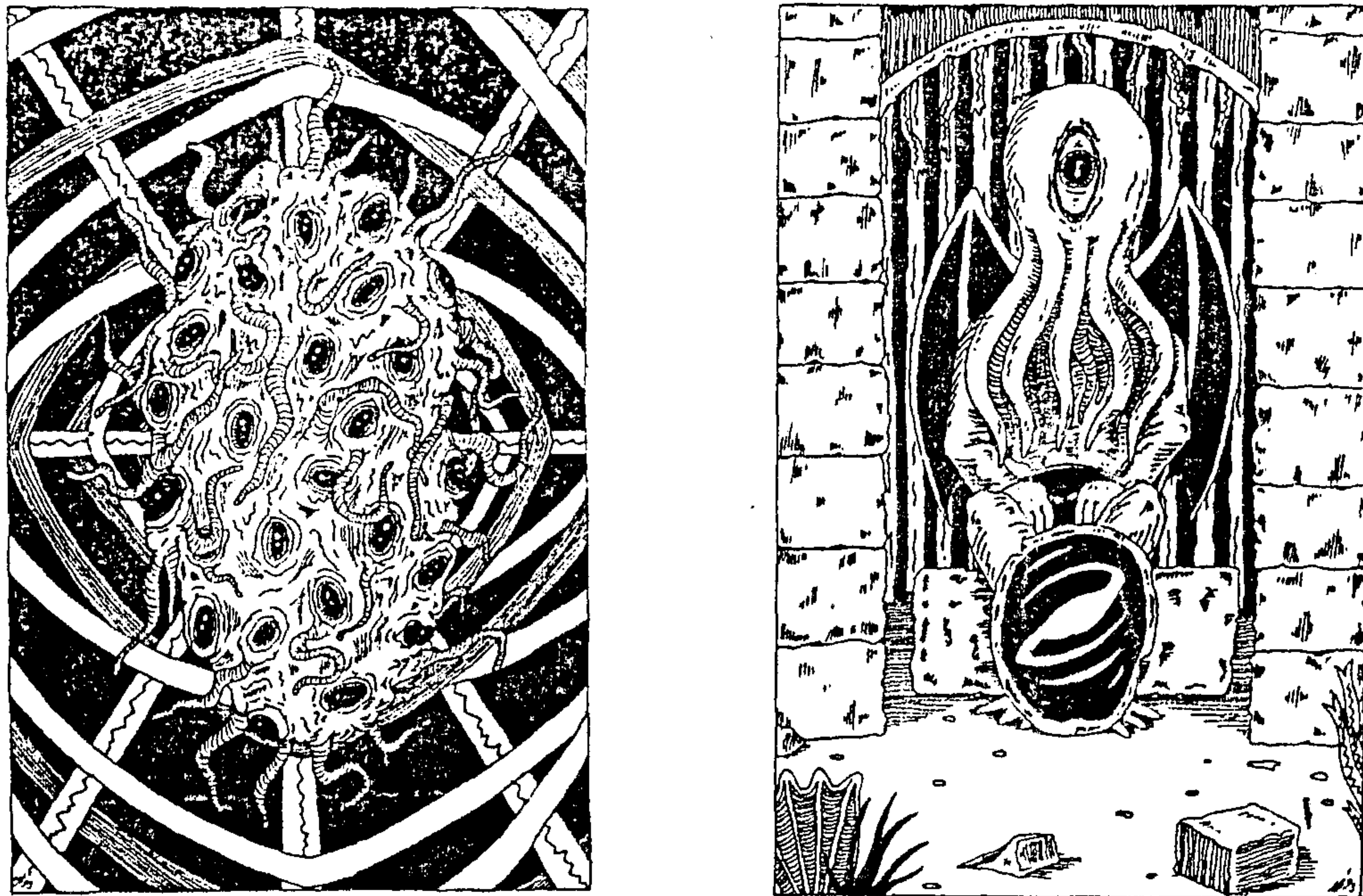
Dark.

In August 1999 I was at Talking Stick, chatting to Jack - a neo-pagan and retired teacher in his early fifties. Jack did not define himself as a Chaos magician, but had integrated Chaos magical ideas into his own beliefs and practices; he had also written occasional articles for *Chaos International* (which had ceased publication by this time). Knowing of my academic interest in Chaos magick, he offered to introduce me to Jason, another regular at Talking Stick.

Jason, a twenty-seven year old art student, told me that Caroline (who organised the moot) had asked him to find new speakers for Talking Stick, and suggested that I might want to talk about my own research into Chaos magick. This seemed a good opportunity for gauging the views of neo-pagans concerning academic research being conducted within their ranks, so I agreed. Since my role-playing sessions, I had begun to investigate the links between Lovecraft's fiction and Chaos magick; I also knew that other members of the IOT had used Lovecraft's work as a basis for magical practice (although I had not witnessed any such rituals); during my final conversations with Rick, he told me of his dream experiences involving "Lovecraftian" entities, and had begun creating a "Lovecraftian" tarot deck (see fig. 21). Jason seemed pleased when I suggested the relationship between Lovecraft's work and magic as a topic, and said that he would contact me to arrange a time for the talk.

A few weeks later, I happened to meet Jason just outside of Queen Mary College in Mile End, which was hosting a neo-pagan conference. In a nearby pub, Jason proceeded to question me about my interest in Lovecraft's fiction, and told me that some of his Chaos magician friends had been thinking about forming a group dedicated to an exploration of the "Lovecraftian gnosis". I had, it seemed, become the focus of a significant synchronicity for Jason, and he asked if I would like to participate in the group. Jason was a member of the Caliphate OTO, but also classified himself as a Chaos magician, seeing Chaos magick as a more contemporary recension of Crowley's Thelemic philosophy. He was, at the time, only vaguely familiar with Lovecraft's work, but was eager to explore what was for him a new avenue of magical practice; from what he had read, he found the darker





**Fig. 21 - some of Rick's designs for a set of "Lovecraftian" Tarot cards.**

aspects of Lovecraft's work especially attractive. Later on in the day, we met with Garth and Alan, two other Chaos magicians who were interested in forming the "Lovecraft group". I had previously met Alan at Talking Stick, when I expressed an interest in joining the IOU (who were about to start running a series of seminars on Chaos magick). On this occasion, Alan told me that other members of the IOU would be participating in the as-yet unnamed Lovecraft group, and encouraged me to attend the first IOU workshop which was to take place later that month.

By early October, I had met Rob, Stuart (an administrative assistant in his late-thirties who only remained with the group for a short time), Damien, and Dane (who I already knew from the IOT) who, along with Garth (a student in his late twenties), Alan and Jason, would form the core of this new group. The group met on a twice-monthly basis in a pub about fifty yards from the venue where Talking Stick was held. During the first few meetings, the members attempted to thresh out the aims and objectives of the group, and to decide on a "style" of working. One of



the first decisions made was to name the group the Haunters of the Dark, after one of Lovecraft's stories. Damien, a writer in his early thirties who worked in computing on a temporary and fairly ad-hoc basis, later told me that he believed this had been a defining period for the group. Because the HOD were working with what other pagans viewed as extremely dark and malign forces, it was, Damien felt, important that we had taken time to establish proper bonds of trust. This was especially important given the direction that the group's work had taken, namely using spirit possession as its principal *modus operandi*. Although some of the group already knew one another (Damien, Jason and Alan) the rest of us had only recently met; in this respect, trust was an important factor in allaying the often jokingly-expressed fears that participants would abuse those undergoing possession. The relaxed, social atmosphere characteristic of group meetings during this time was also important in the way that the HOD evolved as a largely informal body without a hierarchy or degree structure. The HOD did not, however, remain totally free from the effects of power, and many members saw Alan as an overbearing character; occasionally concerns were raised (of which Alan remained largely unaware) about his predilection for trying to "lead" the group.

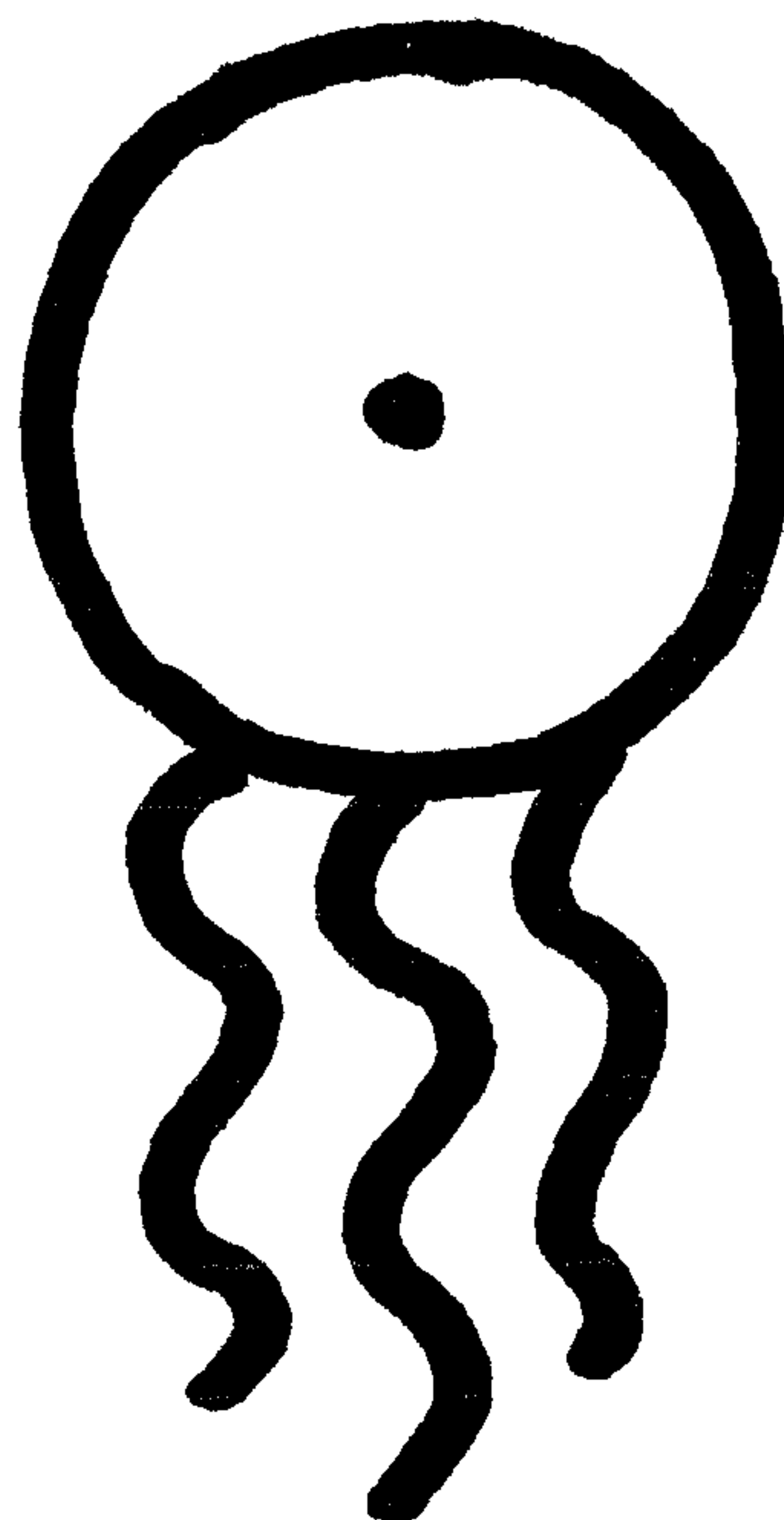
Aside from the twice-monthly discussion groups, between October 1999 and February 2000 the group conducted their magical work "on the astral plane": i.e., they did not meet physically, but attempted to forge an "egregore" - a semi-autonomous, imaginal embodiment of the collective intention of the group - through individual acts of lucid dreaming.

During the group's second meeting, various ideas were exchanged as to how the egregore should be conceptualised. Dane envisaged the egregore as a vast, pyramid-like structure, but one which was not confined to four-dimensional space-time. Rather, he suggested, we should attempt to visualise it as having "strange angles", as if it had been constructed using "non-Euclidean" geometric principles. Later in the evening, the group formulated a glyph representing the egregore. This consisted of a circle with three wavy lines projecting from the lower part of its circumference (see figs. 22 and 23). The circle also had a large black dot at its centre, which Damien felt could be used in visualisation exercises as a kind of "black-hole" or

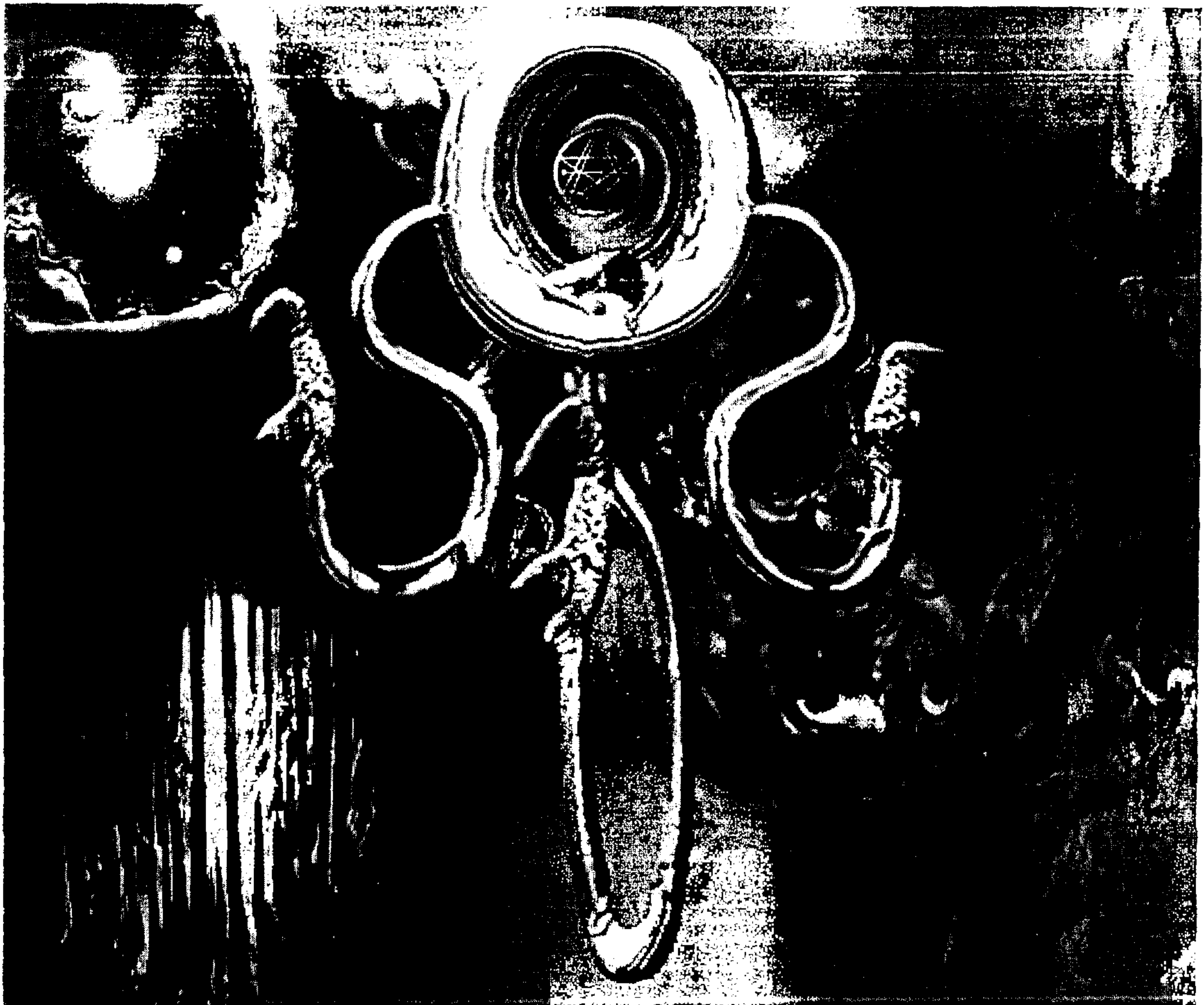


gateway leading to the egregore, and ultimately to contact with the Old Ones. By the end of the session, these three ideas were incorporated as the basic structure for group practice. Each evening, before going to sleep, we would then lie in bed visualising the egregore's symbol, projecting our discarnate psyches through it. This would, it was hoped, lead us to the imaginal-dream world of the egregore, and individually we could begin to explore and map its structure. In the liminal state between wakefulness and sleep, the symbol would sink into our subconscious minds, and there take effect to manifest as an otherworld reality through our dreams.

Lovecraft's fiction played an important role in these practices. Alan thought that we ought to familiarise ourselves with the Cthulhu mythos by reading certain stories and passages before we went to sleep - the hope being that the nightmarish images in Lovecraft's fiction would induce particularly relevant dream experiences. Dane suggested that this might also subtly begin to alter our everyday perceptions at an unconscious level.



**Fig. 22 - the symbol of the Haunters of the Dark.**



**Fig. 23 - Jason's computer-designed illustration of the HOD symbol.**

Over the following weeks, we began communicating our experiences via e-mail. On one occasion, I had a dream in which I was being scrutinised by two black-robed figures standing on a concourse of a huge stone structure, the walls of which seemed to be lined with strange stone sarcophagi. After posting a description of my experience to the group's e-mail list, Garth and Damien both replied, claiming that they had both shared a similar dream around the same time. This was taken to mean that the groups efforts at reifying the egregore were beginning to take effect, as the three of us had obviously managed to encounter one another within the confines of the imaginal edifice. It was upon such apparent synchronicities that the magical "paradigm" was built and reinforced in the minds of the practitioners.

Initially, Alan felt that the group's approach should, in fact, be "paradigmatic":



“We have to treat the Old Ones as if they are absolutely real within the paradigm...we should assume that the Old Ones are going to return to the Earth, and we need to find out what they want, and how we can help them”.

He suggested that participants should only agreed to take Lovecraft’s fictive universe seriously within the context of the group. But increasingly members reported events occurring outside group practice that added depth to the “reality” of the Old Ones, and Dane felt that Alan was wrong in supposing that belief could be compartmentalised this way.

Alan also felt that, as the group had formed a few months before the beginning of the new millennium, members should purposely adopt an apocalyptic stance. Rob agreed, suggesting that it would also be worthwhile conducting some sort of Lovecraftian ritual in or around the Millennium Dome: because of their vast size, their connection with the millennium, and their circularity (which suggested similarities with the egregore’s symbol), he felt that both the Dome and the London Eye would be suitable structures through which the Old Ones could be called. The group decided that, on New Years Eve, each of its members should attempt to project a visualised image of the egregore’s symbol onto either the Dome or the Eye. Rob was in the vicinity of the London Eye at the appointed time (undergoing a particularly unpleasant drug-induced experience), and he later claimed to see the greenish trails of three fireworks projecting out from the edges of the London Eye up into space - an inverted image of the egregore’s symbol.

Derived from the Greek word *grigori*, meaning “watcher”, an egregore also represents for Chaos magicians a type of guardian-spirit - generally used to ensure that group secrets are protected, and that group rituals are not interrupted. In this latter role, the HOD’s egregore seemed wanting: group rituals were interrupted on various occasions - usually by people who were extremely drunk or appeared to be suffering from some form of mental illness. On one such occasion, an intoxicated individual came over to our table mid-discussion, and asked for a cigarette. Damien offered him one, and in return received a packet of crisps from the stranger. On opening the packet, the group was surprised to find that the crisps were shaped into an almost exact-likeness of the egregore’s symbol. Secondary

rationalisations were invoked so that these instances were taken as confirmatory of the “madness” of the Cthulhu mythos. They were even incorporated into ritual performances (which increasingly became more discordant and spontaneous): for example, the group once encountered a hippyish man of Afro-Caribbean origin playing a flute in the woods where they regularly conducted ritual. This was seen as significant, both because the manifestation of the Old Ones is sometimes heralded by “mad piping” in Lovecraft’s stories, and also because the Old One Nyarlathotep is described by one writer as a “Black Man with a Horn” (Klein 1985) - which this individual appeared to represent<sup>12</sup>. The man, who introduced himself as Doug, was of neo-pagan leanings and agreed to continue playing as the group performed their ritual on this occasion. The way in which the group sought to make these occurrences inclusive within ritual practice was part and parcel of the “paradigm shift” which members collectively sought to affect.

Through paradigm shifting, Chaos magicians attempt to cognitively restructure their current worldview through the adoption of a new (and sometimes arbitrarily chosen) set of beliefs. This process is roughly equivalent to what Tanya Luhrmann (1989: 312-315) refers to as “interpretive drift”, the process by which magicians become “progressively more skilled at seeing new patterns in events, seeing new sorts of events as significant, paying attention to new patterns” (Luhrmann 1989: 312). But whilst Luhrmann views interpretive drift as a largely unconscious process (which occurs through the interaction of belief and practice), the Chaos magical approach represents a conscious attempt to reinterpret the universe through the lens of a new beliefs (until, that is, such beliefs have become fully internalised).

The process of actively seeking to transform cognition would suggest that Chaos magicians are always at least partly conscious of the constructed nature of their current beliefs. This problematises practitioners’ claims concerning the effectiveness of paradigm shifting: in the following year, when Alan was undergoing possession by the Old One Ghatanothoa, Damien asked the invading entity if it knew when the Old Ones would return. The group was, I think, somewhat surprised when Alan baldly stated “September 8th 2001”. After the

---

<sup>12</sup> Racist themes permeate Lovecraft’s work, and are discussed later in the chapter.



World Trade Centre was subject to a terrorist attack a few days after this date, members of the group began to reassess the extent to which they could - or even wanted to - treat the paradigm as “real” (see below). As I show later in this section, it becomes difficult for practitioners to maintain an antinomian stance in the face of genuinely “apocalyptic” events.

### **The Black Goat Appears**

Early in 2000 (and preceding some of the events described above), the group had decided to further reify the Lovecraftian paradigm by conducting a series of spirit possession rituals workings by which they hoped to invoke and communicate with the Old Ones.

Over the following months, the Haunters of the Dark met regularly at two locations: a sprawling Jacobean mansion in South East London (which had been converted into a local community centre, and which was also used by the IOU), and in a secluded wood in North London. The group conducted what was generally referred to as “experimental work” at the mansion. This included seances, consciousness-raising practices using a piece of equipment known as a “mind machine”, and various pathworkings which members wanted to try out on the rest of the group. Possessions were conducted at this locale on a few occasions, but were discontinued after the group had twice been disturbed mid-ritual (in an odd juxtaposition of the exotic and the banal, by members of the stamp-collecting group which met in an interconnecting room); the HOD had, however, prepared for this eventuality by constructing a “cover story”: they explained to the surprised stamp-collectors that they were a troupe of performance artists in rehearsal. The wooded area subsequently became the preferred locale for possessions, as it tended to be deserted at night, when the group conducted their rituals (although as noted above, interruptions still occurred).

The HOD’s first possession ritual occurred during February 2000 and took place in a room above the New Age bookshop where Dane worked. He had secured use of the room from the shop’s owner, but the following day was told that the group would have to move elsewhere. His employer never disclosed the reasons behind

this decision, although Dane gleefully suggested that it was probably because he was disturbed by the “dark energies” which the group had raised the night before. The deity incarnated on this occasion was Nyarlathotep. Rob had noted in an e-mail that the deity acted as a kind of an intermediary between humanity and the Old Ones in Lovecraft’s stories; it was also the only Old One described as appearing in human or quasi-human form. Thus, Rob suggested, an encounter with the almost-human Nyarlathotep would better prepare the group for any later encounters with the wholly-alien Old Ones. This ritual formed the first of a series of possessions involving the Old Ones, the aim of which was to discover more about these entities - particularly their nature, what their ultimate aims and goals were, and what they wished of the group. The possession rituals occurred at roughly one-month intervals, but were not planned in any strict order: in fact, the structure and order of the rituals emerged through the possessions themselves. For example, during the first ritual Nyarlathotep directed the group to invoke the “Guardian of the Gateway” Yog-Sothoth - the entity who must be approached in order to enter the weird, otherworldly realm of the Old Ones - as part of their next rite. Subsequently, Yog-Sothoth informed the group that they should evoke Cthulhu next.

On the occasion of the group’s fourth possession ritual (conducted in July 2000, and about two months after the Cthulhu possession), the group met in a North London pub near the woods where the ritual was to take place. I have included a detailed description of this particular possession rite, because by this time the group had settled on a “style” of practice - one which came to characterise most of the HOD’s later possession rituals (the majority of which also took place outdoors).

On this occasion Damien, who was to undergo possession, was encouraged to have a couple of alcoholic drinks in order to relax him. Expectations were high, particularly as the group’s work up to this point had proven successful. During the previous possession ritual, Cthulhu had indicated that the Old One Shub Niggurath, - also known as the “Black Goat of the Woods with a Thousand Young”, and which Lovecraft depicts as a kind of perverse alien fertility deity - should be the Old One to be invoked. Damien had volunteered to undergo this latter possession, as he felt a close affinity with Shub Niggurath.



We arrived at woods at about 8.30 p.m., and spent about twenty minutes searching for a suitably-isolated clearing. Dane lit a number of tea-lights and spread them throughout the clearing, although it was still relatively light even at this time. After donning black robes, we gathered in a circle facing inward, and performed a banishing ritual which Alan had written for the purposes of the group (see below).

Once we had performed the opening ritual, Alan - who was acting as “MT” for the evening - asked Damien to kneel in the centre of the circle we had formed. Alan stood before him, arms outstretched, and began chanting loudly using “barbarous language” - a form of glossolalia in which vowels and consonants are stringed together spontaneously in a seemingly meaningless, stream-of-consciousness - to invoke Shub Niggurath into Damien’s body. Earlier, he had instructed the rest of the group to chant “Ia Shub Niggurath” repeatedly, whilst directing our magical energy into Damien in order to call forth the deity. As we raised the chant, Damien began hyperventilating (which Alan had earlier suggested would facilitate the possession). This continued for a short time, until Alan gestured to us to stop. Damien arose unsteadily from the floor, head bowed, and began wandering aimlessly around the inside of the circle. At this stage in the development of the HOD’s practices, the group had begun to ask each of the possessing deities to provide a secret name or word by which they could be summoned in later possessions:

Alan: Who are you?

Damien/Shub Niggurath: Dirt and leaves and soil.

A: Shub Niggurath, Black Goat of the Woods with a Thousand Young, will you answer the questions of those who call you forth?

D/SN: Ask.

Dane: Tell us your secret word.

D/SN: What are you to me? I am my will. What is it to you? I have nothing to share with you.

A: Will you answer our questions? Give to us your power?

D/SN: Give me your questions.

A: What word shall we use to summon you?

D/SN: By my name am I called. No word is needed.

Dane: I have a question, Black Goat of the Woods. Which direction will our workings take next?

D/SN: Your...your workings are not me. You are...you are products. You

are not me.

Rob: Shub Niggurath, how should we serve you?

D/SN: To do, to act, to serve my will, my...not my will.

R: Not your will?

D/SN: My will is the sound of the trees, of the rivers, of the grass, the sound of the soil is my will. My will is not you. Give me your questions.

Dane: Shub Niggurath, will you give us a sign, a glyph? Might we get a glyph of the hidden nature of which you speak?

Dane produced the book in which the Old Ones had inscribed their signs during previous possessions, and offered Damien a pen. Damien took the pen, and drew his sign (which took the form of an unintelligible series of interwoven lines).

Following this, I decided to ask a question; in each possession thus far, one member of the group had asked the incarnating entity which deity should form the focus of the next possession rite. In asking this question, I felt that I was demonstrating a willingness to participate, without unduly influencing the actions of the group:

Justin: Shub Niggurath, can you give us the name of one of your Brethren, the Old Ones, who next we should contact?

D/SN: Go, go to, go to Azathoth, to Azathoth.

R: Shub Niggurath, how may we serve you?

D/SN: You may serve me by being what is truest to you, by doing you truest nature, your truest will. Finding that for yourself, you may serve me.

A: Will you now bless this wine with your essence and power, so we might drink of your ecstasy?

Alan then handed an opened bottle of red wine to Damien, who crouched on the floor, drew a sign in the air over the bottle, and then directed a stream of harsh, guttural and nonsensical words at the bottle. Damien was swaying and staggering unevenly at this point, and Alan removed the bottle from his hands:

D/SN: You may drink of me now.

A: Black Goat of the Woods with a Thousand Young, be again at the centre of us, we thank you for your presence, we thank you for your power. We ask you now that you return to your preferred place in the Dark of The Woods, and leave the mind and body of this our brother Damien. We bid you hail and farewell.

Damien: Cool. Who's got the booze?



Damien had returned rapidly to an ordinary state of consciousness, dazed but otherwise physically unharmed by the experience. It was usual for the wine to be poured into a “chalice” following possession; however, on this occasion, Alan had forgotten to bring the cup, and so members swigged from the open bottle as it was passed around.

Outside of this basic question-and-answer format, the HOD’s possession rituals did not follow a rigidly formalised structure: ritual became a volatile and negotiable space founded upon a habitual core of trance-facilitating techniques. As a consequence, the group’s rituals represented a highly individualised and “creative” set of practices. The banishing ritual which Alan had devised to “open” and “close” the groups possession rites<sup>13</sup> - and indeed the issue as to whether or not the group should perform banishings at all - proved to be a particular source of tension within the group. This was because some members wanted to move away from “traditional” forms of magical practice, and felt that Alan’s rite was far too “Wiccan” (and hence “traditional”) in tone and structure. By the end of the year, the group had abandoned the use of this ritual; in the following year, members also began referring to themselves as being part of a “post-Lovecraftian” group - particularly as hitherto unknown entities and forces (with names such as “Uranakai”, “Lazul” and “Orzaz”) began to spontaneously manifest through possession.

This aspect of the HOD’s practice differed widely from the institutionalised possession of Baphomet which occurred within the IOT. For the HOD, spontaneity and the uncertain nature of the possession was always stressed as an important and legitimising factor - the “weirder” and more incomprehensible the speech and actions of those possessed, the more authentic the possession was held to be. Despite these differences, an implicit function of possession was (in ways similar to the Mass of Chaos “B”) to empirically and experientially reinforce the group’s paradigm and ideology. However, the issue of the Old Ones’ “objective existence”, and the way in which the overall paradigm was objectified and “believed” by members of the group, is a more complex matter that is closely bound to neo-pagan

---

<sup>13</sup> The ritual is transcribed in appendix 3.

cosmological thought.

The concept of magic as understood by the Chaos/Lovecraftian magicians of the HOD was founded upon the same holistic cosmology which permeates neo-pagan thought; and it was from this foundation that the HOD recognised an ontological unity between the Old Ones and human beings. Alan believed that the Old Ones were an intrinsic aspect of human consciousness, but also felt that most people were unaware of their existence because these entities haunted a perceptual strata “below and beyond normal human consciousness”. This was implied in a statement included in the opening ritual initially used by the group, where the lines “I call You within us as You always are” were used in reference to the “blind idiot god” Azathoth (described by Lovecraft as a “nuclear chaos” existing at the centre of infinity). In the holistic discourse of the practitioners, this was taken to mean that Azathoth, the primal Chaos, resided at the very centre of the magician’s being. Not only did this reiterate a core concept of Chaos magical cosmology, but it also affirmed for practitioners the multiple subjectivities and non-essentialist concept of selfhood favoured by Chaos magicians. The Old Ones exist outside of linear space-time: they represent both the primordial foundations of human consciousness; more importantly they are models of a future extraterrestrial condition of existence. This point was confirmed on a number of occasions, through dialogue with the Old Ones. The first example is taken from the group’s very first possession, involving Nyarlathotep:

Jason: Nyarlathotep, how do we evolve humanity into something else?

Nyarlathotep: *Seek for me within* and go beyond the form before you into Chaos (my emphasis).

The following exchange occurred during the final ritual of what the HOD later referred to as their “first possession cycle”, and involved the Old One Hastur:

Rob: Are we of the Old Ones?

Hastur: Yes, and the Old Ones are of you.

Also significant is Shub Niggurath’s reply to Rob’s repeated question “How may we



serve you” in the earlier transcript: “You may serve me by being what is truest to you, by doing you truest nature, your truest will. Finding that for yourself, you may serve me”. This indirectly suggests an ontological unity of the magician’s magical will with that of the Old One in question.

Jason also suggested that the group should attempt to integrate the Old Ones as part of their own sense of selfhood rather than fully exorcise the deities after possession. It was for this reason that the group eventually decided to abandon banishing rituals at the conclusion of magical workings: they did not want to dismiss the Old Ones entirely, but hoped to become infused with their “extraterrestrial” essence. As a result, participants in later possession rites reported that the Old Ones seemed to be continually interpenetrating their consciousness, a feeling which could last days or even weeks after the possession.

These notions are also defined within Chaos/Lovecraftian magical literature: self-identification with, and internalised embodiment of, the Old Ones is, according to Phil Hine, a “process of uniting the chthonic roots of primeval consciousness to the stellar magicks of the future” (Hine 1994: 12). Similarly, Peter Carroll outlines a ritual identification of the magician with the Old One Azathoth who is “associated with the emergence of sentience from the primeval slime and the quest of sentience to reach for the stars. It is associated with these activities in star systems other than our own; the next nearest being apparently Deneb in Cygnus” (Carroll 1992: 148).

### **Alien Selves - Becoming Hybrid**

Following the work of Kenneth Grant, members of the HOD thus held that the Old Ones represented the primordial, extraterrestrial - but occluded - root of human consciousness. In a talk which Damien gave for the South East London Folklore Society in 2000, he claimed that this awareness was now being reawakened within the human species: an amateur ufologist and psychic investigator, Damien believed that the widely-publicised phenomenon of alien abduction indicated an evolutionary resurgence of the hidden levels of consciousness. For Damien, such experiences did not necessarily entail physical encounters with “little green men”:

rather, they reflected age-old shamanic experiences couched in an new mythological idiom accessible to an increasingly technologised world; such encounters spoke of psychic contact with “higher” dimensions of reality which had the potential to radically alter our view of the cosmos<sup>14</sup>.

Ultimately, the HOD saw itself as preparing a psychic conduit through which the Old Ones could enter our world. In the words of Jason, the ensuing apocalypse would manifest as “an apocalypse of consciousness” - an unmediated awareness of the true nature of reality divested of the veneer of socialisation and moral conditioning. In contrast to Lovecraft’s bleak nihilism, the group held that, in recognising its extraterrestrial heritage through this “apocalypse”, the human species would be forced to abandon its petty moral, ethnic, religious and national differences - along with the limiting terrestrial or three-dimensional perspective - to make an evolutionary quantum leap into space and into an “extraterrestrial” mode of existence.

The focus of the HOD was not, therefore, upon worship of the Old Ones, but *identification* with them as conduits of a “post-human” metamorphosis; similarly, Anton LaVey refers to the Old Ones as “the spectres of a future human mentality” (LaVey 1972: 178) - a view echoed by Rob, who suggested that “the Old Ones are our future selves who only appear as monstrous because we lack the language to directly perceive them”. In a personal communication, Rob also claimed that the Old Ones represent

“our evolutionary heritage. They are memories of dinosaurs, the silence of space, and the primordial chaos of the big bang. In order for the human species to evolve beyond its current status of clever talking chimp, we must somehow find a way to awaken these long forgotten elements that shaped the development of our consciousness”.

He went on to state that Lovecraftian magick was thus concerned with

“waking up the Great Old Ones that lie sleeping...the primeval consciousness of the universe which has been lying dormant in humanity but is now slowly waking up...becoming the monsters ourselves”.

---

<sup>14</sup> A view also found in some popular ufological texts (see for example Keel 1971; Strieber 1987).



Dane also felt that working magically with the Great Old Ones was a process of “trying to approach the unthinkable through the monstrous”.

The HOD’s self-identification with otherness through transformation into “monstrous” or non-human states was couched in terms of what Rob called “interspecies symbiosis” - an idea also contemporaneous with the human-extraterrestrial hybridisations which form a core element of the alien abduction narratives cited by Damien, and popularised by *The X-Files*<sup>15</sup>. Rob commented on the importance of the idiom of hybridisation in Lovecraft’s fiction, noting Lovecraft’s famous “the Deep Ones” (Lovecraft 1934: 303-367): frog-like, sea dwelling minions of Cthulhu who mate with humans to produce monstrous but immortal offspring (see fig. 24)<sup>16</sup>.

Through shapeshifting practices, members of the HOD would enter into trance and attempt to encompass this hybridity within their own experience - imagining themselves adopting the form and consciousness of Deep Ones or other Lovecraftian entities<sup>17</sup>. In April 2000, after meeting in a nearby pub, the group entered the woods at about nine o’clock in the evening in order to conduct such a rite. We proceeded to light some candles, donned black robes, and then gathered in a circle. The opening ritual was again performed to invoke the presence of the Old Ones, after which members of the group began slowly circling in an anti-clockwise direction with eyes closed, a tape of unearthly music playing in the background. I was asked to act as “MT” on this occasion, and began a slow recitation of a pathworking designed to facilitate the transformation into Deep One form:

---

<sup>15</sup> Lovecraftian narratives have been even more closely linked to contemporary ufological discourses through an entity known as Lam encountered by Crowley in 1919, resembling the archetypal “grey” extraterrestrial of contemporary ufological lore (Adams 1997: 15). Members of Grant’s Typhonian Ordo Templi Orientis have also linked Lam to the same reality represented by Lovecraft’s Great Old Ones (Staley, Lowe, & Taylor 1994; Staley 1996).

<sup>16</sup> In his popular work of “alternative archaeology”, *The Sirius Mystery*, Robert Temple (1976) argues that amphibian extraterrestrials from the Sirius star system - similar to Lovecraft’s Deep Ones - have intervened in humanity’s evolution in the distant past, and may be preparing to return to the earth in the near future. Sirius is also recognised by many Thelemites as the source of the magickal extraterrestrial energies or “stellar current” represented by Lam (see also Grant 1972; Wilson 1977; Dzikiewicz 1991; Beal 1993: 9; 1994: 186; Baker 1998: 10-18),

<sup>17</sup> See Hine (1993: 100; 1994: 39).





Fig. 24 - the Deep Ones.



“imagine floating in deep, green waters; those waters begin to churn in a gentle whirlpool pattern around you, drawing you deeper and deeper, ever downwards. Down past the rough hulking shapes of early human consciousness, the instinctual drives of flight or fight of your mammalian ancestors, down past the sleek alien ripples of reptilian consciousness, returning to the warm womb of the sea where you float at the brink of the blackest, atavistic depths of amphibian consciousness, the ancient dream-time of Cthulhu...your limbs become fluid and undulating; fins sprout from your back and your skin takes on the sheen of beautiful iridescent scales that shimmer in the darkness...you sense in the distance other presences writhing in the dark waters, and you cry out to them with a profound sense of kinship, a guttural, inarticulate, prehuman croaking - the primal tongue of the Deep Ones. Your joyful cry reaches out to touch those swimmers in darkness, your brothers and sisters the Deep Ones, drawing them toward you. Within that darkness the inhuman sound of your call coalesces to take form and substance as a symbol of power...your cry dissipates across time and space drawing you back to your human form in the here and now”.

Afterwards, participants reported that the movement, music, my slow intonation of the words, and their own concentration on the guided imagery helped induce a light trance in which the transformation was experienced. As the ritual progressed, I noticed that the group’s movements became more sluggish, and they adopted hunched or awkward poses whilst making low, inhuman-sounding noises. They felt themselves changing, returning to the primeval roots of consciousness, where human selfhood and alien Deep One fused.

### **Killing The Magickal Child: Transgression, Morality, and Belief**

A concern with breaching boundaries, identifying with the monstrous, is an ideational manifestation of Chaos magick’s transgressive sensibility - one which finds its initial expression in Aleister Crowley’s millenarian notion of the Aeon of Horus as a time of liberating “Force and Fire” (Crowley 1969: 404). This notion is also indirectly mirrored in the Nietzschean strains of Lovecraft’s own apocalyptic vision:

“mankind would...become as the Great Old Ones; free and wild and beyond good and evil, with laws and morals thrown aside and all men shouting and killing and revelling in joy. Then the liberated Old Ones

would teach them new ways to shout and kill and revel and enjoy themselves, and all the earth would flame with a holocaust of ecstasy and freedom” (Lovecraft 1926: 141).

Thus, the practice of Lovecraftian magick was, according to Dane, all about “calling on the Old Ones to liberate us from society”. Likewise, Phil Hine (1994) argues that encounters with the Old Ones - as forces of unreason - are fundamental to the emancipatory project of magic. To stand in the presence of the Old Ones is, Hine suggests, to embrace madness as a radical metamorphosis of awareness, and to allow oneself to become transformed by the experience. Hine also describes this as “becoming “alien””, and an “evolution into a new mode of being” (Hine 1994: 9) which confers total autonomy from the values and judgements of society of large.

As practitioners of Left-Hand Path magick, Chaos magicians, Satanists and Thelemites point to the contingent value of Western notions of good and evil as contextually situated within Christian moral discourse. The Old Ones - the darker, chaotic and atavistic aspects of the psyche - can be harnessed through acts of blasphemy and taboo-breaking in the self-analytical process of “deconditioning”. As discussed in chapter two, the Church of Satan views the ritualised blasphemy of the Black Mass as a form of psychodramatic catharsis, one which frees practitioners’ from the yoke of Christian morality. The HOD similarly adopted this concept of the Satanic Mass on two occasions, when they attempted to sell their souls to the Old Ones - in both instances, practitioners went so far as to sign their names in their own blood to seal such pacts. In a possession rite conducted in late-2000, the Old One Tsathoggua also informed the members of the HOD that they were required to “sacrifice the magickal child at the altar of the Old Ones”. Despite their self-inflicted blood-letting, none of the group, to my knowledge, ever expressed the view that this statement should be taken at face value.

It took the HOD some weeks to work out exactly what the “magickal child” represented. There was some discussion concerning an infamous footnote in Crowley’s (1973) magnum opus, *Magick*. In a chapter entitled “Of the Bloody Sacrifice: and Matters Cognate” Crowley states that “a male child of perfect



innocence and high intelligence is the most satisfactory and suitable victim” (Crowley 1973: 219). In the footnote in question, Crowley claims that “[i]t appears from the Magical Records of Frater Perdurabo [Crowley] that He made this particular sacrifice on average about 150 times every year between 1912...and 1928” (Crowley 1973: 219-220). These words have been used by some Christian groups to support their own claims that contemporary magicians and pagans practice child sacrifice. However, Crowley goes on to quote his follower Martha Kunzel on the matter:

“It is the sacrifice of *oneself* spiritually. And the intelligence and innocence of that male child are the perfect understanding of the Magician, his one aim, without lust of result. And male he must be, because what he sacrifices is not the material blood, but his *creative power*” (Kunzel in Crowley 1973: 220; my emphasis).

Crowley is indicating here that the act of “child sacrifice” is a symbolic act, and almost certainly refers to the reification of the magician’s intention (“his one aim”) through sexual magick (see also Suster 1988: 61).

Thus, members of the HOD initially speculated that the sacrifice of the magical child indicated some undisclosed form of sexual magick which the Old Ones required members of the group to perform. Various divinations were undertaken to clarify the matter, including a number of seances during which the group sought to contact the fictional “Mad Arab” Abdul Alhazred, author of the *Necronomicon*. No clear answers were, however, forthcoming. Dane eventually suggested that the magickal child probably represented the Aeon of Horus, the “crowned and conquering child” (Crowley 1969: 399) ushered in by Crowley in 1904. Earlier possession rituals had indicated that the Old Ones wished to implement their own Aeon or magical current, the avatar of which was a nebulous entity or concept referred to as Uranakai, or “The Nameless One”. Edward, a psychiatric nurse in his late twenties who had recently joined the HOD, readily agreed. Edward was also member of the Caliphate OTO, but had become disenchanted with the organisation (later joining Grant’s Typhonian OTO). On the occasion of one of the HOD’s meetings (by this time the group had come to frequent The Plough in central

London), Edward became extremely vocal on the point, proclaiming that he wanted to “destroy the [Caliphate] OTO”.

Eventually, a suitable receptacle for the “magickal child” was procured by Dane. Walking home from work one evening, he discovered a baby doll lying in a rubbish skip. Taking the doll, he painted various magickal symbols over its body, inscribing the words “love” and “will” - these being the cornerstones of Crowley’s doctrine of Thelema: “Love is the Law, Love under Will” (Crowley 1938: 26) - on the knuckles of either hand. A photograph of Crowley was enlarged and taped to the doll’s face to reify its association with this iconic figure.

Over the following months, the doll formed the focal point of the group’s possession rituals, although very little information was elicited from the Old Ones during the time. Various suggestions were made as to how to “sacrifice” the doll, although no satisfactory solution presented itself.

The problem was eventually resolved when the HOD were invited to perform a ritual at the opening night of “The Choronzon Club” in June 2001. This was held once a month in a pub near St. Paul’s Cathedral, and catered to members of the “Goth” or “Gothic” subculture. Not only did this present the HOD with the opportunity of heralding the new aeon of the Old Ones in a public arena, but members of the Caliphate OTO were going to be present. This would add to the frisson of the event, given that the OTO’s prophet (i.e. Crowley) was going to be symbolically sacrificed by the HOD.

On the evening, the group entered the pub in procession, chanting “Uranakai” in low voices. Each member wore black robes and held a single black candle. The group formed a circle in at the centre of the pub, watched by an audience of about seventy pagans and Goths. I had again been asked to act as MT, and read aloud a preliminary invocation to the Old Ones; after this, each member of the group took it in turns to recite their own individual invocations to Azathoth, Yog Sothoth, Shub-Niggurath and Cthulhu. An ornate chair was brought forward, and after Rob seated himself the rest of the group began circling and shouting “Ia Nyarlathotep” in an attempt to incarnate the Old One in his body. This was, however, a ruse. The group had planned the ritual as a theatrical performance which, they hoped, would shock



the onlookers. Throughout the ritual, Alan had been acting as a narrator, explaining the various elements of the ritual to the audience. He stood on a small podium some distance from the rest of the group; at a pre-planned signal, Alan suddenly became “possessed” by Nyarlathotep, and ran into the crowd, screaming incoherently whilst spitting fake blood. He grabbed the magickal child, which had been wrapped in swaddling and was being rocked in the arms of a friend of the group who sat in the audience. Earlier, Dane had packed the innards of the doll with tissue paper soaked in fake blood. Edward, Garth, Dane and Damien converged on Alan, and proceeded to tear the doll limb from limb, stuffing the appendages into their mouths until their faces were dripping with blood from the doll’s innards. The performance ended as members of the group ran screaming out of the pub, to the raucous applause of the audience.

Over the following months, two more blood-soaked public performances followed, enhancing the HOD’s kudos as transgressive black magicians. Towards the end of my fieldwork, the HOD had adopted the practice of opening pub-based meetings with the toast: “Gentlemen, to Satan! To Evil!”. This sometimes had the side effect of encouraging anyone occupying nearby tables to move elsewhere, thus freeing up more space for the group. When the group were discussing the merits of prospective members, Edward would invariably ask jokingly “but is he evil enough?”. Despite these superficial nods in the direction of the “dark side”, the group were neither Satanists *per se*, nor were they genuinely enamoured with evil. At least half the members of the HOD (along with many members of the IOT and IOU) were vegetarians or vegans who harboured strong environmentalist sentiments, and who (outside the occasional shedding of their own blood) had no interest in actively participating in genuine sacrifice of the human or animal variety. The actual moral sensibilities of group members became particularly nuanced during a series of event occurring at the close of (and, in fact, after) my time in the field. Alan and Damien both regularly posted reports of recent natural disasters on the HOD’s e-mail list, which they had culled from various internet news sites. The aim of this was to engender belief in the Lovecraft “paradigm” by treating these disasters as evidence of the apocalyptic resurgence of the Old Ones. On one

occasion, Dane told me that he was rather perturbed by the fact that the group was, in some sense, constructing magical belief and practice upon other people's misery. Alan rationalised this by suggesting that the group could not be held responsible for these events, but were simply tapping into and become attuned to the power of the Old Ones.

Early in September 2001<sup>18</sup>, members of the group visited Dunwich<sup>19</sup>, a small village on the East Coast of Britain. At the time, they had encountered a road sign displaying the image of a leaping frog, which appeared to indicate that the particular section of the road was a "frog crossing". Damien, Dane, and Edward, who were visiting the locale, found this both amusing and unnerving, as the purpose of their visit was to contact the batrachian Deep Ones. They also planned to raise a physical manifestation of Cthulhu off the nearby coast. The apocalyptic connotations of such an act are clearly outlined in Lovecraft's famous story "The Call of Cthulhu". Here, the rising of Cthulhu from its age-long sleep beneath the Pacific Ocean is prefigured by widespread social unrest and violence, along with catastrophic natural disasters. The magical "ramifications" of the group's act became apparent two days later when, on September the 11th, the World Trade Centre was destroyed in a terrorist attack. This resulted in a short "flame war" on the HOD's mailing list<sup>20</sup>:

Edward: The gates have opened... I'm most pleased to discover that Kutulu is anti-capitalist... A little upset that the houses of parliament didn't go up in the same manner...

Garth: There I was at the anti-capitalist/anti-arms demo yesterday when the journos suddenly lost all interest in us and all started to go ape over something else...[the protest] just didn't seem to cut the mustard compared to jet-hijacking, building-blasting suicide bombers. And the culprit in Uncle Sam's demise? Me, I'm certain it was that Mad Arab.

Damien took the lead in berating Garth and Edward:

---

<sup>18</sup> I remained in contact with members of the group, principally through e-mail, up to this time, although I no longer participated in group rituals as my fieldwork ended earlier that year.

<sup>19</sup> This site was significant for the group because it shared its name with a haunted locale which appears in Lovecraft's fiction.

<sup>20</sup> The entirety of this e-mail discussion is included in Appendix 4.



“I’m absolutely astonished at the complete lack of respect for suffering and loss you guys are showing. Adopting a paradigm is one thing. Glorifying in the murder of thousands of innocent people is another...Life is sacred. What has happened is an utter tragedy. While I share your anticapitalist sentiments, I simply cannot condone an activity or action that leads to wholesale slaughter”.

In reply, the miscreants stated variously that they thought the event “terrible”, and were equally “disgusted, shocked, and upset”, although Garth claimed that the event had to be seen in perspective, questioning whether

what happened on Tuesday is any more terrible than what is happening in the developing world on a daily basis, to a large extent as a result, direct or indirect, of Amerikkka's foreign policy.

The transgressive project of Chaos magick is often ideational and, outside of drug-taking and sexual experimentation, the more extreme forms of transgressive practice occupy a symbolic rather than a literal space. The delight expressed at the destruction of the World Trade Centre was not, to reiterate, a result of members of the HOD being enamoured of evil, or a case of them revelling in other people’s suffering. Despite his anger at the e-mailed comments, Damien later stated that

“my “special plan for this world”, my vision for the universe is quite brutal - it renders human needs and human emotions useless. Magic is shadow play - if we hope to progress as a species we need to abandon all notions of our humanity: sentimentality is the nemesis of evolution.”

Similarly Jason - who categorised himself as “pagan”, but nevertheless felt that neo-paganism’s concern with local ecological issues was “earth-bound” - once half-jokingly commented that “we need to consider the possibility that it might be necessary to destroy the Earth so that the rest of the galaxy can evolve”. To an extent, such contradictory views (at least in Damien’s case), highlight some of the moral ambiguities of Chaos magick. In other ways, comments of this sort were, more often than not, expressive of the kudos attached to Chaos magick: the need to

cultivate an aura or “magical glamour” of danger and “evil” in the reinforcement of practitioners own perceived elite status. However, as I have indicated in chapter two, this is also a marginalising practice, and magicians recognise that this self-induced alienation is a form of incompleteness. Thus, Phil Hine (1994) comments that adoption of the Cthulhu mythos as a magical paradigm may also be seen as the magical equivalent of adolescence:

“I’ve met any amount of desperately doom-laden young men who seem to be convincing themselves that bohemian decadence can be achieved whilst living in a small room on an even smaller income.

A cynic, however, might look at these “outsiders” and point out that they happen also to be neurotic, repressed...and desperately lack anything which resembles basic social skills. It may not be nice to hear, but unfortunately one of the attractions of the occult for some people is that you can convince yourself that you are a mighty adept whilst everyone else is continually amazed at your total ineptitude on planes more solid than the astral.

The reason why I am saying this is because that’s what I was like, when I first started doing magick, and became particularly interested in the Cthulhu Mythos entities. It’s probably a phase you have to go through, like having zits or something, but of course you get the opportunity to grow out of it”. (Hine 1994: 9).

As a consequence, it is difficult to dispute Luhrmann’s claim that the “romantic brutality of the chaos magician takes place largely in his head” (Luhrmann 1989: 105), or equally that, in the face of real tragedy, Chaos magicians readily empathise with other people’s suffering.

As demonstrated in chapter four, Chaos magicians’ experiences often lead them to believe in the existence of supernatural beings and spirits; I am not, therefore, suggesting that the HOD were simply “play-acting” (although Chaos magicians also believe that the superficial performance or “faking” of possession can facilitate a “genuine” experience of possession). As Chaos magicians, members of the HOD *were* suspicious of claims concerning the absolute nature of supposed truths, but nonetheless they did consider the possibility that Lovecraft’s creations represented an objective, albeit non-empirical reality<sup>21</sup>.

---

<sup>21</sup> This view was legitimised through the status magicians afford to dreams and visionary experiences



The issue of belief is, as with much else in Chaos magick, marked by ambivalence - and the ambivalent feelings towards demonic power which the destruction of the World Trade Centre evoked amongst members of the HOD also reflected some of the moral ambivalences and uncertainties surrounding public responses to the terrorist attack. Although Damien thought that the HOD should differentiate between the adoption of a paradigm and their response to actual disaster, some members of the group were genuinely concerned that their attempts to call forth the Old Ones had been all too successful. In the latter case, the decision to treat the Cthulhu mythos as simply an empty paradigm appeared to be a self-preserving strategy, distancing practitioners from feelings of guilt. Such strategies are also, for some Chaos magicians, self-transformative - inasmuch as they lead to the realisation that with magical power comes responsibility. Thus, questions regarding the authenticity of practitioners' belief in a given paradigm is sometimes peripheral with regard to Chaos magicians' utilitarian concerns - what *is* important is whether or not one's involvement in a paradigm facilitates self-transformation; hence Damien's comment (quoted in chapter four) that "adopting different gods can amount to nothing more than a change of scenery if you yourself do not change in fundamental ways". Thus, while critical of the self-alienating aspects of Lovecraftian/Chaos magical praxis, Phil Hine also suggests that alienation and transgression can form an important self-analytical role in practitioners' magical progress, leading to greater completeness and functioning as "an invocation of future otherness" (Hine 1994: 23).

### **Part 3 - Interpreting the Lovecraftian Universe.**

#### **Imagination, Selfhood, and Otherness**

Within the confines of the Lovecraftian milieu the boundary between science fiction and social reality has been eroded: around twenty different published

---

as authoritative forms of knowledge: in this instance, the authenticity of Lovecraft's fiction as a reflection of a genuine otherworldly reality rested upon the fact that many of Lovecraft's tales were based on his own dreams and nightmares - thus Kenneth Grant suggests that Lovecraft may have been unconsciously "channelling" the Great Old Ones (Grant 1972: 117; 1973: 36-38; 1980: 167-

versions of Lovecraft's fabled grimoire the *Necronomicon* have, for example, been published (Harms & Gonce 1998: 51-76). No longer a literary device but a manifest social reality, one version of the *Necronomicon* has even been cited as evidence in support of an unsubstantiated rumour concerning the murder of two police officers by Satanists (Ellis 1991: 289). The Lovecraftian magical "paradigm" only remains a literary endeavour to the extent that practitioners draw inspiration from a body of science-fiction and fantasy literature - a practice that is by no means unique to Lovecraftian magicians. Neo-pagans draw primarily upon the traditional or re-invented cultural discourses of Egyptian, Roman, Sumerian and Celtic mythology, but as indicated earlier in the chapter, science-fiction literature remains another key source of inspiration. Marion Adler notes that

"science-fiction and fantasy probably come closer than any other literature to systematically exploring the central concerns of Neo-Pagans and Witches...writers of science fiction and fantasy are bound less than any others by the political, sexual, and racial mores of their society...Science fiction has been the literature of the visionary; it has been able to challenge preconceived notions about almost everything, while at the same time attending to fundamental questions of the age" (Adler 1979: 285).

In utilising techniques of "defamiliarisation and estrangement" (Robert Scholes quoted in Adler 1986: 286), science fiction literature allows readers to re-envision their world from radically new perspectives. This was demonstrated in the coupling of science-fiction and magical practice at the Thelemic symposium held in Oxford in 1998, where Phil Hine led a workshop (attended largely by Chaos magicians) entitled "Discover Your Inner Alien". Through a series of trance, visualisation and movement exercises, Hine encouraged participants to explore the science-fictional idiom of the extraterrestrial as a way of seeing the world through alien eyes. Notions of fantasy and role-play were equally noticeable in neo-pagans' contestation of social and sexual mores - certainly to the extent that a portion of neo-pagans are involved in fetishistic and sado-masochistic subcultures.

While Adler stresses the capacity of myth for re-envisioning the world, she ignores its ideological dimension as a tool for legitimising traditional cultural



hegemonies and asymmetrical power relations. In naming the Old Ones, Lovecraft expressed a barely-veiled racism (i.e. Yog Sothoth and Shub Niggurath); he also represents the “degenerate” worshippers of the Great Old Ones as ethnic stereotypes of the worst sort. Most Lovecraftian magicians are cognisant of the racist views which permeate Lovecraft’s writings, although racist ideology is rarely incorporated into Lovecraftian magick - indeed, the Haunters of the Dark saw their work as antithetical and resistant to Lovecraft’s racism in attempting to disembed themselves from the constructed categories of race and ethnicity<sup>22</sup>. Thus, Alan claimed that by nominally identifying themselves as “worshippers” of the Cthulhu mythos, the HOD effectively subverted the racist elements of Lovecraft’s fiction by affiliating themselves with the ethnic groups around which the writer expressed his own fear of the other. In a personal e-mail, Rob also suggested to me that

“the negative fear and paranoia is what happens when humans step outside of their consensus reality. When we encounter something as alien as the Lovecraftian gnosis, our knee jerk reaction is one of fear, it automatically presses our fight or flight buttons. But this doesn't necessarily mean that the Lovecraftian entities are inherently “evil”. The negative emotional responses seem to occur because of our own conditioned fear of stepping beyond the construct we mistake for empirical “reality”...The process of working creatively with non-human entities forces us to take responsibility for these fear complexes by putting us in a situation where we must adapt to a radically alien concept of the universe in order to operate effectively”.

Or as Jason claimed, magick “enables you to be a little less dogmatic about other people”. Working magic with the Old Ones is an attempt at countering socio-moral boundaries which reinforce notions of sameness and otherness. Union with the alien Old Ones, notions of transmutation and hybridity - these both aim to bring about a transformation of the socially-experienced self in ways which suggest comparison with Donna Haraway’s (1991) concept of the “blasphemous” cyborg which holds “incompatible things together” (Haraway 1991: 149). Like the cyborg, the Old Ones do not hold an expectation of a “finished” whole, but of a holism that is processual, changing, dynamic and fundamentally chaotic. It exists at the

---

<sup>22</sup> The group itself included members from Anglo-Asian and Eastern-European backgrounds.

margins, breaches boundaries, and offers a model for rethinking socially-defined notions of difference and otherness which have otherwise circumscribed exclusionist national, ethnic, religious and political identities. In an article entitled “Cthulhoid Copulations”, Lovecraftian magician Bill Seibert (n.d.a.) describes his imaginal sexual encounters with the Old Ones:

“At first I felt like a fieldmouse in a world populated by owls, hawks and rattlesnakes. But the farther I got in my explorations, the more I came to realise that my personal relationship with any energy or entity is one which is uniquely determined by me and the energy/entity in question - regardless of racial or ecological stereotypes.” (Seibert n.d.a.:1).

In other words, union and identification with the “alien within” functions as an attempt to dissolve barriers between self and other; it is, as Adler suggests, a way of re-cognising and re-imagining social and moral worlds anew. Joining with the alien is seen to offer a way of negating alienating, prejudicial and separatist categories by which, as Lovecraftian magicians see it, human beings continue to define their social boundaries.

### **“Not in the Spaces We Know, But Between Them”**

Embracing the alien, becoming monstrous, becoming hybrid, is also to step into the margins between boundaries. Drawing on Mary Douglas’ (1966) symbolic analysis of anomaly and marginality, Martin Bridgestock (1989) argues that horror fiction is characterised by a concern with the marginal, the anomalous and the interstitial - the “horror of indetermination” (Bauman 1991: 56): it is the incursion of chaos - the violation of established cultural codes and categories - which evokes horror. Similarly, Lovecraft’s Old Ones evoke such feelings because they exist “[n]ot in the spaces we know, but *between* them” (Lovecraft 1928: 170): inhabiting “the borderland between mental categories”, they threaten “our entire system of thought and, by implication, the society which generates it” (Bridgestock 1989: 115). Chaos threatens to disrupt socially-inscribed conceptual categories but it is also, as Mary Douglas argues, the source from which the initial categories of thought are drawn. It is, as suggested in the previous section, through this concern with marginal,



demonic beings, that Chaos magicians seek an experience of completeness through the erosion of socially-normative, differentiating boundaries.

According to Levy, Mageo and Howard, “[t]he poorly-lighted night and the socially uncolonized spaces (bush, forest, wilderness) around communities are perfect settings for uncanny experiences” (Levy, Mageo & Howard 1996: 20). These notions are congruent with the urban context of Chaos magick: here the spaces of the uncanny are situated in the socially uncolonized or liminal spaces: deserted churches, cellars, squats, subway tunnels and urban woodlands. Although such spaces are no longer popularly associated with ghosts and spirits, in the popular imagination they are the haunts of peripheral and dangerous figures - rapists, child-murderers and drug addicts (see Stewart 1991: 132, 189). For a time, the HOD transferred their site of operations to a derelict hospital in South London. I was concerned about the legality of the group’s actions, and would only ever act as a “sentinel” on such occasions - waiting outside the building with my mobile ‘phone ready in case the police arrived. Members of the group told me that the palpable sense of fear of winding their way through the vast and unlit building (which was occasionally patrolled by security guards) facilitated states of intense *gnosis* during the possession rituals they conducted there. The group visited the hospital on five or six occasions, designating the place “Temple Uranakai” after they encountered an entity of that name during one of their possession rites. Occasionally, they would take away items (including what appeared to be a blood-stained apron) to use as magical artefacts in later rituals.

Earlier in September 1999, my research into the interface between Chaos magick and the Cthulhu mythos had already brought me into contact with a well-known Chaos magician calling himself Zebulon. Zebulon was a sociology graduate in his late thirties, and worked as a production assistant for a trade journal in North London. He spoke to me at length about the importance of conducting rites in what he called (echoing Victor Turner) “liminal spaces” - at night in dark and secluded woods, desolate hills, graveyards, sewers, and areas of pronounced urban decay - marginal or “heterotopic” sites (Green 2002) imbued with what Zebulon referred to as the “entropic ambience” of the Old Ones. At the age of nineteen, Zebulon

travelled to a desolate moor in the North of England. Standing naked on a hill at night as the wind whipped around him, he attempted to call down Yog Sothoth from the spaces between the stars using a ritual cobbled together from Lovecraft's writings. Witnessing a weird beam of light shooting down from space, Zebulon fled the scene partially naked and in a state of extreme agitation and anxiety which he characterised as "borderline madness".

Members of the HOD similarly reported that possession by the Old Ones had precipitated comparable crises, resulting in intense feelings of paranoia, personal dissolution, and sometimes culminating in physical illness. After being possessed by Cthulhu, Dane experienced a paranoid fear that "something was lurking below the surface of reality", precipitating insomnia, frequent nightmares and occasional visions or hallucinations involving an indistinct, shadowy entity which would appear at night at the end of his bed.

Experiential encounters with the Old Ones subsequently lead members of the Haunters of the Dark to question their everyday perceptions of reality - an experience that Rob termed "Cthulhu gnosis". I experienced this myself on a number of occasions, notable the time when Damien underwent possession by Shub Niggurath. Halfway through the ritual, I noticed a huge, bulky shape moving through the woods towards the group; I was too afraid to speak, and my fear was compounded when Alan, who was standing next to me, pointed in the direction of the shape and asked in a whisper if I could also see something out there. Whilst nothing actually did appear, it took me a few days to rationalise this experience; in the interim, I was half convinced that Shub Niggurath had been about to manifest in physical form. Whilst travelling on the London Underground on separate occasions, Rob and Damien both experienced "Cthulhu gnosis", similarly describing the subtle transformation of their fellow passengers into sinister, mindless, insect-like creatures. This seemed to confirm their sense of distance, difference and alienation from "ordinary" people, who seemed to live their lives as little more than mindless automaton.

In a personal communication, the magician Michael Staley (a leading member of Kenneth Grant's Typhonian OTO) suggested to me that the Old Ones emerge "from



a common background, a continuum, and that continuum is consciousness” of which “our awareness registers only a limited subset or waveband”. From the HOD’s perspective, it is from this limited perceptual waveband that everyday cognitive categories are drawn; and it is the intrusion into consciousness by the “undimensioned” Old Ones that disrupts the categorical boundaries and socially-circumscribed modes of thought - upon which a consensus view of reality rests - causing them to dissolve within the undifferentiated wholeness, continuum or “primal chaos” of consciousness. So it was that after becoming possessed by Yog Sothoth, Alan felt the boundaries between his own sense of self and the intruding entity dissolve; he also experienced the entity as existing simultaneously at all points in the room where the possession occurred, undermining his normative conceptions of space and causality.

In precipitating a collapse of internalised social, moral and cognitive codes, encounters with the Old Ones were seen to have a positive or creative impact. The existential crises experienced by Zebulon and members of the Haunters of the Dark were the starting point from which the practitioners came to view the Old Ones as potential models of an “evolving” selfhood - one which embraced the postmodern or late modern experience of the self.

### **Selfhood and Uncertainty**

Towards the end of my research Alan, Damien, Garth and Rob discussed the fact that they had increasingly come to feel “comfortable” working with forces that other pagans viewed as intrinsically demonic. The normalisation and integration of the Old Ones were, it seemed, the starting points from which Lovecraftian magicians could begin “evolving” the self. In relation to my argument in chapter four, it is, however, important to recognise that notions of the “spiritual evolution” of the self tend not to be viewed by Chaos magicians in strictly orthogenic or teleological terms, but as a process of increasing diversity and complexity - a notion embodied in the Chaos magick motto “Mutate to Survive” (Hine 1993: 120).

Lovecraft (1932) imbues quantum mechanics with a magical quality, so that mathematical formulae open doorways to dimensions beyond the space-time

continuum. There, the Old Ones falter indeterminately between a state of existence and non-existence. Drawing on popular science, Lovecraftian magicians refer to this as “hyperspace” (see for example Kaku 1995). According to Erik Davis (1995), this aspect of Lovecraft’s work becomes, for Lovecraftian occultists, a metaphor of the Derridian “crisis of representation” (Davis 1995: 5); inasmuch as the Cthulhu mythos “marks the limits of language, limits which paradoxically point to the Beyond” (Davis 1995: 6), the Old Ones can only be indirectly perceived and contacted through imaginary and incomprehensible prehuman languages: “*N’gai, n’gha’ghaa, bugg-shoggog, y’hah; Yog-Sothoth, Yog-Sothoth*” (Lovecraft 1928: 175), for example. In practice, the HOD attempted to “move beyond language” by evoking the Old Ones through the schizoid and non-linear “word salad” of language dissociated from the conscious mind - namely through the use of glossolalia and “barbarous words of evocation” (Grant 1972: 100-118; Hine 1994: 16). Similarly, names such as Nyarlathotep, Azathoth, etc., did not, according to Damien (and implied by Alan’s experience of Yog Sothoth mentioned above), signify discrete entities with definable characteristics and personalities (see also Hine 1994: 19): these names were simply labels that humans felt compelled to use in order to conceptualise the inconceivable. Rob encapsulated the “symbolic” nature of the Old Ones when he asked rhetorically whether “the Great Old Ones can be used as a language for accessing the higher extraterrestrial circuits of consciousness?”. Thus, the terminology of the Cthulhu mythos is, according to magician Stephen Sennitt, only

“meant to stand in for the absence of cognition, mediating and reducing the ineffable into more easily digestible packets of information. These symbols...are the masks which reality adopts at the dictation of the ego” (Sennitt 1997: 7).

For Sennitt, it is chaos and ontological indeterminacy which lies behind these phenomenological masks (Sennitt 1997: 12): the Old Ones “are ultimately random, but only in the same sense that we ourselves are ultimately random” (Sennitt 1997: 7).

Through identification with the Old Ones, Chaos magicians are not, therefore,



seeking refuge from the late modern condition of “ontological insecurity” (Giddens 1991: 53) in transcendental absolutes; rather, they claim to embrace “ontological anarchism” where the self is the shifting site of multiple biographies and subjectivities. For Anthony Giddens, “the content and form of prevalent anxieties...have become altered” (Giddens 1991: 32) within the context of late modernity - primarily as a consequence of broad structural changes: globalisation, disembedding mechanisms, the compression of time and space allowing interaction and interchange “across a plurality of contexts”(Giddens 1991: 18, 146-148). This leads to a dynamism and fluidity, and the emergence of an increasingly reflexive perspective which “undermines the certainty of knowledge” (Giddens 1991: 21), particularly in the search for fixity of selfhood and identity. The result is that overarching cultural metacriterion by which identities were “traditionally” defined become displaced by a range of possible metacriteria from which the individual has to choose from or alternate between (Baumeister 1986: 247). In a globalised context, patterns of coherence are broken when individuals encounter experiences which are discontinuous with their own cultural conceptions of order and categorisation, resulting in identity problems. Similarly, Richard Sennett (1996) suggests that anxiety and identity problems arise as a consequence of the increasing pressures brought to bear upon our decision making capabilities. However, drawing upon the work of Fromm and Marcuse, Sennett argues that attempts to maintain fixed and stable metacriteria result in neurosis and inhibit personal development and growth. Taking an anarchist stance which closely resembles that of the Chaos magicians, Sennett claims that disorder and diversity are therefore necessary for the fulfilment of human potential and freedom. Static environments and social structures lead to static, unfulfilled personalities, “self-slavery” (Sennett 1996: xviii), and alignment to an ahistorical and imagined preconceived order. This order generates “the desire for purity” (Sennett 1996: 22), or the modernist project of subordinating the inchoate and ambivalent elements of reality in order to make them manageable (Bauman 1990; 1991: 15).

The HOD’s identification with the Old Ones thus essentially reframes the apocalyptic resurgence of these entities as an “evolutionary” transformation of

consciousness - the “inner apocalypse” or “apocalypse of consciousness” referred to by Jason. This is, I suggest, an attempt to foster a mode of consciousness emergent from what James Aho refers to as “the apocalypse of modernity” (Aho 1997; see also Giddens 1991: 4): the erosion of the Enlightenment’s project of anthropocentric humanism and its essentialist notions of the self, wherein “the human centre of modernity has destabilised and collapsed. Its fragmentation has opened a space for new revelations” (Aho 1997: 62).

For Chaos magicians, the Cthulhu mythos functions as a “mythography” of the ambivalence, disorderliness, ruptures, and uncertainties of late modern “risk society”, and a reification of the antinomian and postmodern dissolution of grand narratives and overarching moral schemas. The “new revelations” presented by the Lovecraftian oeuvre mark the limits of rational progress and offer (through the seemingly-paradoxical consequences of new scientific paradigms) a counter-narrative to modernity’s teleological certainties. Part of the attraction of the Cthulhu mythos lies, therefore, in the compatibility between practitioners’ use of scientific discourse and Lovecraft’s own cosmological vision founded upon “a twisted materialism in which scientific “progress” returns us to the atavistic abyss” (Davis 1995: 5)<sup>23</sup>. Thus in the opening paragraph of his story *The Call of Cthulhu* Lovecraft writes:

“We live on a placid island of ignorance in the midst of black seas of infinity, and it was not meant that we should voyage far. The sciences, each straining in its own direction, have hitherto harmed us little; but some day the piecing together of dissociated knowledge will open up such terrifying vistas of reality, and of our frightful position therein, that we shall either go mad from the revelation or flee from the deadly light into the peace and safety of a new dark age” (Lovecraft 1926: 125).

Ultimately, Chaos magicians utilise a category of “fictive” demonic spirits or entities as a method of imaginably and metaphorically exploring and consuming the multiple, fragmenting and transforming categories of the self in the increasingly complex and uncertain socio-cultural context of “post-” or “late” modernity. Such

---

<sup>23</sup> Similarly, the science-fiction writer George Hay (1995: 9-10) and magician Barry Walker (1999) suggest that Lovecraft’s apocalyptic vision resonates with contemporary fears of environmental



entities are literally, as Michael Lambek suggests, “imaginative constructs - local takes on experience and the world” (Lambek 1996: 238). In this respect, the entities of the Cthulhu mythos represent a fundamentally “modern” idiom for the consumption of otherworldly experience, being embedded in secularised and technologised conceptions of the supernatural (Hess 1994): namely the popular belief in UFOs and visitations by extraterrestrial beings<sup>24</sup>.

Marc Auge observes that “mythologies speak of origins but these are cited, used, explored and re-imagined in order to answer the questions asked by the present” (Auge 1999: 19). The adoption of Lovecraft’s mythology as a system of belief (however partial) indicates a substantively new and emerging magico-religious response to a crisis of meaning and identity instigated by processes of rationalisation, secularisation, and globalisation. It is a response which contests Peter Beyer’s supposition that, despite globalisation’s relativising thrust, religious thought universally reflects a concept of the transcendent as “a *structured* reality” (Beyer 1994: 6; my emphasis): Lovecraftian magicians do in fact attempt to articulate an alternative conception of the transcendent as “unstructured hyperspace”, the abysmal chaos of the Great Old Ones - a conception of the “sacred” which mirrors practitioners’ perception of the social landscape as lacking any clear, structural or meaningful locus, and divested of “ultimate sacred postulates” (Rappaport 1979: 117). This conception entails a recasting of the groundlessness of being, and the decentralisation of the self (with uncertainty as its consequence), as sources of potential self-emancipation and creativity rather than the cause of cynicism or existential angst.

However, according to Cohen, Ben-Yehuda and Aviad (1987),

“personal decentralization reflects radical secularization in an extreme form: all ends become equally valuable, or better, relative and ultimately valueless. The individual hence turns upon himself, and the immediate here and now: the new narcissism...and the hedonistic desire for instant gratification, frequently manifested by late modern youth, are ultimately an adaptive stance, reflecting the nature of the radically secularized universe

---

collapse as a consequence of scientific materialism and mass consumption.

<sup>24</sup> See for example Keel (1975); Rojcewicz (1987); Lewis (1995); Whitmore (1995); Porter (1996); Dean (1998); Matheson (1998).

into which it has been born.” (Cohen, Ben-Yehuda & Aviad 1987: 323).

In this respect, Chaos magick represents the formalisation of an “elective centre” which embraces and is adaptive to the multitude of beliefs, ideologies, styles and lifestyle choices which fall under the rubric of globalisation. The emergence of such elective centres is also indicative of a shift in the way that “otherness” is conceptualised; as Jonathan Rutherford (1990) notes, within the context of global modernity “[d]ifference ceases to threaten, or to signify power relations. Otherness is sought after for its exchange value, its exoticism and pleasures, thrills and adventures it can offer” (Rutherford 1990: 11). In other words, “otherness” has also become commoditised within the Lovecraftian magical milieu<sup>25</sup>.

In conclusion, I have shown in this chapter how Chaos magicians attempt to utilise fantasy and the imagination in resisting the alienating rationalism of the wider culture. However, in the final section of this chapter, I have shown that adoption of science-fictional idioms also indicates ways in which Chaos magick forms part of the modern or late modern socio-cultural landscape. In the weakest sense of this “modernity”, such idioms articulate a notion of the sacred congruent with modern, secular and technologised conceptions of the cosmos (wherein powerful, god-like aliens replace “traditional” gods, demons and spirits). More importantly, practitioners’ use of science-fictional ideas ratifies their position within the consumerist milieu of late modernity - insofar as possession by alien forces indicates the consumption of otherness as a thrilling, empowering experience. Furthermore, I demonstrate that this embracing of the disorderly alien or “other” of the Cthulhu mythos represents an attempt to encompass and internalise uncertainty. This, I argue, is not so much as a form of resistance to modernity, but a strategy for coping with the anxiety, ephemerality and confusing variety of lifestyle options characteristic of late modern life.

---

<sup>25</sup> Paul Heelas makes similar claims in relation to the “postmodern” religion of the New Age (1998: 5-6). This view also reinforces part of Hebdige’s (1979: 96) thesis that subcultural movements rapidly become assimilated by the dominant culture, and repackaged or “reinvented” by the popular media. Whatever critique they originally offered the dominant cultural values become sanitised and presented as another “lifestyle choice”.



## Chapter 7

### Conclusion: Wholeness, Magic, and Late Modernity

#### Introduction

In summation, the final chapter of this thesis looks at how Chaos magick constitutes both an ethos and set of magical practices which have been shaped by, and are deeply entrenched in, the experience of late modernity.

Practitioners of Chaos magick hold the view that, with the advent of quantum physics, Western consciousness has been wrenched from the teleological certainties offered by Newtonian physics and the belief in God as divine watchmaker. A new cosmological vision has come into being - one dominated by ontological uncertainty and “non-linearity”. According to the holistic principles which lie at the core of the Western magical tradition, this new framework is seen to be mirrored by wider social and cultural transformations - for example, the global expansion of both electronic information systems and consumer capitalism which have increasingly eroded the certainties of nation-state, culture, and established systems of belief.

Subsequently, this chapter examines the ways in which Chaos magick embodies some of the central values of late modernity, and which enables practitioners to adapt to the modern experience of social flux and rapid change: where the traditional anchors of identity are being relativised and replaced by a profusion of commodified lifestyle options and “identity politics” (Sarup 1996: 51-52), accompanied by new anxieties and moral ambiguities which problematise the human search for ontological security.

Reiterating the role of new cosmological conception emergent from post-Newton physics (first addressed in chapter four), I then go on to suggest that the modern sense of uncertainty is in part a product of cognitive problems resulting from the growth and specialisation of knowledge. As mentioned in the introduction to the thesis, the Western concept of the “occult” is embedded in a discourse of secret knowledge and the discovery of hidden or concealed forces. Magic is, then, a

method of understanding and utilising the hidden and intangible forces which underlie the everyday experience of reality. In this respect, magic in general - and Chaos magick in particular - represent a recasting of the instrumental aims of scientific theory; thus, following Robin Horton (1967; 1993), I approach magic as a theoretical activity not dissimilar from science. But beyond eliciting explanations and causal relationships, magic is also an activity which takes an “expanded” view of phenomena to imbue them with meaning. The recourse to magic is, I argue, a way of reducing the disparity between knowledge and experience and forging them into an emotionally satisfying experience of wholeness (Glucklich 1991: 11-12). For Chaos magicians, this experience of wholeness is signified by “Chaos”, a “higher order” lying beyond culture-bound systems of categorisation. The idiom of the disorderly demonic plays a central role in allowing practitioners to comprehend and experience this processual order by transgressing and dissolving those seemingly static, absolute and “naturalised” (but socially-constructed) categories which constitute a “mundane” perception of everyday reality. However, in concluding the thesis I problematise the practitioners’ attempts to emancipate the self from the alienating effects of late modern society. There I suggest that whilst the practice of Chaos magick can have positive effects on practitioners lives, it also represents a conduit for the consumption of commodified otherworldly experiences, and is itself a commodified lifestyle option.

### **Magic and Modernity**

In an important study of contemporary witchcraft beliefs in Cameroon, Peter Geschiere (1997) argues against the reductionism of classical anthropological approaches to witchcraft, which treat the category as an index of a society’s moral values and social boundaries, consequently performing a number of functions *vis a vis* the social structure (see for example Douglas 1970b; Marwick 1970). For Geschiere, the category of witchcraft is, instead, surrounded by ambivalences and moral ambiguities. That such ambiguities are apparent in Chaos magick is indicated in a number of ways: not only is magical power used by practitioners for the purposes of both self-liberation and coercion, but concepts such as “Chaos” and the



“demonic” are intertwined in a dialectic of creativity and destruction, of self-negation and self-construction, of contesting the social whilst striving for new, “liberated” forms of sociality.

Geschiere’s work is representative of a recent trend in anthropological studies of African witchcraft that has attempted to reassess the category as being as much a product of “modernity” as it is of “tradition” (see for example Comaroff & Comaroff 1993; Moore and Sanders 2001). In these studies, witchcraft represents an idiom by which the impersonal and occluded transnational forces shaping actors’ experience are made visible, and by which new inequalities of power become comprehensible within African systems of thought. In effect, the resurgence of witchcraft beliefs in a post-colonial African context is seen to represent an indigenous response to new forms of political and economic power which have emerged in the wake of modernisation.

This perspective, whilst representing an important attempt to create a theoretical shift away from the association of witchcraft beliefs and practices with “tradition” - and by implication, the irrational - reifies a “neo-Tylorian” (Horton 1993: 53-62) perspective on the “problem” of witchcraft. Thus, for these theorists the underlying, abstract and mystified transglobal economic forces, and the vagaries of a moral economy of consumption which have increasingly shaped African people’s experience, are personalised and made tangible in the figure of the witch. As a consequence, belief in witchcraft makes it possible to mediate new uncertainties resulting from transformations of the domestic sphere, gender relations, social, political and economic structures, and even forms of consciousness, in the colonial and post-colonial context.

For Chaos magicians, the practice of magic is also attractive for the very reason that it is deeply embedded in the often occluded and uncertain workings of modernity. The practice of Chaos magick consequently resonates with the ever-shifting experience of late modernity; everyday life is replete with examples in which seemingly “occult” forces shape and transform the experience of selfhood and identity: where consumer desires are created and internalised in apparently “magical” ways, and the search for ontological authenticity becomes commodified

in a range of “lifestyle options”. Thus, paradoxically, the search for an authentic selfhood - distinct from the alienated and “contaminated mode of being” (Heelas 1996: 2) produced by consumer capitalism - serve to further the economic status quo. Thus, concealed networks of power are seen to shape the collective psyche in ways which homogenise belief and behaviour, and maintain the illusion of a “paramount reality”.

For its adherents, the practice of Chaos magick leads to “illumination” - the awareness of reality as it is rather than as it is presented by various media. Thus, becoming competent in the techniques of Chaos magick grants the ability to free oneself from those internalised but false, restrictive and mediated narratives through which human beings seemingly perceive the “real”.

### **Selfhood and Late Modernity**

The “daemonic” is the personalised idiom through which Chaos magicians seek to understand and undermine the concealed operations of power. However, the techniques which allow “daemons” - or the psychological complexes “inhabiting” the modern, fragmentary experience of the self - to be made visible (and ultimately mastered) are deeply embedded in contemporary psychotherapeutic discourse. As indicated in chapters three, four and five, such techniques form part of a “modern” system of internalised discipline and self-surveillance, and play a significant role in determining actors’ competence as Chaos magicians in the eyes of their peers. As much as it attempts to formulate itself as a site of resistance to certain aspects of modernity, Chaos magick arguably constitutes a discursive practice which shapes practitioners sense of selfhood to the social, cultural and ideological demands of late modernity.

This is apparent in the rational-instrumental ways in which many of the practitioners approach employment - as a way of garnering new skills, and as temporary sources of income to support leisure activities. In many respects, the practice and ethos of Chaos magick creates individuals ideally suited to the insecurities of life in the modern, post-industrial social landscape. These are individuals whose outlook and abilities ably fulfil the requirements of the modern



workplace: where expectations of secure, long-term employment have been increasingly eroded, and where the discourse of adaptability dominates the rhetoric of work management - as evident in such popular terms as “multitasking”, “transferable skills”, and “prioritising workloads”.

According to Paul Heelas (1992, 1994: 104-105, 1996: 138-141), the emergence of modern, self-oriented forms of religiosity is presaged by a dialectical relationship between the “mainstream” individualistic ideology of capitalism, and the anti-capitalistic but equally individualistic “humanistic expressivism” of the 1960’s counterculture. For Heelas (1996: 135-177), the appeal of New Age “self-spiritualities” thus lies in the way they thus encompass both countercultural and mainstream responses to modernity. On the one hand, New Age discourse offers the opportunity to uncover an authentic, “sacralised” self in response to the fact that the “various uncertainties of modernity generate identity-problems”(Heelas 1996: 137) - namely the erosion of social and cultural institutions which “traditionally” formed the locus of selfhood and identity (Heelas 1996: 143). On the other hand, New Age movements also emphasis the individualistic, self-oriented values of modernity: “exercising responsibility, initiative, energy, creativity, self-reliance, standing on your own feet rather than being dependent on others” (Heelas 1996: 168).

Tanya Luhrmann (1989: 343-344) also sees the appeal of neo-paganism lying in part in the ways that it articulates the self-reflexive character of modernity. Thus, the relativism espoused by Chaos magicians (invoked as a characteristic of their postmodern orientation) represents an extension of the Enlightenment ideal of critical (i.e. reflexive) reason (Giddens 1991: 21; Eilberg-Swartz 1985). As a result, some of the values and ideals articulated within the ethos of Chaos magick represent “a *radicalised* rendering of more familiar assumptions and values” (Heelas 1996: 115) ensconced within modernity. Significantly, the very same (individualistic) values are seen as desirable and are readily harnessed to enhance productivity within Western enterprise culture (Heelas 1991b; see also Anthony Cohen 1994 171-176). Thus, the appeal of the New Age (and similarly, of Chaos magick) is that it represents a spirituality “of” and “for” modernity. (Heelas 1996:

168-169). Importantly, this radicalised rendering of modernity within both the New Age and Chaos magick stretches to encompasses and “spiritualise” modern scientific theory.

### **Chaos Magick and “Ontological Insecurity”**

As a generalisation, New Age and neo-pagan movements seek to uncover ontological security within the inner sanctum of an authentic and sacralised self. Chaos magicians, on the other hand, strive to become adaptive to the insecurities and uncertainties of modernity, embracing them as an ontologically “authentic” condition of “being-in-the-world”. However, as suggested elsewhere in the thesis, the end aim of these diverse approaches is uniform: to uncover a sense of wholeness and totality.

Chaos magicians’ stress spontaneity, acausality, non-linearity and indeterminism as intrinsic to their cosmological and ontological schema. Chaos itself is conceptualised as the inchoate and non-teleological process which spontaneously “adds increasing complexity to the universe by spawning structures which were not inherent in its component parts” (Carroll 1987: 28). As demonstrated in chapter four, many of these ideas have been shaped by practitioners’ interest in popularised - and often quasi-mystical - exegeses of quantum theory and the science of chaos. As a consequence, it is necessary to frame the broad contours of Chaos magical discourse within the historical and cultural context of Western cosmological beliefs.

The argument presented here claims that the emergence of quantum theory in the early decades of the twentieth century has - at least partially - resulted in broad cultural shifts in Euro-American societies, particularly within the domain of cosmological conceptions (Wallerstein 1999).

I begin by presenting some of the theoretical premises of quantum theory (drawn from popular science sources) concerning the origins of the universe. The science writer Paul Davies (1995) states that



“At about one Planck time [ $10^{-43}$  seconds] following what we would otherwise take to be *the* beginning, the nature of space and time could be severely distorted by quantum effects” (Davies 1995: 11).

The consequence of this being that space may be finite, comparable to a line formed into a circle, turning back upon itself, whilst time “turns gradually into a spacelike direction” (Davis 1995: 13). Davies goes onto suggest that

“[s]ince time essentially fades away and becomes another dimension of space at some sufficiently early epoch, it means we don’t have a first moment of the universe at all...We have a universe in which the age is finite but in which there is no first moment.” (Davies 1995: 14).

Thus, the inception of the universe may be treated, in theory, as an event without an *a priori* cause. Attempts at identifying the originary point of the universe upon the space-time curvature are further problematised by the theory of relativity, which holds that the perception of such a point is context-dependent: human beings are then faced with the possibility that there is “no privileged beginning of the coordinate system that represents the absolute first moment of coming-into-being of the universe.” (Davis 1995: 14). The implication of all this being that “there is an element of uncertainty and spontaneity in nature” (Davies 1995: 10). Here, I am not concerned with the truth value of such theoretical claims *per se*, but with their wider implication *vis a vis* Western cultural and religious beliefs. In rejecting the non-theistic implications of this theory, Einstein famously stated that “God does not play dice with the universe” (quoted in Davies 1995: 10) - a statement which resonates with the broader religious expectations of Euro-American societies.

I do not mean to suggest that such conceptions are widespread or have irrevocably undermined the cosmological certainties posited by Christianity and indented into the religious consciousness of Euro-American societies. Quantum theory and the science of chaos have, however, emerged as cultural reference-points through the plethora of popular science books dealing with the topic. Significantly, the popular appeal of quantum mechanics and chaos theory is, arguably, due to their being presented in relation to problems of human meaning, and in terms of their religious and philosophical connotations (a few titles typically found on the

shelves of retail bookshops include: *God and the New Physics*, *Does God Play Dice?*, *The Physics of Immortality*, and *The Tao of Chaos*). In seemingly undermining traditional theistic conceptions, these theories have, I would argue, asserted some degree of influence upon the detraditionalisation of Western religiosity and spirituality; they have also, I suggest, given rise to qualitatively new conceptions of uncertainty of an *existential* order. Although the cultural impact of these “new” uncertainties may not be widespread, those individuals attracted to Chaos magick are persons who have, for a variety of reasons (and summarised later in this chapter), been particularly receptive to the religious implications of such theories: traditional sources of spiritual authority and legitimacy have been brought into question for these individuals; this, in turn, has problematised religious responses to questions of human meaning, teleology and theodicy. Chaos magick is attractive to these individuals because it offers a relevant magico-religious response to the existential import of cosmological uncertainty; in doing so, it speaks to the everyday experience and concerns of its adherents. In brief, contemporary scientific theory not only represents a relevant source of magico-religious ideas for Chaos magicians, but has in a Weberian sense played a significant role in shaping their existential orientation and motivations.

One of the most significant aspects of Chaos magick is the emphasis it places upon the creative potential inherent in the “non-linear” conception of nature (as posited by chaos theory): the notion that “[s]mall changes lead to bigger changes” is, according to physicist Ian Percival, “the signature of chaos” (Percival 1991: 11). This concept is, as discussed in chapter four, implemented in the practical aspects of Chaos magick, namely sorcery or results magick. However, the problems of treating the science of chaos as isomorphic with different theoretical domains (i.e. a theory of magic, or, indeed, with a concept of culture) remain largely unexamined by Chaos magicians. Ian Percival thus goes on to state that

“you cannot use the theory of chaos everywhere. Science takes words and shapes their meanings to its own ends, and ‘chaos’ is no exception. The state of Lebanese politics and British education may look chaotic, but you cannot study them using chaos theory. There are many other situations that



are chaotic in the ordinary sense, but not in the scientific sense of chaos.” (Percival 1991: 16).

Similarly, Richard Sutcliffe (1995: 127) suggests that Chaos magicians have based their ideas on a popular misconception of quantum theory: the belief that the observer asserts some influence over that which is observed. This notion is famously encapsulated in an arguably misunderstood recension of the “Uncertainty Principle” theorised by physicist Werner Heisenberg (see Casti 1990: 346), which “involves an irreducible disturbance, or uncertainty, introduced into the measurement of one attribute due to the intrusion of the measuring device when making a measurement on a different attribute” (Casti 1990: 345-346). Heisenberg’s Uncertainty Principle played a significant part in shaping the Copenhagen Interpretation of quantum theory (developed by physicist Nils Bohr), which holds that: uncertainty is “an intrinsic property of nature”(Casti 1990: 442), and that both the observer and that which is being observed form an indivisible totality. The implications of this theory, in its most “radical” form, point to an observer-created or observer-dependent universe. More conservative interpretations hold that the outcome of an experiment is effected by the nature of the experiment and the type of apparatus used (Casti 1990: 437-438; see also Sutcliffe 1996: 129). In fact, the assumptions underlying Chaos magicians’ use of the former theoretical approach (that of an observer-dependent universe) appear to run counter to the more “mystical” interpretations of quantum theory such as those suggested by physicist David Bohm. The problem being that Chaos magicians do not always appear to treat consciousness as part of the implicate order or “*Undivided Wholeness in Flowing Movement*” (Bohm 1980: 11). Whilst acts of sorcery supposedly involve the erosion of the subject-object dualism, Chaos magical sorcery practices implicitly maintain the same dualistic distinction: the consciousness of the sorcerer is seen as inhabiting some privileged and objective viewpoint outside of the implicate order - one which allows the intentionality of the observer to effect change upon “external” reality.

However problematic Chaos magicians’ understanding and appropriation of science may be, this appropriation is significant to the broader contours of my

argument in two respects: it points to the ways in which contemporary magical belief is enmeshed in the dominant epistemological frameworks of modernity; it also elicits an understanding of the cognitive aims of Chaos magick (and of magic as a more generalised category). These two themes are closely interrelated insofar as Chaos magick, in attempting to explain and control the underlying forces which shape the cosmos, represents a theoretical activity similar to science. Quantum theory also represents one of the models by which practitioners' attempt to gain an understanding of the experience of modernity, with all of its vagaries and uncertainties.

Within the discourse of Chaos magick there exists, therefore, a complex relationship between notions of cosmological uncertainty, and the human need to comprehend the hidden "causal" relations which shape the cosmos (in order to elicit patterns of meaningful wholeness). Thus, the "disorderliness" of encounters with demonic entities represent attempts by Chaos magicians to shatter socially- and culturally-determined categories, but the goal of such encounters is to attain a greater sense of wholeness and freedom.

In this respect, Kenneth Grant (1977) suggests that Western representations of the demonic as supernatural evil have arisen from an inability of Judeo-Christian discourse to "comprehend the forces of Non-Being" (Grant 1977: 142); the subsequent response being to "cast them in a false mould from which they emerged as powers of 'evil'" (Grant 1977: 142). In what amounts to a structural inversion of Judeo-Christian concepts of holiness as related to "wholeness" (see for example Douglas 1966: 52), the transgressive power of the demonic is seen to erode established categories, thus leading to the experience of Chaos as an undifferentiated totality. As I have shown in chapter six and elsewhere in the thesis, encounters with the demonic lead practitioners to experience an expanded sense of self, one which forms an indivisible part of a cosmic continuum of consciousness (see also Grant 1973: 37). The demonic thus becomes associated not with the fragmentation of the self, but to wholeness and totality through the self's immersion within this continuum. Uncertainty is an intrinsic aspect of reality, but it ultimately forms part of an processual cosmological and ontological totality for



Chaos magicians. It is, therefore, important to reiterate that Chaos magicians do not necessarily treat the notion of “chaos” in vulgar terms (i.e. as fragmentation and disorder), but as a “higher order” of reality.

### **Chaos Magick, Science, and Instrumentality**

As mentioned in chapter one, Susan Greenwood (1995) has suggested that modern witchcraft tends to emphasise stereotypically feminine attributes such as the emotions and intuition, whereas Thelemic magick and Chaos magick are driven by a masculine concern with rational mastery of the environment. Whilst my experiences amongst Chaos magicians tend to affirm Greenwood’s claims that contemporary magical practices are distributed across gendered fields (see chapter five), her categorisation nonetheless represents something of an overgeneralisation. One of the key aims of Chaos magical practice is to articulate a “non-rational”, participatory and experiential awareness of “processual wholeness”. This orientation not only allows adherents to make sense of the dissonance and uncertainty they encounter in their day to day lives, but also transforms the “modern” experience of anxiety in the face of incertitude. Thus, for Chaos magicians, the uncertain comes to constitute a new semantic field, where the vagaries of day-to-day life constitute a resource to be drawn upon in the Nietzschean project of “becoming” and “overcoming” (Nietzsche 1978: 138). This project of continual self-creation not only imbues their existence with meaning but, in theory, expands the limits of their freedom. For practitioners, the erosion of objectivity means that in the face of an ultimately meaningless cosmos, they are free to define, create and alter their own meanings. Through acts of magic, meaninglessness and uncertainty are transformed into an expanded field of meaning and freedom.

The emotive, intuitive and participatory aspects of contemporary magic are, therefore, important modalities of knowledge and experience. But in treating these aspects as the *defining* modality of magical consciousness in stereotypically-gendered terms is problematic.

It is also difficult to deny that the contemporary magical subculture represents a response to the problems of rationalising modernity. However, by emphasising practitioners' interest in domains which are treated as being antithetical to modern instrumental rationality, there is a danger that the marginal status of practitioners (and of the subject in general) is further reified within scholarly analysis. In failing to recognise magic as linked to so-called "modern" rational modes of thought, these substantively "expressivist" definitions continues to reinforce, in subtle ways, an social evolutionist discourse - where practitioners become implicitly identified or categorised as "pre-modern", or as redundant and anachronistic oddities suffering from a form of false consciousness.

Thus, to define the scientific or pseudo-scientific aspects of Chaos magick as "inauthentic" (i.e. practices which do not "properly" reflect the aims and concerns of the contemporary magical subculture) is also problematic. Furthermore, the co-option of scientific discourse does not simply dictate the sometimes instrumental orientations of Chaos magical practice. In fact, they indicate another dimension to magical belief and practice which is linked to a probably universal cognitive disposition - one which elicits a broader theoretical interest in the universe as being "an object of thought at least as much as it is a means of satisfying needs" (Lévi-Strauss 1962: 3). However, Chaos magick clearly does not postulate the "complete and all embracing determinism" (Lévi-Strauss 1962: 11) which Lévi-Strauss attributes to magical thinking: I do not, therefore, mean to conflate magical and scientific thought in intellectualist terms; with regard to my earlier comments concerning the modernity of magic, I mean to suggest that magic can by no means be considered a "traditional" and hence "closed" system of thought, as compared to science which is "modern" and "open" (i.e. Horton 1967: 349-352).

As I have suggested earlier in the chapter, the relativistic trend of Chaos magical thought embodies the same critically reflexive principles characteristic of "modern", rational modes of thought. By the same token, I would also claim that science and magic apply *sometimes congruent and overlapping* modes of thought to *similar* phenomena. Thus, Chaos magick is as equally concerned with the nature and organisation of the cosmos as is contemporary science. Both Chaos magick and



some approaches to scientific theory (i.e. the more “mystical” interpretations of quantum theory) both involve sometimes subtle gradations in emphasis - from theoretical modes of knowledge to the emotional and existential need to make sense of that knowledge - which are not always easy to categorise. In this respect, both scientific and magical theorising can elicit expressive dimensions. The important distinction between the two modalities of magic and science is that magic allows practitioners to either bypass the chain of causality, or to posit alternative concepts of causality, where the limits of knowledge are reached (Malinowski 1948: 30-31, 79)<sup>1</sup>. However, this also appears to be the case in the more “mystical” interpretations of quantum theory.

These subtle gradations, between tradition and modern, between explanation and meaning, between instrumentality and inner experience run across the gamut of beliefs and practices: for Chaos magicians, medieval grimoires continue to represent repositories of magical formulae by which demons can be evoked to perform one’s will. But such repositories may also, and simultaneously, be articulated in ways congruent with detraditionalised, internalised and psychologised notions of supernatural evil (as discussed in chapter two). Thus, the concept of the demonic comes to be reconfigured through the ancient Greek idiom of the “daemon” in order to articulate a modern or late modern concept of the self. External spirits become the personalised idiom of the psyche’s depredations by modern consumer capitalism and media overkill: “traditional” supernatural entities such as Baphomet and Choronzon are re-imagined by practitioners as psycho-social/cultural forces, “memes” and word virii. These daemons then become the focus of magic’s instrumentality - the object of which is not, however, rational control of external nature but the transformation of “inner nature” (Greenwood 1998: 102), i.e. the self.

---

<sup>1</sup> In this respect, magical belief also evidences elements of an innate cognitive capacity which Sperber (1974: 115-149) calls the “symbolic mechanism”; which is to say that magical acts evoke a sense of relevance by searching “memories and knowledge in order to produce certain hypothetical assumptions” (Boyer 1994: 56) where explanations are otherwise lacking. Sperber and Boyer are, however, less concerned with magico-religious beliefs as solutions to human existential problems than with the evolution of human cognitive structures within which such beliefs reside.

### **Magic, Knowledge and Uncertainty**

With the challenge offered to “traditional” Christian theistic cosmology by contemporary scientific theory, qualitatively new conceptions of uncertainty have come into being. By this, I do not mean to suggest that there is an historically and empirically verifiable (or quantifiable) “increase” in uncertainty within the modern world. Uncertainty is, for the purposes of this thesis, taken to indicate an existential condition which, by its very nature, is not readily made subject to empirical observation outside of the emergence of various phenomena: new social movements (anti-nuclear groups, environmentalist groups, etc.); psychotherapeutic discourse as a vastly popular culture industry; and the emergence of “identity politics” in the wake of a globalised and globalising consumer industry of “lifestyle options”.

The community of Chaos magicians exemplifies, on the small scale, some of the responses to the potential effects and anxieties produced by a new “sense” of “ontological” uncertainty - a sense which has been exacerbated by rapid social and technological change (and the emergence of new conceptions of risk as consequences of late modernity, i.e. Beck 1992). In this respect, practitioners of Chaos magick form a special case. But as one set of strategies and responses which form part of a much wider and diverse set of beliefs and practices (the contemporary magical subculture) they are indicative, but not necessarily demonstrative, of wider cultural responses which have been shaped by these uncertainties (psychotherapy as a case in point). Chaos magick, along with other forms of paganism, magic and New Age spirituality, has attempted to address these uncertainties: by formulating a “new” synthesis of science, religion and magic, practitioners have attempted to close the gap between diverse forms of knowledge, historically identified as separate and discrete domains (Tambiah 1990: 31). This claim may seem paradoxical given the strongly relativist thrust of Chaos magick; however, it is important to bear in mind two points at this stage in the argument: 1) Chaos magicians’ emphasis the pragmatic goal of stripping away layers of symbolism to reveal the “core” or “universal” techniques of magic, which are roughly identical with “archaic” forms of shamanism and 2) the notion of Chaos as



the primordial and *undifferentiated* (i.e. unified) ontological basis of the phenomenal world - conceptualised in various ways as a kind of mystical processual totality or continuum of consciousness.

This unifying approach - presaged by Aleister Crowley's claim that "magick" seeks to fulfil the aims of religion using the method of science (Crowley 1909: 1) - is as much an attempt to "spiritualise" science (in other words, to make it existentially "meaningful") as it is a way of scientifically legitimising the aforementioned varieties of belief.

Edmund Leach (1976: 32) suggests that the switching on of a light evidences the application of magical thinking amongst Westerners as much as does the use of spells amongst the Trobriand Islanders. As Malinowski argued in the latter context, magical thought is applied in instances of uncertainty where technical knowledge has reached its limits. However, in the case of the lightswitch, technology and scientific theory exists to explain the causal links existing between the switch and the lightbulb. But as Ian Stewart and Jack Cohen (1997: 243-245) point out, the range and diversity of information in the modern world means that knowledge increasingly takes the form of "extelligence": the bulk of scientific knowledge exists in forms external to the human mind - either in books or as electronic data; The consequence of this is that there is simply too much available information for any one individual to process and use effectively to construct a coherent and orderly model of reality. Jack Cohen (1999) argues elsewhere that, as systems of knowledge become increasingly complex, diverse, specialised and compartmentalised, the more likely that people will make recourse to "magical thinking" as a cognitive strategy for resolving or avoiding discontinuities within day to day knowledge and experience. Anthropologists have also recognised that the necessity exists, either through an innate cognitive mechanism (Sperber 1974), or a largely untheorised emotional requirement for order and certainty (Geertz 1973), for "filling in the gaps" in knowledge and dealing with the exigencies of everyday life.

As a generalised concept, magic provides an emotionally-satisfying model of underlying unity and totality in the face of diversity and uncertainty; magical

idioms function as both summarising and elaborating symbols (Ortner 1973), delineating a model of the cosmological order which in turn provides the orientation and motivation for human action in the world (Geertz 1973: 123). As Evans-Pritchard demonstrated in his analysis of the Azande concept of *mangu*, magical beliefs do not necessarily replace causal explanations, but rather they add a semantic layer to those explanations and render them meaningful and emotionally-satisfying in the face of misfortune. For the Zande, the belief in witchcraft and the use of oracles provide a way of explaining misfortune and formulating a response to events otherwise beyond the control of actors - particularly where the scientific means or technical knowledge to do so are not available. This has the effect, if not of actually controlling uncertainties, of at least mediating the emotionally unsettling effects of uncertainty. This, as I have indicated above, is as much the case in “modern”, complex societies as it is in the kind of small scale “traditional” societies which have long been the principle focus of the anthropological gaze. In the case of Chaos magicians, the personalised idiom of the “daemon” represents an accessible “folk model” for understanding the seemingly mysterious forces which shape the alienating experience of the modern self; through possession and other forms of magical practices, such demons can be “mastered” or negotiated with, or transformed into a positive source of creativity and meaning. In the broader context of Euro-American societies, “magical thinking” also informs Western folk models of “fate” and “destiny” (as often barely articulated and undertheorised concepts) which structure the contingencies of everyday life into an ordered and meaningful pattern.

Throughout the thesis, I have given ample examples of how magic can be a symbolic or expressive act, an instrumental act, a political act, a form of theorising, a psychological tool, and in the eyes of the practitioners, a genuine, *sui generis* mystical power. As a consequence, the problem in attempting to theorise magic lies in the need to reduce the category down to a single unified and overarching definition, free from contextual restraints. Magic is a polysemic and ambivalent category, and indeed many anthropological explanations of magic implicitly subsume into their analyses some notion of its being linked to indigenous



cosmological beliefs, to systems of theorising, to ways of explaining and classifying the world, to methods of instrumental action and the control of nature, and to indigenous existential orientations. When Chaos magicians use sorcery or “results magic”, their intention is self-consciously instrumental rather than *explicitly* symbolic. Thus, it is important not to lose sight of the fact (as is often the case with an unreconstructed symbolist approach) that magical acts are not simply expressive acts, but may well encompass *both* instrumental *and* expressive dimensions.

### **Magick and Sorcery as an Existential Orientation**

The symbolic, expressive or meaningful dimensions which *do* exist in Chaos magical sorcery practices are often implicit within the instrumental aims of such acts. Sorcery entails *gnosis*, and through *gnosis* the magician’s will becomes merged with the intangible and fluid impetus of the cosmos (i.e. *kia* or Chaos). In effect, to successfully utilise the power of Chaos, the magician must recognise his or her self as a living manifestation of the Chaos force (Carroll 1987: 55) existing at a localised point in time and space<sup>2</sup>. As demonstrated in chapters three and four, sorcery practices - whilst embodying a vulgar desire for instrumental mastery over the world - also involve the practitioner in a particular existential orientation, wherein the trajectory of the magician’s life (the microcosm) is brought into alignment with the that of the cosmos-at-large (the macrocosm). As a consequence, the materialistic aspect of sorcery rest upon mystical participation in and identification with the fundamental “will” or impetus of the cosmos as a force for change.

The use of sorcery within Chaos magick has been influenced by Crowley’s view that the efficacy of magic is dependent upon the practitioner’s psychological orientation: that the magician should approach acts of magic “unassuaged of purpose, delivered from the lust of result” (Crowley 1938: 23-14). This view gives rise to a variety of secondary rationalisations which Chaos magicians apply in the face of failure: the magician’s inability to emotionally distance his or herself from the desired outcome, for example; or failing to clarify one’s desire or intention. A

lack of success may also be taken as a direct “message” from the universe - that the desired outcome was counter to the impetus of the cosmos, or would in some unforeseen way counteract the trajectory of the practitioner’s magical and spiritual evolution. In all of the above instances, failure to achieve the desired results becomes indicative of the necessity of undertaking further “work on the self”. Such failure does not, therefore, necessarily undermine a belief in magic; it often presses practitioners to engage in a reflexive process of self-assessment, in order to attain a deeper understanding of their conscious and unconscious motivations (Lee 1997: 139). As a consequence, the instrumental and pragmatic approach associated with Chaos magick is perceived by practitioners as an important balance to an otherworldly orientation - one which might otherwise lead the magician to become detached from the realities of everyday life (Hine 1995: 80-81).

The theoretical foundations of results magic are again based upon a popular recension of post-Newtonian science, namely the belief that the outcome of apparently causal events can be affected by the manipulation of small variables (Hine 1993: 64). The magician must, therefore, undertake a careful assessment of such variables: the social and environmental factors (hence the importance placed on worldly participation) which may facilitate the fulfilment of the desire; and the conditions arising within the self that generate a need to see the desire fulfilled. Sorcery is the manipulation of nascent probabilities, *but within the context of practical expectations*. No matter how powerful magicians believe themselves to be, they will not pass an exam or driving test without having studied for it; nor will they attract a lover unless they have the confidence to approach and speak to the desired individual. Arguably, the use of sorcery in such contexts can then have very “real” effects. Edward Moody (1974: 356) thus claims that contemporary Western magic is attractive for the very reason that it *does* work: primarily as a psychological tool which enables practitioners to overcome problematic social contexts and deal effectively with the exigencies of everyday life.

Success in sorcery may also lead practitioners to reassess their notions of morality and responsibility (as in the case of the HOD’s response to the events of

---

<sup>2</sup> Chaos magicians sometimes drawn on the terminology of theoretical physics to refer to this as



September 11th described in chapter five; see also Hine 1995: 80). As I show in the final section of chapter three, the intent behind cursing, “hexing” or “knacking” is not always malefic, but in some cases is meant to re-orient the victim’s narrow perceptions of “reality”.

### **Why Chaos Magick?**

The attraction of Chaos magick is manifold. It appeals to those individuals seeking meaning and orientation in the world, and for whom institutionalised religions no longer fulfil those needs. Magic is attractive because it supports a belief in the efficacy of human agency in the face of an uncertain world - Chaos magick especially so, because of the marked emphasis it places upon pragmatism and instrumentality.

More importantly, Chaos magick represents a response to qualitatively new forms of social, cultural and cosmological uncertainty. In the latter instance it is important not to overstate the case: whilst quantum theory has, to a degree, influenced the mainstream of Western cultural thinking, it has not led to the obsolescence of “traditional” religious and cosmological beliefs. Chaos magick does, however, represent a special case; its practitioners tend to be individuals whose outlook have been shaped by post-Newtonian science for the following reasons: Chaos magicians are individuals who, like many other contemporary magicians and neo-pagans, are drawn to artistic or “creative” pursuits and careers. As demonstrated in chapters five and six, they tend to be highly imaginative individuals whose outlook has been shaped by a love of fantasy and science-fiction literature (often since childhood). As a result, they have often developed a deep interest in - and willingness to accept (often uncritically) - some of the “wilder” theorems of quantum theory: particularly where those ideas have been dressed up in science-fictional and quasi-mystical terms for popular consumption. Subsequently, they find traditional, Judeo-Christian theistic conceptions of the cosmos untenable. In this respect, paganism is attractive because it often emphasises the pantheistic immanence of divinity *within* the manifest cosmos rather than being external to it -

---

“collapsing the wave function”.

beliefs which also resonate with quasi-mystical and holistic interpretations of quantum theory.

Although broadly accepting of neo-paganism, Chaos magicians often find that it offers a romanticised view of nature which does not address the concerns of their everyday lives in a modern, urban context. In the internet-driven consumer culture of late modernity, Chaos magick offers a shamanic immersion in the immediatism of readily consumable images and identities, which can be used strategically and adaptively in the project of self-construction, and for projecting the self into new, boundary-breaching, and “posthuman” modes of consciousness. As Erik Davies (1999) argues, the technological trajectory of modernity by no means delimits the possibilities of magico-religious expression; rather, technology has always been culturally imbued with spiritual and soteriological potency, and new technological developments are seen to offer new ways of attaining human spiritual perfection and self-divinisation. Subsequently, Chaos magick’s explicitly neophilic and often utopian approach to new technologies is very much a “spirituality” - albeit a marginal one - of modernity.

These notions also form an odd sort of hybrid with the utopian vision implicit in human beings’ first steps into outer space. For some, Chaos magick *is* the magic of the technological space age. However, for these practitioners’, space travel is not simply a case of an embodied shift into a new physical locale: adaption to non-terrestrial environments means abandoning earth-bound, “three-dimensional” thinking, and the evolution of a collective species-consciousness in place of the embodied, egoistic self. However, the Chaos magicians holding this view were often unsure as to how exactly they meant to “get off planet”; such notions thus appear to constitute the “consumption” of science fictional ideas and imagery as potential sources of exotic otherness.

### **Concluding Remarks**

Certain ambiguities and ambivalences remain within the discourse of Chaos magick, particularly in terms of how it defines itself in relation to modernity. Chaos magickal ideas concerning uncertainty imply a cosmos which is processual and in



flux; importantly, it is a cosmos which is creative by virtue of its very processual and uncertain nature. Thus, the techniques of Chaos magick attempt to tap into the “non-linear” processes of the subconscious mind - processes seen to be creative because they move outside the boundaries of structure and convention, beyond the limitations of socially- and culturally-determined “linear” thought-processes (Hawkins 1996: 75). Jaq Hawkins also suggests that the “Chaos Magician seeks to understand the natural laws behind the workings of magic” (Hawkins 1996: 5). Because quantum theory and the science of chaos imply the existence of uncertainty and spontaneity in nature, Chaos magicians tend to equate the “natural laws” of magic with these “naturalised” concepts of uncertainty and spontaneity, which are in turn conflated with synchronicity. As a result, the

“mind that is constantly sensitive to change is in tune with the natural order of synchronicity. Natural creativity pervades every element of nature, yet is not apparent to a large extent in the life of the average person” (Hawkins 1996: 57).

Thus for practitioners, a “contaminated mode of being” is one in which the magician has become alienated from the spontaneous creativity which permeates nature. Becoming caught up in the everyday routines of work, family, culturally-defined relationships, institutionalised belief, etc., is to lose touch with one’s intuitive connection with the natural spontaneity which shapes an “authentic” experience of the cosmos.

Chaos magical conceptions of the fragmentary nature of the self are also subsidiary to and dependent on the notion of Chaos as the ontological, albeit non-essentialist, foundation of selfhood. The experience of multiple selfhoods is, then, conceptualised as temporally-localised experiences of consciousness’ participation in Bohm’s “*Undivided Wholeness in Flowing Movement*”. The fragmentary nature of this multiplicity of selves is, according to the gnostic claims of Chaos magicians, a consequence of the dualistic condition of the phenomenal world in which human beings find themselves. Humans are unable to perceive this undivided totality because of the socio-cultural categories through which the world is made cognisable to them. Having become internalised through social conditioning, these

categories are mistakenly perceived as “natural” and intrinsic to the world. As a result, notions of uncertainty are not articulated for their own sake by Chaos magicians, but in order to challenge conceptual boundaries and classificatory divisions which are seen to “fragment” reality, and which, ultimately, serve various ideological purposes in imposing artificial limits upon the possible range of cognisable worlds. The goal of magic is thus to become “illuminated”, to see beyond these conditioned categories which structure our experience.

However, this experience of “illumination” or expanded awareness is also deeply implicated in the need to attain self-mastery when entering trance or dealing with one’s “daemons”. Notions of “self-mastery” tend, therefore, to reify the individualistic, self-reliant thrust of late modernity and - as much as they contest the ideological ramifications of those values - embed practitioners in implicit networks of power through disciplinary practices and self-surveillance.

The indeterministic ontology upon which the ethos of Chaos magick has been built is also, on the one hand, seen to be commensurable with the uncertainties, fragmentation and moral ambiguities which practitioners perceive as the dominant characteristic of modernity. As Hine suggests, Chaos magical practice attempts to embed practitioners in “an experience of culture which embraces, rather than attempting to resist...the modern condition” (Hine 1993: 122). On the other hand, practitioners claim that this experience is one which is powerfully shaped by overdetermining and regimented social, cultural and political forces. These forces attempt to fix identity, belief and morality, and in doing so alienate the individual from the “natural order” of creative spontaneity and uncertainty.

In this respect, Chaos magicians operate within a dual conception of modernity<sup>3</sup>: as socially fragmented, fluid, ever-changing, and diverse; and as fixed and subject to powerful and often occluded systems of social control. But it is within these liminal and ambivalent zones which Chaos magick claims to operate. It is the very fluid and uncertainty nature of modern society, where identities become divested of clearly defined social and cultural anchors, which generates anxiety. In response, individuals allow themselves to become subject to social control: either by seeking



security in absolute values, or by attempting to self-reflexively create coherent identities from the melange of commodified lifestyles. By embracing the spectacle's confusion of the illusory with the real, Chaos magicians claim to be in tune with the shifting matrix of modern society. At the same time, they contest the need for absolutism and essentialism by radicalising this confusion and treating it as a "guerrilla ontology" which, by embracing uncertainty as the ontological foundation of the self, resists social control.

Chaos magick sometimes enables practitioners to transform their lives in practical and positive ways; as a therapeutic practice, it may even "illuminate" the ways in which power is exerted upon practitioners lives. Under the guise of "therapeutic" self-transformation, Chaos magick also offers strategies by which adherents can function effectively within the cultural and ontological vagaries of contemporary Western (and increasingly global) society. But in doing so, the Chaos magical ethos arguably reproduces the ideological requirements of modernity for mutable and adaptive consuming subjects. To the extent that practitioners are also driven by the need to experience their fantasies, Chaos magick also encourages the consumption of signs, images, and neatly compartmentalised encounters with exotic otherness: "There is no escape from the Society of the Spectacle...The Chaos approach offers...to find a sense of freedom not through trying to resist consensus reality...but to embrace it joyfully" (Hine 1993: 26-27).

In recent years, Chaos magick has itself been portrayed in sci-fi comic-books (particularly the popular comic *2000 AD*) which straddle "mainstream" and "countercultural" markets. Whilst it is unlikely that it will ever fully enter the mainstream of cultural consumption, Chaos magick is popular amongst an small audience of disaffected twenty-somethings, many of who find it attractive for the reason that it offers them the opportunity to experiment with an "alternative" lifestyle which brings with it a certain kudos. In a telling moment towards the end of my research, Damien announced that the problem with Chaos magick lay in the way that "belief systems are reduced to commodity" by practitioners. The danger of treating immersion in the "spectacle" with ambivalence thus lies in the subtle ways

---

<sup>3</sup> See for example Taylor (1999: 15-18) for a brief overview of the perceived dual-nature of

by which practitioners allow themselves to become a commodified part of the consumerist milieu which they also claim to resist.

---

modernity within the social sciences.



## **Appendix 1 - "Origins: The IOT Story So Far"**

The following document (downloaded from: <http://www.goetia.net/~iota/html/history.html>) purports to describe the founding of the IOT:

Origins: The IOT Story So Far

Pete Carroll

In 1976 in an abandoned ammunition dump dug deep into a mountain somewhere in the Rhineland, two magicians, one English, one German, announced the formation of a magical order with the celebration of a Mass of Chaos in the company of a couple of dozen other magicians. Soon after we emerged from the bowels of the mountain a localized tornado hit the immediate area. This was but a small portent of things to come.

We left the mountain with no particular idea other than to form an Order such as had never existed before, that would break the existing mold and provide a vehicle for Chaos Magic. A year later some of us met in a splendid Austrian castle and formally arranged ourselves into the Magical Pact of the Illuminates Of Thanateros, using as a basis a simple structure of four grades and five offices that I had devised in the meantime. Since then the Pact has evoked a veritable whirlwind of activity, and at the time of writing-counts some sixteen temples in the UK, Germany, Austria, Switzerland, Australia and the USA. A meeting for all members is held annually, usually at the same original castle. It is always a wild experimental gathering during which plenty of hard work is being done. In devising a structure I sought mainly to avoid the mistakes of previous established orders such as the Golden Dawn and the Ordo Templi Orientis. A certain division of labor is essential just to ensure that people take responsibility for organizing that which needs organizing. Beyond that it seems an absurdity to form an order on the basis of one or a few persons adopting the role of great guru almighty. Their bluff must eventually be called, and such organizations are unlikely to advance beyond whatever set of ideas they start with.

Crowley had to break with the Golden Dawn to make his own contribution to magic, and Austin Spare had to break with Crowley in his turn. Such progress through schism is an idiotic waste of time and effort. Any contemporary order which wishes to remain alive, exciting and innovative requires a structure or at least a communication network to exist at all but dogmatic ideas, rigid hierarchies and fixed teachings and beliefs will kill its creative spirit rapidly. Thus in the Pact, the individual temples, which are its basic unit, experiment with whatever techniques, rituals and ideas they please, and exchange results and inspirations through



newsletters, magazines, a computerized electronic mailbox system, inter-temple visits and the annual Pact meeting. There is thus a natural selection of ideas. Techniques, Spells, and Rituals which are found to be really useful become used and expanded upon whilst the less effective material gets forgotten. Those members who enter the Pact bubbling over with ideas are encouraged to put them into use immediately. Naturally in an organization such as this there is an emphasis on enthusiasm and creativity. The Pact is more interested in those who can experience magic as a living thing, than in those who can merely follow instructions. Indeed the only power the Pact reserves over its members is the right of expulsion for extreme non-fraternal behavior or for bringing the Pact into danger. The Pact has but two aims. Firstly the pursuit of the -Great Work of Magic and the pleasures and profits attendant on this Quest. Secondly to act as a Psychohistoric Force in the Battle for the Pandaemonaeon.

To fulfill the first aim we provide communication facilities that enable us to work together and develop our own magick"s through the exchange of ideas and information. Esoterics should also be fun. If you don't enjoy doing magic you are probably doing something wrong. The profits are entirely whatever rewards individuals can make from their own magic. The Pact holds annual Pact meetings, seminars and excercitiums that some members hold for the general public plus any members who wish to attend. The somewhat grandiosely phrased "Psychohistoric" action in the Battle for the Aeon consists mainly in spreading the philosophy of magical paradigm where we can, in print and by word of mouth, although we occasionally perform acts of magic to hasten things along. The magical techniques and philosophy of the Pact are mainly Chaoist in inspiration. Chaos Magic calls for a concentration of the actual mechanics at work when planning acts of evocation, divination, enchantment, invocation, and illumination. It is techniques and intention which are important in successful magic. The most important techniques are those which adjust subconscious belief. Subconscious belief controls both the self or selves and the world. So long as this is never forgotten one can structure a ritual or spell with just about any form of symbolism, from Tibetan Tantra to Icelandic Runelore. And indeed, where else but in the Pact could you find magicians experimenting with Runic Sex Magic? Well perhaps you will find other examples now I notice the eclectic approach becoming ever more pervasive in esoterics.

Insights and ideas are now poached shamelessly from one so-called tradition to another, but this is how it should be, and Chaos Magic boldly encourages the meta-tradition which takes anything and everything that is effective from all traditions to create an explosive mixture. So, on with the pursuit of the Great Work of Magic, with whatever forms of TechnoShamanism, Tantric Goetia, or Greco-Egyptian Quantum Physics we can make work for us.



There are worlds within us, and the universe is infinitely more weird, I'm sure, than all our theories put together. Hopefully some of the explosives the Pact cooks up can propel us a little further into these strange domains. I have no idea how this year's Pact meeting will unfold, except that there will be magicians from many lands seated in a huge circle ready to offer their specialties in everything from Esoteric Buddhist Sorcery through Norse Wyrdcraft and Chaos Mathematical investment schemes to Voodoo and Ice Magick. We have the technology and we are crazy enough to use it!

copyright 1990 Peter J. Carroll.

## **Appendix 2 - Neophyte (4<sup>o</sup>) Initiation Ritual of the IOT**

The initiand is called into the room where the initiation is to take place. He or she is then asked to stand at the centre of the circle formed by the other participants, who always wear black hooded robes; the initiand remains dressed but does not wear a robe. At this point, the individual acting as MT for the ritual asks:

MT: Does any person here object to this candidate?

Following this, one of the participants normally answers: "I have no objections but I have a question". In the initiations I witnessed, this precipitated a sometimes lengthy series of questions aimed at the initiand by other participants. Sometimes, the potential Neophyte was also asked to demonstrate his or her magical knowledge to those gathered - usually by demonstrating one of the banishing rituals used by the IOT. Once the initiand has been "tested" in this way, the MT asks him or her to confirm his or her dedication to the of the IOT:

MT: Candidate, I call upon you to make the assertions of a Neophyte. Candidate, do you know that there may be no ultimate truths?

Candidate: I do.

MT: Candidate, do you dare to practice the philosophy and techniques of magic?

Candidate: I do.

MT: Candidate, do you agree to keep silent about the signs and passwords of this Pact and its private business and not reveal the identities of its members to outsiders without their consent?

Candidate: I do.

MT: Candidate, do you take this robe and ring as marks of the will to be a magician?

Candidate: I do.



MT: Candidate, by what name and number will you be known in this Pact?

The initiand then states the name and number he or she has chosen, and the rite concludes:

MT: Candidate, I recognise you as a Neophyte of this Pact and I open this temple in the grade of Neophyte with the signs and words of a Neophyte.

This marks the end of the initiation; if other initiations of the same grade (i.e. 4<sup>o</sup>) follow this, the new Neophyte is invited to join the circle and participate as a member of the order.

## **Appendix 3 - Opening Ritual of The Haunters of The**

### **Dark**

This opening ritual was written by Alan and initially used by the Haunters of the Dark and the beginning and end of the magical “workings”. Four members of the group would stand at each quarters of the compass, another at the centre of the square formed by the other four and recite the specified verses. After the recitation of the final line of each incantation (“words and gestures from below and beyond normal human consciousness), the speaker would undergo a form of glossolalia by crying out seemingly meaningless words whilst making wild gesticulations or drawing complex and symbols in the air. These actions were meant to draw forth the presence of the Old Ones from those liminal zones which were otherwise beyond the power of human signs and language to describe.

“Introduction: We stand, The Haunters of the Dark, in this place of apparent order. But we...know that beyond this circle are places of darkness and mystery. It is our Will to call around us and within us the Great Old Ones to stand guard and witness this rite. This we shall do with words and gestures from below and beyond normal human consciousness.

East: In the East, I call upon the Great Lord of the Spheres. Yog Sothoth. Come to us from Your secret places of the Air to stand guard and witness this our rite. Thee I call using words and gestures from below and beyond normal human consciousness.

South: In the South I call the Black Man of the Sabbat, Nyarlathotep. Come to us from Your secret places in the sun-scorched desert to stand guard and witness this our rite. Be here in response to my summons with words and gestures from below and beyond normal human consciousness.

West: In the West I call upon the High Priest of the Great Old Ones to stand guard and witness this our rite: Cthulhu! Great Lord of the depths of the sea, Master of the Deep Ones, be with us. I call you to us from you secret places in the depths of the ocean using words and gestures from below and beyond normal human consciousness.

North: In the North I call upon the Black Goat of the Woods with a Thousand Young, Shub Niggurath. Lord of all Fertility, Master of Earth. Come from your secret hiding places of the Earth to stand guard and



witness this our rite. I call Thee to us using words and gestures from beyond normal human consciousness.

Centre: In the Centre of All Creation is Azathoth, Blind, Idiot Chaotic God, accompanied by Daemon Pipers. I call You within us as You always are, beyond the illusion of the everyday and the normal, with words and gestures from below and beyond normal human consciousness.”

This opening ritual emerged as a central point of contention within the group. Alan had originally written the opening, and had based it upon a format traditionally used by Wiccans. However, other members of the group wished to maintain an almost permanent state of anti-structure within the ritual arena, and felt that this use of traditional structure was antithetical to the chaos and dissonance of the Old Ones. Eventually, Dane wrote a new version of the opening, replacing the original ritual calls in their entirety with “barbarous words of evocation”:

Introduction: Votu kenu-vahag-a-lahan, wgah nal zai, yat kenu-vahag-a-lahan yg ta vayas ke lyem nig'ya ta azai. Tu ve ked von va-alla-tan. Ke votu ar barakai.

East: Halla-el-la. Ygnaiih, ygnaiih thflthk'ngaha Yog Sothoth y'bthnk hehye ngrkdl'lh. Eh-y-ya-ya-yahagh-e-yayayaa ngh'aa ngh'aa h'yuh h'yuh.

South: Azag-analoch. Ngah kthun thflthkh Nyarlathotep y'bthnk hehye ngrkdl'lh. Eh-y-ya-ya-yahagh-e-yayayaa ngh'aa ngh'aa h'yuh h'yuh.

West: Ia R'lyeh Cthulhu fhtagn! Ia Ia! Ph'nglui mglw'nafh Cthulhu R'lyeh wgah'nal fhtagn. Eh-y-ya-ya-yahagh-e-yayayaa ngh'aa ngh'aa h'yuh h'yuh.

North: Wza-yei! Wza-yei! Y'khaa ha boh iii. Ia Shub Niggurath! Eh-y-ya-ya-yahagh-e-yayayaa ngh'aa ngh'aa h'yuh h'yuh.

Centre: Ia Azathoth! Ia Azathoth! Eh-y-ya-ya-yahagh-e-yayayaa ngh'aa ngh'aa h'yuh h'yuh.

## **Appendix 4 - Transcript of On-line Discussion (Haunters of the Dark)**

The following is a transcript of the entirety of the HOD's on-line discussion following the events of September 11th, 2001:

Edward: The gates have opened... I'm most pleased to discover that Kutulu is anti-capitalist... A little upset that the houses of parliament didn't go up in the same manner (or down rather)!

Jason: I also noticed that it was Flight no 93 that crashed into the pentagon.....this Abort the Aeon thing has gone a little too far. Flight 77 that crashed into the South Block of the WTC...in 777, one of the attributes of this number is 'towers and citadels'....

Garth: There I was at the anti-capitalist/anti-arms demo yesterday when the journos suddenly lost all interest in us and all started to go ape over something else... well, I mean, I've never been so upstaged in all my revolutionary life! A bunch of hippies samba dancing and about two minor scuffles with polis just didn't seem to cut the mustard compared to jet-hijacking, building-blasting suicide bombers. And the culprit in Uncle Sam's demise? Me, I'm certain it was that Mad Arab<sup>1</sup>.

[Coincidentally, I was in New York, about to board a bus bound for Providence (Lovecraft's birthplace) at the time of the terrorist attack. Damien and Rob raised concerns about my welfare on the mailing list, and responded rather angrily to the earlier comments]

Damien: I'm absolutely astonished at the complete lack of respect for suffering and loss you guys are showing. Adopting a paradigm is one thing. Glorifying in the murder of thousands of innocent people is another. Just because they happened to have to go to work. There's video footage of a couple holding hands, jumping out of a window just before the tower collapses. How would you feel if that was Justin...Justin could have been on the WTC at the time. Would it have been so clever then? How would you feel if your relatives or friends were working in that building? If they'd been on one of those planes and phoned you to

---

<sup>1</sup> A reference to Lovecraft's fictional character Abdul Alhazred, who prophesied the end of the world at the hands of the Old Ones.



say they loved you and were about to die? How would you feel if your dad or your brother or your partner was a fireman buried under thousands of tons of steel and concrete?

Life is sacred. What has happened is an utter tragedy. While I share your anticapitalist sentiments, I simply cannot condone an activity or action that leads to wholesale slaughter. I always hoped that something like this would never happen in my lifetime. Now I'm wondering how much worse it is going to get before the thing is resolved. There's people I know in New York, and I don't know at the moment if they're still alive or not. Everytime I watch the news, or read a paper, I just want to cry. My overwhelming feeling is of sorrow and of compassion; for the dead, for the loved of the dead, for those that have to deal with this on a day to day level. Making up jokes to prove how clever or smart you are is just idiotic.

As for your 'humourous' remarks about Parliament... Hmmm. Jenny [Damien's partner] goes there quite a bit as part of her job. If somebody took the place out while she was there, I'd hunt down and kill the fucker myself. Get some perspective, guys, and stop with this crap.

[Soon after, Garth, Edward and Alan responded to Damien's accusations]

Garth: Hmm ... in my defense ... making a sick joke does not necessarily imply a lack of respect; use of humour as a defense mechanism, if that's what it was, need not even imply lack of sensitivity, never mind a lack of respect. As for "glorying" in murder ... no, I was being flippant, in case it wasn't clear!

From my perspective, it is terrible, and I too have been rendered tearful by some of the news shots, the ones of people jumping especially. It (obviously) occurred to me that it could have been Justin, or anyone of my NYC friends and acquaintances, or any one of my friends and acquaintances from anywhere else for that matter. However, one of the things that I am not standing for is an implication that what happened on Tuesday is any more terrible than what is happening in the developing world on a daily basis, to a large extent as a result, direct or indirect, or Amerikkka's foreign policy. This has been so for years if not decades. As Castro has pointed out, the world-system, a lot if not all of which has to do with Uncle Sam, kills more people every two years than died in the whole of WW2... This morning I was attempting to walk down Tottenham Court Road and had to push my way through a group of people all stood there doing nothing. Obviously the good citizens were observing the 3 minutes silence, just as they had been told to. My refusal to stop was obviously considered soooo subversive that a journalist took a picture of me as I breezed through. I may be exposed in tonight's Standard or tomorrow's papers as a cold-hearted beast, a Muslim sympathiser, who knows? However, my conscience is clear: it is NOTHING OTHER THAN RACIST to observe 3 minute silences, mourn or shed tears for people who are mainly white and speak English when we ignore a greater number of



human fatalities throughout the developing world on a daily basis. (But hey, they are black mainly, so maybe they shouldn't count as humans? Er, that last sentence was also sarcastic, in case it isn't clear.)

I am aware that while some tourists and cleaners and secretaries and firefighters will have died, a lot of the people who worked in the WTC are not the kind of people who are famous for the sympathy to human suffering now are they? This may sound harsh, but having sympathy for some of those fuckers is like having sympathy for Nazi soldiers in WW2, i.e. not an option. So sorry, but I reserve the right not to take part in this media-induced emotional ejaculation. And that includes making the odd joke. After all, it's either that or, if we wanted to show an equal amount of respect for all those who suffer, I imagine there'd be so many back-to-back three minute silences that we'd end up having to keep our gobs shut for at least the rest of our lives, if not the next twenty-three incarnations.

That's my defense anyways, can't speak for the other offenders of course.

Edward: I'm as disgusted, shocked and upset about it as you are; anything but 'glorying', no, most certainly not.

I unfortunately live in a time where this slaughter, humiliation and total inhumanness happens accumulatively every week. Not to mention the unimaginable suffering imposed upon the animal kingdom each day.

We don't have the video-footage from Iraq, Afghanistan, Serbia etc magnifying suffering that really brings it home.

The atrocities perpetrated by Irish republican idiots seems to have been forgotten even by Mr. deranged, flatulent, arse-licking Blair. Some of the unfortunate's caught up in that suffered fate's far worse than a falling building could ever provide. This was condoned by U.S and partly funded by them. Iraq and the other's non-visually speak for themselves. I'm not going to pursue this. America are now going to war with they don't know whom. I already feel sorry for the thousands of innocents who are going to take the brunt of it.

Alan: While death of innocents is unforgiveable, please remember how the US has supported regimes around the world that have killed far more than the numbers currently going around. Palestinian children are the latest, but remember Guatemala, Nicaragua, Chile, Vietnam, the list is long and American guilt has come home to roost. I still haven't heard from my New York family, but get some perspective. When we were bombed by the IRA the main American response was to fund them.

Many of us use humour to hide pain, and laughter can produce endorphins to kill pain. I got into telling jokes about the WTC events earlier than just about anyone, and I still don't know if Ramona & co (my NY posse) are alive. I'm pretty sure, though, that they know people who have died, or people who know.....

I do not appreciate a new standard being applied to this one event. I do not appreciate my way of dealing with yet another horror story being



criminalised. I hate pulling rank based on age, but if it hadn't been for the Nazis I'd never had been in the family I am, due to how my adopted mother ended up sterile as a result of Nazi Terror attacks on London. I particularly don't like a post I sent to the list about the general context of recent events being picked to pieces as though it was a personal attack on one individual. Damien, I know you know about Palestine, Cambodia etc. I do not appreciate the sarcastic remarks you posted about my message. The whole world needs to put the WTC events into context, not just the HOD, and I did not make those points simply to answer yours, I do just happen to think that these events go beyond our own sensibilities. I just don't want anyone in HOD getting demonised for reacting to the fact that this particular atrocity was live on TV, instead of slowly happening over decades, by saying "shit happens". Shit might happen to all of us. Soon.

I know loads of jokes about things that happened to my family in WWII, wanna hear them? They're funny. And desparate. Listen to the Goon Shows and then read Spike Milligan's war memoirs and you'll know where humour has sometimes very dark roots.

## **Bibliography**

- Adams, J. 1997. "Gray Matters: The Origin of the "Gray" Alien Archetype" in *Skeptic* vol. 5, no. 2, pp.14-17.
- Adler, M. 1979 (1986). *Drawing Down the Moon*. New York, Penguin..
- Aho, J. 1997. "The Apocalypse of Modernity" in T. Robbins & S.J. Palmer (eds.) *Millennium, Messiahs, and Mayhem: Contemporary Apocalyptic Movements*, pp.61-72. London, Routledge.
- Alfred, R. 1976. "The Church of Satan" in C. Glock & R. Bellah (eds.), *The New Religious Consciousness*, pp.180-202. Berkeley, University of California Press.
- Ankarloo, B. & Henningsen, G. (eds.). 1993. "Introduction" in B. Ankarloo & G. Henningsen, *Early Modern European Witchcraft: Centres and Peripheries*, pp.1-15. Oxford, Clarendon Press
- Armstrong, A.H. 1947 (1957). *An Introduction to Ancient Philosophy*. London, Methuen.
- Atkinson, J. 1992. "Shamanisms Today" in *Annual Review of Anthropology*, no.21, pp.307-330.
- Auge, M. 1999. *The War of Dreams: Studies in Ethno Fiction*. London, Pluto Press.
- Austen, R. 1993. "The Moral Economy of Wotchcraft: An Essay in Comparative History" in J. Comaroff & J. Comaroff (eds.), *Modernity and Its Malcontents*, pp.89-110. Chicago, Chicago University Press.
- Austin, J.L. 1962. *How to do Things with Words*. Oxford, Oxford University Press.
- Baddeley, G. 1999. *Lucifer Rising*. London, Plexus.
- Baker, A. 1998. *Destination Earth: A History of Alleged Alien Presence*. London, Blanford.
- 2000. *Invisible Eagle: The History of Nazi Occultism*. London, Virgin.
- Barker, E. 1995. *New Religious Movements: A Practical Introduction*. London, HMSO.
- Barton, B. 1990. *The Church of Satan*, New York, Hell's Kitchen.
- Basil, R. (ed.). 1988. *Not Necessarily the New Age: Critical Essays*. New York, Prometheus.



- Bateson, G. 1972 (2000). *Steps to an Ecology of Mind*. Chicago, The University of Chicago Press.
- Bauman, Z. 1990. "Modernity and Ambivalence" in M. Featherstone (ed.) *Global Culture*, pp.143-169, London, Sage.
- 1991. *Modernity and Ambivalence*. Cambridge, Polity Press.
  - 1998. "Postmodern Religion?" in P. Heelas (ed.), *Religion, Modernity, and Postmodernity*, pp.55-78. Oxford, Blackwell.
- Baumeister, R. 1986. *Identity, Cultural Change and the Struggle for Self*. New York, Oxford University Press.
- Beal, J. 1993. "Celestial Bodies in the Cthulhu Mythos" in *The Silver Key: Journal of the Miskatonic Society*, no.1, pp.6-9.
- 1994. "Fractal, Stars and Nyarlathotep" in D.M. Mitchell (ed.), *Starry Wisdom: A Tribute to H.P. Lovecraft*, pp.182-191. London, Creation Books.
- Beck, U. 1992. *Risk Society: Towards a New Modernity*. London, Sage
- Beckford, J. 1985. *Cult Controversies: The Societal Response to New Religious Movements*. London, Tavistock.
- Bell, C. 1992. *Ritual Theory, Ritual Practice*. Oxford, Oxford University Press.
- Bellah, R.N. 1976. "New Religious Consciousness and the Crisis in Modernity" in C. Glock & R. Bellah (eds.), *The New Religious Consciousness*, pp.180-202. Berkeley, University of California Press.
- Ben-Yehuda, N. 1985. *Deviance and Moral Boundaries: Witchcraft, the Occult, Science Fiction, Deviant Sciences and Scientists*. Chicago, University of Chicago Press.
- 1989. "Witchcraft and the Occult as Boundary Maintenance Devices" in J. Neusner, E. Frerichs & P. McCracken Flesher, *Religion, Science, and Magic: In Concert and In Conflict*, pp.229-260. Oxford, Oxford University Press.
- Berman, M. 1982 (1988). *All That Is Solid Melts Into Air*. London, Penguin
- Best, J. 1991. "Endangered Children in Antisatanist Rhetoric", in J. Richardson, J. Best & D. Bromley (eds.), *The Satanism Scare*, pp. 95-106. New York, Aldine de Gruyter.
- Bey, H. 1985. *T.A.Z.: Temporary Autonomous Zone, Ontological Anarchy, Poetic*

- Terrorism*, <http://www.cia.com.au/vic/taz/index5.html#labelTAZ>.
- Beyer, P. 1994. *Religion and Globalization*. London, Sage
- Bloch, M. 1989. *Ritual, History, Power*. London, Athlone Press.
- Bock, P. 1980. *Rethinking Psychological Anthropology*. New York, W.H. Freeman
- Boddy, J. 1988. "Spirits and Selves in Northern Sudan: The Cultural Therapeutics of Possession and Trance" in *American Ethnologist* 15/1, pp.4-27.
- 1994. "Spirit Possession Revisited: Beyond Instrumentality" in *Annual Review of Anthropology*, vol.23, pp.407-434.
- Bohm, D. 1980. *Wholeness and the Implicate Order*. London, Ark.
- Bourgois, P. 1995. *In Search of Respect: Selling Crack in El Barrio*. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.
- Bourguignon, E. (ed.). 1973. *Religion, Altered States of Consciousness, and Social Change*. Columbus, Ohio State University Press.
- Bowker, J. 1995. *Is God a Virus? Genes, Culture and Religions*. London, SPCK.
- Bowman, M. 1995. "Cardiac Celts: Images of the Celts in Paganism" in G. Harvey & C. Hardman (eds.), *Paganism Today*, pp. 242-251. London, Thorsons
- Boyer, P. 1994. *The Naturalness of Religious Ideas: A Cognitive Theory of Religion*. Berkeley, University of California Press.
- Bridgestock, M. 1989. "The Twilit Fringe - Anthropology and Modern Horror Fiction" in *Journal of Popular Culture* 23/3, pp.115-123.
- Brown, P. & Tuzin, D.(eds.). 1983. *The Ethnography of Cannibalism*, Washington, Society for Psychological Anthropology.
- Burridge, K. 1980. *New Heaven, New Earth*. Oxford, Basil Blackwell.
- Burroughs, W. 1984. *The Place of Dead Roads*. London, John Calder.
- 1985. *The Adding Machine: Collected Essays*. London, John Calder.
- Capra, F. 1976 (1992). *The Tao of Physics: An exploration of the parallels between modern physics and Eastern mysticism*. London, Flamingo.
- Carroll, P. n.d.a. "The Magic of Chaos",  
<http://www.phhine.ndirect.co.uk/essays/mach.htm>.
- 1987 (1991). *Liber Null & Psychonaut*. Maine, Samuel Weiser.
- 1990. "Origins: The IOT Story So Far", <http://www.goetia.net/>



- ~iota/html/history.html.
- 1992. *Liber Kaos*. Maine, Samuel Weiser.
  - 1996a. 'The Magician as Rebel Physicist', *Chaos International*, 21: 36-37.
  - 1996b. "Chaoist Models of Mind" in *Rebels & Devils: The Psychology of Liberation*, C. Hyatt (ed.), pp. 189-193, Arizona, New Falcon Press.
  - 2001. "Paradigm Shifts and Aeonics",  
<http://www.chaosmatrix.com/lib/chaos/texts/aeonic.html>.
  - 2002. "Specularium" Web Site, <http://dspace.dial.pipex.com/specularium>.
- Carroll, P. & Sherwin, R. N.d.a. "Notice of the formation of the IOT",  
<http://www.chaosmatrix.com/lib/chaos/texts/iot.html>.
- Casti, J. 1990. *Paradigms Lost: Images of Man in the Mirror of Science*. London, Scribners.
- Cavendish, R. 1969. *The Black Arts*. London, Pan
- 1975. *The Powers of Evil: in Western Religion, Magic and Folk Belief*, London, Routledge & Kegan Paul.
- Chaos Matrix. 2002. Chaos Matrix Web site, <http://www.chaosmatrix.com>.
- Chodorow, N. 1978. *The Reproduction of Mothering: Psychoanalysis and the Sociology of Gender*. Berkeley, University of California Press.
- Choucha, N. 1991. *Surrealism and the Occult*. Oxford, Mandrake.
- Clough, P. & Mitchell, J. (eds.). 2001. *Powers of Good and Evil: Social Transformation and Popular Belief*. Oxford, Berghahn Books
- Clulee, N. 1988. *John Dee's Natural Philosophy*. London, Routledge.
- Cohen, A. 1994. *Self-Consciousness: An Alternative Anthropology of Identity*. London, Routledge.
- Cohen, E., Ben-Yehuda, N., & Aviad, J. 1987. "Recentring the world: the quest for 'elective' centers in a secularized universe" in *The Sociological Review*, vol.35, no.2, pp.320 - 346.
- Cohen, J. 1999. "Science and Magic", paper presented at Fortean Times Unconvention, Commonwealth Institute, London, 25th April.
- Cohen, S. 1980. *Folk Devils & Moral Panics: The Creation of the Mods and Rockers*. Oxford, Blackwell.

- Cohn, N. 1957. *In Pursuit of the Millenium*. London, Collins.
- 1993a. *Cosmos, Chaos and the World to Come: The Ancient Roots of Apocalyptic faith*. London, Yale University Press.
  - 1993b. *Europe's Inner Demons*, London, Pimlico.
- Comaroff, J. & Comaroff J. (eds.). 1993. *Modernity and its Malcontents*. Chicago, University of Chicago Press.
- Constantinides, P. 1985. "Women Heal Women: Spirit Possession and Sexual Segregation in a Muslim Society" in *Social Science and Medicine*, no.6, pp. 685-692.
- Cooper, J.C. 1972 (1990). *Taoism: The Way of the Mystic*. Wellingborough, Crucible.
- Cornford, F.M. 1937 (1971). *Plato's Cosmology*. London, Routledge & Kegan Paul.
- Couliano, I. 1990. *The Tree of Gnosis: Gnostic Mythology from Early Christianity to Modern Nihilism*. San Francisco, Harper Collins.
- Crapanzano, V. 1973. *The Hamadsha*. Berkeley, University of California Press.
- 1977. "Introduction" in V. Crapanzano & V. Garrison (eds.), *Case Studies in Spirit Possession*, pp.1-40. New York, John Wiley & Sons.
- Crowley, A. 1909 (2002). "Editorial" in the *Equinox*, vol.1, no.1, <http://www.the-equinox.org/vol1/no1/eqi01002.html>.
- 1914 (1999). "De Arte Magica" in A.R. Naylor (ed.), *O.T.O. Rituals and Sex Magick by Theodor Reuss and Aleister Crowley*. UK, IHO Books.
  - 1938 (1976). *The Book of the Law*. Maine, Samuel Weiser.
  - 1969 (1989). *The Confessions of Aleister Crowley*. London, Arkana
  - 1973 (1986). *Magick*. London, Guild.
  - 1977. *777 and Other Qabalistic Writings*. Maine, Samuel Weiser.
  - 1997. "The Initiated Interpretation of Ceremonial Magic" in S.L. MacGregor Mathers (trans.), *The Goetia: The Lesser Key of Solomon the King*, pp.15-20. Maine, Samuel Weiser.
- Curra, J. 2000. *The Relativity of Deviance*. California, Sage.
- Daftry, F. 1995. *The Assassin Legends*. London, I.B.Tauris.



- Davies, P. 1995. "The Birth of the Cosmos" in J. Grundy (ed.), *God, Cosmos, Nature and Creativity*, pp.1-27. Edinburgh, Scottish Academic Press.
- Davis, E. 1995. "Calling Cthulhu: H.P. Lovecraft's Magick Realism", <http://www.levity.com/figments/lovecraft.html>.
- 1999. *TechGnosis: Myth, Magic & Mysticism in the Age of Information*. Serpent's Tail, London.
- Dawkins, R. 1976 (1989). *The Selfish Gene*. Oxford, Oxford University Press.
- 1986. *The Blind Watchmaker*. Harmondsworth, Penguin.
- De Sardan, J. 1992. "Occultism and the Ethnographic 'I'" in *Critique of Anthropology*, 12/1, pp. 5-25.
- Dean, J. 1998. *Aliens in America: Conspiracy Cultures from Outerspace to Cyberspace*. New York, Cornell University Press.
- Debord, G. 1967 (1994). *The Society of the Spectacle*. New York, Zone Books.
- Deren, M. 1953 (1991). *Divine Horsemen: The Living Gods of Haiti*. New York, McPherson & Company.
- Derrida, J. 1974 (1997). *Of Grammatology*. Baltimore, Johns Hopkins Press.
- Douglas, M. 1966 (1994). *Purity and Danger*, London, Routledge.
- 1970a. *Natural Symbols*. London, Barrie & Rockliff.
- Douglas, M. 1970b (ed.). *Witchcraft Confessions and Accusations*. London, Tavistock Publications.
- Drury, N. 1982. *The Shaman and the Magician Journeys Between the Worlds*. London, Arkana.
- 2000. *The History of Magic in the Modern Age*. London, Constable & Robinson.
- Dukes, R. 1975. *S.S.O.T.B.M.E.* Hertfordshire, The Mouse That Spins.
- 1989. *Thundersqueak, or the confessions of a right wing anarchist*. Hertfordshire, The Mouse That Spins.
- 1998. *What I Did in My Holidays: Essays on black magic, Satanism, and other nicities*. Oxford, Mandrake/The Mouse That Spins
- Dumont, L. 1985. "A modified view of our origins: the Christian beginnings of modern individualism" in M. Carrithers, S. Collins, & S. Lukes (eds.), *The Category of the Person*, pp. 93-122. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.

- Durkheim, E. 1915 (1965). *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life*. New York, Macmillan.
- Dziklewicz, S. 1991. "Dagon Rising" in *Starfire* 1/4, pp. 63-78.
- Eilberg-Schwartz, H. 1985. "Witches of the West: Neopaganism and Goddess Worship as Enlightenment Religions" in *Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion*, 5/1, pp. 77-95.
- Ellis, B. "Legend-Trips and Satanism: Adolescents' Ostensive Traditions as "Cult" Activity" in J. Richardson, J. Best, & D. Bromley, D. (eds.), *The Satanism Scare*, pp. 279-295. New York, Aldine de Gruyter.
- EOD (Esoteric Order of Dagon). 1987. Untitled. *Starry Wisdom* 1/1, p.1.
- 1990 (1995). *Starry Wisdom: Dunwich Lodge*. USA, Starry Wisdom Press.
  - 1992. *The Esoteric Order of Dagon: An Introduction*. USA, Miskatonick University Press.
  - n.d.a. *The Directory of the Esoteric Order of Dagon*. USA, Miskatonick University Press.
- Evans-Pritchard, E. E. 1976. *Witchcraft, Oracles, and Magic Among the Azande*. Oxford, Oxford University Press.
- Faivre, A. 1994. *Access to Western Esotericism*. Albany, SUNY Press.
- Favret Saada, J. 1980. *Deadly Words: witchcraft in the Bocage*. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.
- Featherstone, M. 1995. "Postmodernism and the Quest for Meaning" in L. van Vucht Tijssen, J. Berling & F. Lechner (eds.), *The Search for Fundamentals: The Process of Modernisation and the Quest for Meaning*, pp. 217-235. Dordrecht, Kluwer Academic Publishers.
- Festinger, L., Riecken, H., & Schachter, S. 1956 (1964). *When Prophecy Fails*. New York, Harper & Row.
- Forbes Brown, M. 1989. "Dark Side of the Shaman: the traditional healer's art has its perils", in *Natural History*, pp. 8-10. November issue.
- Fortune, D. 1935 (1987). *The Mystical Qabalah*. London, Aquarian Press.
- Fortune, R. 1932 (1963). *The Sorcerers of Dobu*. London, Routledge & Kegan Paul.



- Foucault, M. 1967 (1997). *Madness and Civilization: A History of Insanity in the Age of Reason*. London, Routledge.
- 1977. *Discipline and Punish*. London, Allen Lane.
  - 1991. "Governmentality" in G. Burchell, C. Gordon, & P. Miller (eds.), *The Foucault Effect*, pp. 87-104. Hertfordshire, Harvester Wheatsheaf.
- Frazer, J. 1922 (1993). *The Golden Bough*. Hertfordshire, Wordsworth.
- Frater Choronzon. 1991. "Crisis Magicians, Orders, Disorders, Lynx and Lone Wolves", <http://www.chaosmatrix.com/lib/chaos/texts/crisis.html>
- Frater Equilibrium. 2001. *The Neonomicon: Personal Daemonkeeping and Chaos Magic*. Privately Published.
- Frater U.D. 1990. *Practical Sigil Magic: Creating Personal Symbols for Success*. Minnesota, Llewlllyn.
- 1996. "Models of Magic", <http://csbh.mhv.net/~dsprague/modmag/model.txt>
- Freud, S. 1930 (1963). *Civilisation and its Discontents*. London, Hogarth.
- Fries, J. 1992. *Visual Magick: A Manual of Freestyle Shamanism*. Oxford, Mandrake.
- 1993. *Helrunar: A Manual of Rune Magick*. Oxford, Mandrake.
- Fritscher, J. 1993. "Straight from the Witch's Mouth", in A. C. Lehmann & J. Myers (eds.), *Magic, Witchcraft, and Religion: An Anthropological Study of the Supernatural*, pp. 362-371. California, Mayfield Publishing.
- Fromm, E. 1960 (1942). *The Fear of Freedom*. London, Routledge & Kegan Paul.
- Geertz, C. 1973 (1993). "Religion As a Cultural System" in C. Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures*, pp.87-125. London, Harper Collins.
- 1983 (2000). "'From the Natives Point of View': On the Nature of Anthropological Understanding" in C. Geertz, *Local Knowledge*, pp.55-70. USA, Basic Books.
- Geschiere, P. 1997. *The Modernity of Witchcraft: Politics and the Occult in Postcolonial Africa*. USA, University Press of Virginia.
- 2001. "Witchcraft and New Forms of Wealth: Regional Variations in South and West Cameroon" in P. Clough & J. Mitchell (eds.), *Powers of Good and Evil: Social Transformation and Popular Belief*, pp.43-76. Oxford, Berghahn Books.

- Giddens, A. 1990. *The Consequences of Modernity*. Cambridge, Polity Press.
- 1991. *Modernity and Self Identity: Self and Society in the Late Modern Age*. Cambridge, Polity Press.
- Gilligan, C. 1982. *In A Different Voice: Psychological Theory and Women's Development*. Massachusetts, Harvard University press.
- Ginzburg, C. 1991. *Ecstasies: Deciphering the Witches' Sabbath*. London, Penguin
- Gleick, J. 1989. *Chaos: Making a New Science*. London, Cardinal.
- Glock, C. & Bellah, R. 1976. *The New Religious Consciousness*. Californian, University of California Press.
- Glucklich, A. 1991. *The End of Magic*. Oxford, Oxford University Press.
- Gluckman, M. 1963. *Order and Rebellion in Tribal Africa*. London, Cohen & West.
- Godwin, J. 1993. *Arktos: The Polar Myth in Science, Symbolism, and Nazi Survival*. London, Thames & Hudson.
- Goffman, E. 1961. *Asylums*. New York, Doubleday.
- Goodman, F. 1988. *How About Demons? Possession and Exorcism in the Modern World*. Bloomington, Indiana University Press.
- 1992. *Ecstasy, Ritual and Alternate Reality: Religion in a Pluralistic World*. Bloomington, Indiana University Press.
- Goodrick-Clarke, N. 1992. *The Occult Roots of Nazism*. London, I.B.Tauris.
- 2002. *Black Sun: Aryan Cults, Esoteric Nazism and the Politics of Identity*. New York, New York University Press.
- Gove, W. (ed.). 1975. *The Labelling of Deviance*. London, Sage.
- Graham Scott, G. 1983. *The Magicians: A Study of the Use of Power in a Black Magic Group*. New York, Irvington Publishers.
- Grant, K. 1971. "Dreaming Out of Space" in *Man, Myth & Magic* no.84.
- 1972 (1991). *The Magical Revival*. London, Skoob Books.
- 1973 (1992). *Aleister Crowley and The Hidden God*. London, Skoob Books.
- 1975a. *Images and Oracles of Austin Osman Spare*. London, Fredrick Muller
- 1975b (1994). *Cults of the Shadow*. London, Skoob Books.



- 1977 (1994). *Nightside of Eden*. London, Skoob Books.
  - 1980. *Outside the Circles of Time*. London, Fredrick Muller
  - 1992. *Hecate's Fountain*. London, Skoob Books.
  - 1994. *Outer Gateways*. London, Skoob Books.
  - 1999. *Beyond The Mauve Zone*. London, Starfire Publishing.
  - 2002. *The Ninth Arch*. London, Starfire Publishing.
- Grant, K. & Grant, S. (eds.) 1998. *Zos Speaks! Encounters with Austin Osman Spare*. London, Fulgar.
- Grant, R.M. (ed.). 1961. *Gnosticism: An Anthology*. London, Collins.
- Gray, W. 1974. *The Tree of Evil*. Gloucestershire, Helios.
- Green, D. 1999. "Opposites Attract: the Transformation of Uncertainty in Pagan Identity", paper delivered at the Sociology of Religion Study Group conference, University of Durham, 9th April 1999.
- 2002. "A New Cauldron for a New Age? Modernity, magickal cosmologies and science", unpublished paper.
- Greenwood, S. 1995. "The Magical Will, Gender and Power in Magical Practices" in G. Harvey & C. Hardman (eds.), *Paganism Today*, pp.191-203. London, Thorsons.
- 1996a. "Feminist Witchcraft: a Transformatory Politics" in N. Charle & F. Hughes-Freeland (eds.), *Practising Feminism*, pp. 109-134. London, Routledge.
  - 1996b. "The British Occult Subculture: Beyond Good and Evil?" in J. Lewis (ed.) *Magical Religion and Modern Witchcraft*, pp. 277-296. Albany, SUNY Press.
  - 1998. "The Nature of the Goddess: Sexual Identities and Power in Contemporary Witchcraft" in J. Pearson, R. Roberts, G. Samuel (eds.), *Nature Religion Today: Paganism in the Modern World*, pp.101-110. Edinburgh, Edinburgh University Press.
  - 2000. *Magic, Witchcraft and the Otherworld*. Berg, Oxford.
- Greyson, B. 2000. "Near-Death Experiences" in E.Cardena, S.J. Lynn & S. Krippner (eds.), *Varieties of Anomalous Experience: Examining the Scientific*

- Evidence*, pp.315-352. Washington, American Psychological Association.
- Gribbin, J. 1984 (1998). *In Search of Schroedinger's Cat: Quantum Physics and Reality*. London, Black Swan.
- Hall, N. 1992. *Chaos and Sorcery*. Wiltshire, Anthony Rowe.
- Hall, S. & Jefferson, T. (eds.). 1975 (1982). *Resistance through Rituals: Youth subcultures in post-war Britain*. London, Hutchinson.
- Hanegraaff, W. J. 1998a. *New Age Religion and Western Culture*. Albany, SUNY Press.
- 1998b. "Reflections on New Age and the Secularisation of Nature" in J. Pearson, R. Roberts, G. Samuel (eds.), *Nature Religion Today: Paganism in the Modern World*, pp.101-110, pp.22-32. Edinburgh, Edinburgh University Press.
- Haraway, D. 1991. *Simians, Cyborgs, and Women*. Routledge, New York.
- Harms, D. 1999. "Power Without and Within: A History of Legitimization and Subversion in Western Magical Traditions", Master's Thesis presented to the Dept. of Anthropology, University of Buffalo, USA, April 1999.
- Harms, D. & Gonce, J. W. 1998. *The Necronomicon Files: The Truth Behind the Legend*. California, Night Shade Books.
- Harvey, G. 1995a. "Satanism in Britain Today", *The Journal of Contemporary Religion*, vol. 10, no. 3, pp. 283-296.
- 1995b. "Heathenism: A North European Pagan Tradition" in *Paganism Today*, eds. G. Harvey & C. Hardman, pp. 32-46. London, Thorsons.
- 1997. *Listening People, Speaking Earth: Contemporary Paganism*. London, Hurst & Co.
- Harvey, G. & Hardman, C. (eds.). 1995. *Paganism Today*. London, Thorsons.
- Hawking, S. 1988. *A Brief History of Time*. London, Bantam.
- 1994. *Black Holes and Baby Universes and Other Essays*. London, Bantam.
- Hawkins, J. 1996. *Understanding Chaos Magic*. Berkshire, Capall Bann.
- Hay, G. (ed.). 1978 (1992). *The Necronomicon: The Book of Dead Names*. Skoob Books, London
- 1995. "Preface" in G. Hay & R. Turner, *The R'lyeh Text: Hidden Leaves from*



- the Necronomicon*, pp. 7-19. London, Skoob Books.
- Hay, G. & Turner, R. (eds.). 1995. *The R'lyeh Text: Hidden Leaves from the Necronomicon*. London, Skoob Books.
- Hebblethwaite, B. 1979. *Evil, Suffering and Religion*. London, Sheldon Press.
- Hebdige, D. 1979 (1985). *Subculture: The Meaning of Style*. London, Methuen.
- Heelas, P. 1991a. "Cults for Capitalism: Self religions, Magic, and the Empowerment of Business" in P. Gee & J. Fulton (eds.), *Religion and Power, Decline and Growth*, pp.27-41. British Sociological Association, Sociology of Religion Study Group.
- 1991b. "Reforming the Self: Enterprise and the Character of Thatcherism" in R.Keat & N. Abercrombie (eds.) *Enterprise Culture*, pp. 74-90. London, Routledge.
  - 1992. "The Sacralization of the Self and New Age Capitalism" in N. Abercrombie & A. Warde (eds.), *Social Change in Contemporary Britain*, pp. 139-166. Cambridge, Polity Press.
  - 1994. "The limits of consumption and the postmodern 'religion' of the New Age" in R. Keat, N.Whiteley & N. Abercrombie (eds.) *The Authority of the Consumer*, pp. 102-115. London, Routledge.
  - 1995. "The New Age: Values and Modern Times" in L. van Vucht Tijssen, J. Berting & F. Lechner (eds.), *The Search for Fundamentals: The Process of Modernisation and the Quest for Meaning*, pp. 143-170. Dordrecht, Kluwer Academic Publishers.
  - 1996. *The New Age Movement: The Sacralization of the Self and the Celebration of Modernity*. Oxford, Blackwell.
  - 1998. "Introduction: On Differentiation and Dedifferentiation" in P. Heelas (ed.), *Religion, Modernity, and Postmodernity*, pp.1-18. Oxford, Basil Blackwell.
- Hess, D. J. 1993. *Science in the New Age: The Paranormal, Its Defenders and Debunkers, and American Culture*. Wisconsin, The University of Wisconsin Press.
- 1994. "Parallel Universes" in *Anthropology Today*, vol. 10, no. 2, pp.16-18

- Hetherington, K. 1997. *The Badlands of Modernity: Heterotopia and Social Ordering*. London, Routledge.
- Hick, J. 1968. *Evil and the God of Love*. London, Fontana.
- Hill, D. & Thornley, K. 1966 (1994). *Principia Discordia*. Austin, Steve Jackson.
- Hine, P. n.d.a. "The Physics of Evocation: A Cthulhu Mythos Perspective" in *Chaos International*, no. 13, pp.39-43.
- 1991. *Chaos Servitors: A User Guide*. London, Pagan News & Chaos International.
  - 1993. *Prime Chaos*. London, Chaos International.
  - 1994. *The Pseudonomicon*. Irvine, Dagon Productions.
  - 1995. *Condensed Chaos: An Introduction to Chaos Magic*. Arizona, New Falcon Publications.
  - 1996a. *Condensed Chaos: An Introduction to Chaos Magic*, Arizona, New Falcon.
  - 1996b. "Beyond the Event Horizon" in C. Hyatt (ed.), *Rebels & Devils: The Psychology of Liberation*, pp.173-180. Arizona, New Falcon.
  - 2002. "Fifth Aeon Egregore" Web Site, <http://www.phhine.ndirect.co.uk>
- Hobsbawm, E. & Ranger, T. (eds.). 1983 (1992). *The Invention of Tradition*. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.
- Horne, B. 1996. *Imagining Evil*. London, Darton, Longman & Todd.
- Horton, R. 1967 (1975). 'African Traditional Thought and Western Science' in M. Marwick (ed.), *Witchcraft and Sorcery*. Harmondsworth, Penguin.
- 1993. *Patterns of Thought in Africa and the West*. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.
- Hutton, R. 1991. *The Pagan Religions of The Ancient British Isles*. Oxford, Blackwell.
- 1996. "The Roots of Modern Paganism" in G. Harvey & C. Hardman (eds.), *Paganism Today*, pp.3-15. London, Thorsons.
  - 1998. "The Discovery of the Modern Goddess" in J. Pearson, R. Roberts, G. Samuel (eds.), *Nature Religion Today: Paganism in the Modern World*, pp.89-100. Edinburgh, Edinburgh University Press.



- 1999a. *The Triumph of the Moon: A History of Modern Pagan Witchcraft*. Oxford, Oxford University Press.
  - 1999b. "Modern Pagan Witchcraft" in B. Ankerloo & S. Clark (eds.), *Witchcraft and Magic in Europe, Volume 6: The Twentieth Century*, pp.1-79. London, Athlone.
- Ivakhiv, A. 1996. "The Resurgence of Magical Religion to the Crisis of Modernity: A Postmodern Depth Psychological Perspective" in J.Lewis (ed.), *Magical Religion and Modern Witchcraft*, pp.237-265. Albany, SUNY Press.
- Jackson, M, 1989. *Paths Toward a Clearing: radical empiricism and ethnographic enquiry*. Bloomington, Indiana University Press.
- Jacobsen, M. 1999. *Shamanism: Traditional and Contemporary Approaches to the Mastery of Spirits and Healing*. Oxford, Berghahn
- Jonas, H. 1958 (1992). *The Gnostic Religion: The Message of the Alien God and the Beginnings of Christianity*. London, Routledge.
- Jones, P. 1995. "Pagan Theologies" in *Paganism Today*, eds. G. Harvey & C. Hardman, pp. 32-46. London, Thorsons.
- Joshi, S.T. 2001. *A Dreamer and A Visionary: H. P. Lovecraft in His Time*. Liverpool, Liverpool University Press.
- 2002. "Introduction" in H.P. Lovecraft & W. Conover, *Lovecraft at Last*, pp. xi-xvi. New York, Copper Square Press.
- Jung, C.G. 1954 (1993). *The Practice of Psychotherapy*. London, Routledge.
- Kahn, J. 1997. "Demons, Commodities and the History of Anthropology" in J. Carrier (ed.), *Meanings of the Market: The Free Market in Western Culture*, pp.69-98. Oxford, Berg.
- Kaku, M. 1995. *Hyperspace*. Oxford, Oxford University Press.
- Kapferer, S. 1991. *A Celebration of Demons: exorcism and the aesthetics of healing in Sri Lanka*. Providence, Berg.
- 1995. "From the edge of death: sorcery and the motion of consciousness" in *Questions of Consciousness*, Cohen, P & Rapport, N (eds.), pp.134-152, London, Routledge.
- Keel, J. 1971 (1976). *UFOs: Operation Trojan Horse*. London, Abacus.

- 1975. "The Flying Saucer Subculture" in *The Journal of Popular Culture*, vol.8, no.4, pp.871-896.
- Kellner, D. 1992. "Popular culture and the construction of postmodern identities" in S. Lash & J. Friedman (eds.), *Modernity and Identity*, pp.141-177. Oxford, Basil Blackwell.
- King, B. 1993. *Elements of the Runes*. Dorset, Element.
- King, F. 1971. *Sexuality, Magic and Perversion*. London, Neville Spearman.
- 1977. *The Magical World of Aleister Crowley*. London, Weidenfeld & Nicholson.
- 1989. *Modern Ritual Magic: The Rise of Western Occultism*. Dorset, Prism Press.
- Klein, T.E.D. 1985. "Black Man with a Horn" in T.E.D. Klein, *Dark Gods*, pp.129-173. London, Pan.
- Kluckhohn, C. 1944 (1967). *Navaho Witchcraft*. Boston, Beacon Press.
- Koenig, P. 1991. "Kenneth Grant and the Typhonian O.T.O.", [http://www.cyberlink.ch/~koenig/k\\_grant.htm](http://www.cyberlink.ch/~koenig/k_grant.htm).
- 1999. "The McDonaldisation of Occulture", <http://www.cyberlink.ch/~koenig/mcdonald.htm>.
- La Barre, W. 1972. "Hallucinogens and the Shamanic Origins of Religion" in *Flesh of Gods: The Ritual Use of Hallucinogens*, ed. P. Furst. London, Allen & Unwin.
- La Fontaine, J. 1994. *The Extent and Nature of Organised and Ritual Abuse: Research Findings*, London, HMSO.
- 1998. *Speak of the Devil: Tales of Satanic Abuse in Contemporary England*. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.
- 1999. "Satanism and Satanic Mythology" in B. Ankarloo and S. Clark (eds.) *Witchcraft and Magic in Europe: The Twentieth Century*, pp.81-140. London, Athlone.
- Lachman, G.V. 2001. *Turn Off Your Mind: The Mystic Sixties and the Dark Side of the Age of Aquarius*. London, Sidgewick & Jackson.
- Laing, R.D. 1961 (1971). *Self and Others*. Harmondsworth, Penguin.
- 1967. *The Politics of Experience & The Bird of Paradise*. Harmondsworth, Penguin.



- Lambek, M. 1981. *Human Spirits: a cultural account of trance in Mayotte*. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.
- 1996. "Afterword: Spirits and Their Histories" in J. Mageo & A. Howard (eds.), *Spirits in Culture, History, and Mind*, pp.237-249. London, Routledge.
- Larner, C. 1981. *The Enemies of God*. London, Chatto & Windus.
- Lasch, C. 1978. *The Culture of Narcissism: American Life in an Age of Diminishing Expectations*. New York, W.W. Norton.
- Lash, S. & Friedman, J (eds.). 1992. *Modernity and Identity*. Oxford, Basil Blackwell.
- LaVey, A. 1969. *The Satanic Bible*, New York, Avon.
- 1972. *The Satanic Rituals*, New York, Avon.
- Leach, E. 1976. *Culture and Communication*. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.
- Lee, D. 1997. *Chaotopia! Magick and Ecstasy in the PandaemonAeon*. Leeds, Attractor.
- Lee, D. & Strutz, M. 1993. *The Galafron Rite*. (Audio Material). London, Chaos International.
- Lemert, E. 1997. *The Trouble With Evil: Social Control at the Edge of Morality*. Albany, SUNY Press.
- Levack, B. 1996. *The Witch-Hunt in Early Modern Europe*, London, Longman.
- Levi, E. 1995. *Transcendental Magic: Its Doctrine and Ritual*, London, Bracken Books.
- Lévi-Strauss, C. 1962 (1989). *The Savage Mind*. London, Weidenfeld & Nicolson.
- 1963 (1993). "The Sorcerer and His Magic" in C. Lévi-Strauss, *Structural Anthropology. Volume 1*, pp. 167-185. London, Penguin.
- 1969. *Totemism*, Harmondsworth, Penguin.
- Lévy-Bruhl, L. 1966. *How Natives Think*. New York, Washington Square Press.
- Levy, R., Mageo, J., & Howard, A. 1996. "Gods, Spirits, and History" in J. Mageo & A. Howard (eds.), *Spirits in Culture, History, and Mind*, pp.11-27. London, Routledge.

- Lewis, I. M. 1971. *Ecstatic Religion: A Study of Shamanism and Spirit Possession*. London, Penguin.
- Lewis, J. R. (ed.).1995. *The Gods Have Landed: New religions From Other Worlds*. Albany, SUNY Press.
- (ed.) 1996. *Magical Religion and Modern Witchcraft*. Albany, SUNY Press.
- Lincoln Order of Neuromancers. 1986. "Titan Gnosis",  
<http://www.chaosmatrix.com/lib/chaos/texts/apik04.htm>
- Lloyd Smith, R. 1996. "Neophilic Irreligions". Masters Thesis presented to the Department of Sociology, University of Virginia.
- Lofland, J. 1969. *Deviance and Identity*. New Jersey, Prentice-Hall.
- Long, A. & Myatt, D. 1998. "The Order of the Nine Angles" in S. Sennitt (ed.), *Nox, The Black Book Volume 1: Infernal Texts*, pp. 6-22. Logos Press, Mexborough.
- Lorenz, E.N. 1993. *The Essence of Chaos*. London, University College London Press.
- Lovecraft, H. P. 1926 (1987). "The Call of Cthulhu" in H.P. Lovecraft, *Dagon and Other Macabre Tales*, pp. 125-154. Wisconsin, Arkham House.
- 1927 (1995). "History of the *Necronomicon*" in H.P. Lovecraft, *Miscellaneous Writings*, pp.52-53. Wisconsin, Arkham House.
- 1928 (1984). "The Dunwich Horror" in H.P. Lovecraft, *The Dunwich Horror and Others*, pp. 155-198. Wisconsin, Arkham House.
- 1932 (1985). "The Dreams in the Witch House" in H.P. Lovecraft, *At the Mountains of Madness*, pp.262-298. Wisconsin, Arkham House.
- 1934 (1984). "The Shadow Over Innsmouth" in H.P. Lovecraft, *The Dunwich Horror and Others*, pp.368-433. Wisconsin, Arkham House.
- 1976. *Selected Letters Volume V*. Wisconsin, Arkham House.
- 1995. *Miscellaneous Writings*. Wisconsin, Arkham House.
- Lovelock, J. 1979 (1987). *Gaia: A new look at life on Earth*. Oxford, Oxford University Press.
- Lowney, K. 1995. "Teenage Satanism as Oppositional Youth Subculture" in *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography*, vol 23, no. 4, pp.453-484.



- Luhrmann, T. 1989. *Persuasions of the Witch's Craft*. Massachusetts, Harvard University Press.
- Lyotard, J. -F. 1979 (1984). *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*. Manchester, Manchester University Press.
- MacFarlane, A. 1970 (1991). *Witchcraft in Tudor and Stuart England*. London, Routledge.
- Maclellan, A. 1982. *The Lost World of Agharti*. London, Trinity Press.
- MacLellan, G. 1995. "Dancing on the Edge: Shamanism in Modern Britain" in G. Harvey and C. Hardman (eds.), *Paganism Today*, pp.138-148. London, Thorsons
- Macquarrie, J. 1955 (1973). *An Existentialist Theology*. Harmondsworth, Penguin.
- Mageo, J & Howard, A.(eds.) 1996. *Spirits in Culture, History, and Mind*. London, Routledge.
- Magliocco, S. 1996. "Ritual is My Chose Art Form: The Creation of Ritual as Folk Art Among Contemporary Pagans" in J. Lewis (ed.), *Magical Religion and Modern Witchcraft*, pp.121-140. Albany, SUNY Press.
- Malinowski, B. 1948 (1982). *Magic, Science and Religion and Other Essays*. London, Souvenir Press.
- Maroney, T (ed.), 2000. *The Book of Dzyan*. Oakland, Chaosium.
- Martin, D. & Fine, G. 1991. "Satanic Cults, Satanic Play: Is "Dungeons & Dragons" a Breeding Ground for the Devil?" in J. Richardson, J. Best, & D. Bromley (eds.), *The Satanism Scare*, pp. 107-125. New York, Aldine de Gruyter.
- Marwick, M.(ed.). 1970. *Witchcraft and Sorcery*, Harmondsworth, Penguin.
- Mathers, S. L., & Crowley, A. 1997. *The Goetia: The Lesser Key of Solomon the King*. Maine, Samuel Weiser.
- Matheson, T. 1998. *Alien Abductions: Creating a Modern Phenomenon*. New York, Prometheus Books.
- Mauss, M. 1950 (1972). *A General Theory of Magic*. London, Routledge & Kegan Paul.
- 1985. "A category of the human mind: the notion of the person; the notion of the self" in M. Carrithers, S.Collins, & S. Lukes (eds.), *The Category of the Person*, pp. 1-25. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.

- Melton, J.G. 1978. *Encyclopedia of American Religion*. Wilmington, McGrath.
- Métraux, A. 1959 (1972). *Voodoo in Haiti*. New York, Schocken.
- Mitchell, D.M. (ed.).1994. *Starry Wisdom: A Tribute to H.P. Lovecraft*. London, Creation Books.
- Mitchell, J. 2001a. "Introduction" in P. Clough & J. Mitchell (eds.), *Powers of Good and Evil: Social Transformation and Popular Belief*, pp. 1-16. Oxford, Berghahn.
- 2001b. "The Devil, Satanism, and the Evil Eye in Contemporary Malta" in P. Clough & J. Mitchell (eds.), *Powers of Good and Evil: Social Transformation and Popular Belief*, pp. 77-103. Oxford, Berghahn.
- Monday, R. n.d.a. "Fade to Gray: Chaos and Mediocrity", <http://www.phhine.ndirect.co.uk/essays/rexmond1.htm>.
- Moody, E. 1974. "Magical Therapy: An Anthropological Investigation of Contemporary Satanism", in I. Zaretsky & M. Leone (eds.), *Religious Movements in Contemporary America*, pp.355-382. Princeton, Princeton University Press.
- 1993. 'Urban Witches', in A. C. Lehmann & J. Myers (eds.), *Magic, Witchcraft, and Religion: An Anthropological Study of the Supernatural*, pp. 184-190. California, Mayfield Publishing.
- Moore, H. & Sanders, T. (eds.). 2001. *Magical Interpretations, Material Realities*. London, Routledge.
- Morris, B. 1985. "The Rise and Fall of the Human Subject", *Man* vol. 20, pp.722-742.
- 1991. *Western Conceptions of the Individual*. Berg, Oxford.
- 1994. *Anthropology of the Self*. London, Pluto.
- Murray, M. 1921. *The Witch-Cult in Western Europe*. Oxford, Clarendon Press.
- Nathan, D. 1991. "Satanism and Child Molestation: Constructing the Ritual Abuse Scare", in J. Richardson, J. Best & D. Bromley (eds.), *The Satanism Scare*, pp. 75-94. New York, Aldine de Gruyter.
- Nathan, D. & M. Snedeker. 1995. *Satan's Silence: Ritual Abuse and the Making of a Modern American Witch Hunt*. New York, Basic Books.



- Nelson, G. 1987. *Cults, New Religions and Creativity*. London, Routledge.
- Nelson, L. & Taub, D. 1993. "Satanism in Contemporary America: Establishment or Underground?" in *The Sociology Quarterly*, vol. 34, no. 3, pp. 523-541.
- Nietzsche, F. 1956. *The Birth of Tragedy and the Genealogy of Morals*. New York, Doubleday.
- 1978. *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*. London, Penguin.
- Noll, R. 1985. "Mental Imagery Cultivation as a Cultural Phenomenon: The Role of Visions in Shamanism" in *Current Anthropology*, vol. 26, no. 4, pp.443-451.
- O'Connor, J. & McDermott, I. 1996. *Principles of NLP*. London, Thorsons.
- O'Grady, J. 1989. *The Prince of Darkness: The Devil in History, Religion and the Human Psyche*, Dorset, Element.
- Obeyesekere, G. 1981. *Medusa's Hair: Essays on Personal Symbols and Religious Experience*. Chicago, University of Chicago Press.
- Ong, A. 1988. "The Production of Possession: Spirits and the Multinational Corporation in Malaysia" in *American Ethnologist* vol. 15, no. 1, pp.28-42
- Ortner, S, 1973 (2002). "On Key Symbols" in M. Lambek (ed.), *A Reader in the Anthropology of Religion*, pp.158 - 167. Oxford, Blackwell.
- Ovason, D. 1999. *The Zelator: The Secret Journals of Mark Hedsel*. London, Arrow.
- Pagels, E. 1979. *The Gnostic Gospels*. London, Weidenfeld & Nicolson.
- Palmer, M.1991. *Elements of Taoism*. Dorset, Element.
- Parfitt, W. 1988. *The Living Qabalah*. Dorset, Element.
- Parkin, D. (ed.). 1986. *The Anthropology of Evil*, Oxford, Basil Blackwell.
- Partner, P. 1981. *The Knights Templar and Their Myth*. Vermont, Destiny Books
- Pearson, J, Roberts, R.H., & Samuel, G. 1998. *Nature Religion Today: Paganism in the Modern World*. Edinburgh, Edinburgh University Press.
- Percival, I. 1991. "Chaos: a science for the real world", in N. Hall (ed.), *The New Scientist Guide to Chaos*. London, Penguin.
- Philpott, C. (dir.). 2002. *The Whisperers in Darkness*. London, Royal Holloway College.
- Plato (trans.B. Jowett). 1970. "Timeus" in *The Dialogues of Plato, Volume 3*.

- London, Sphere.
- Pocock, D. 1986. "Unruly evil", in D. Parkin, Parkin, D. (ed.), *The Anthropology of Evil*, pp. 42-56. Oxford, Basil Blackwell.
- Poole, F. J. P. 1983. "Cannibals, Tricksters, and Witches", in P. Brown & D. Tuzin (eds.), *The Ethnography of Cannibalism*, pp. 6-32. Washington, Society for Psychological Anthropology.
- Porter, J. 1996. "Spiritualists, Aliens and UFOs: Extraterrestrials as Spirit Guides", in *Journal of Contemporary Religion*, vol.11, no.3, pp.337-353.
- Prigogine, I & Stengers, I. 1984. *Order out of Chaos: Man's New Dialogue with Nature*. London, Fontana.
- Purkiss, D. 1996. *The Witch in History: Early Modern and Twentieth -Century Representations*. London, Routledge.
- Puttick, E. 1998. "Goddesses and Gopis: In Search of New Models of Female Sexuality" in J. Pearson, R. Roberts, G. Samuel (eds.), *Nature Religion Today: Paganism in the Modern World*, pp.111-122. Edinburgh, Edinburgh University Press.
- 2000. "Personal Development: The Spiritualisation and Secularisation of the Human Potential Movement" in S. Sutcliffe & M. Bowman (eds.), *Beyond New Age: Exploring Alternative Spirituality*, pp.201-219. Edinburgh, Edinburgh University Press.
- Rabinovitch, S. 1996. "Spells of Transformation: Categorizing Modern Neo-Pagan Witches" in J. Lewis (ed.) *Magical Religion and Modern Witchcraft*, pp.75-91. Albany, SUNY Press.
- Rappaport, R. 1979. *Ecology, Meaning, and Religion*, pp. Berkeley, North Atlantic Books.
- 1999. *Ritual and Religion in the Making of Humanity*. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.
- Rees, M. 1999. *Just Six Numbers: The Deep Forces that Shape the Universe*. London, Phoenix.
- Regardie, I. 1971 (1992). *The Golden Dawn: A Complete Course in Practical Ceremonial Magic*. Minnesota, Llewellyn.



- 1989. *The Eye in the Triange*. Nevada, Falcon Press.
- Reid, S. 1996. "As I DO Will, So Mote It Be: Magic as Metaphor in Neo-Pagan Witchcraft" in J. Lewis (ed.), *Magical Religion and Modern Witchcraft*, pp.141-167. Albany, SUNY Press.
- Richardson, E. 1999. "Post-Structuralism and Modern Magick",  
<http://www.phhine.ndirect.co.uk/essays/post1.htm>
- (n.d.a.2). *Working Magic!* Privately published.
- Richardson, J., Best, J. & Bromley, D. (eds.). 1991. *The Satanism Scare*. New York, Aldine de Gruyter.
- Rojcewicz, P. 1987. "The "Men in Black" Experience and Tradition: Analogues with the Traditional Devil Hypothesis" in *The Journal of American Folklore*, no.100, pp.148-160.
- Roberts, A., & Gilbertson, G. 1985. *The Dark Gods*. London, Pather
- Rose, N. 1990. *Governing the Soul: the shaping of the private self*. London, Routledge.
- Rowe, L. & Cavender, G. 1991. "Caldrons Bubble, Satan's Trouble, but Witches Are Okay: Media Constructions of Satanism and Witchcraft" in J. Richardson, J. Best & D. Bromley (eds.), *The Satanism Scare*, pp.263-275. New York, Aldine de Gruyter.
- Rowlands, M. & Warnier, J.-P. 1988. "Sorcery, Power, and the Modern State in Cameroon" in *Man* vol. 23, pp.118-132.
- Rucker, R. 1985. *The Fourth Dimension and How to Get There*. London, Rider.
- Rudolph, K. 1991. "Gnosticism" in I. Hazlett (ed.) *Early Christianity*. London, SPCK.
- Russell, B. 1946 (1990). *A History of Western Philosophy*. London, Unwin Hyman.
- Rutherford, J. (ed.). 1990. *Identity: Community, Culture, Difference*. London, Lawrence & Wishart.
- Sagan, C. 1997. *The Demon-Haunted World*. London, Headline.
- Salomonsen, J. 1988. "Feminist Witchcraft and Holy Hermeneutics" in J. Pearson, R. Roberts, G. Samuel (eds.), *Nature Religion Today: Paganism in the Modern World*, pp.145-156. Edinburgh, Edinburgh University Press.

- Sargant, W. 1973. *The Mind Possessed: A Physiology of Possession, Mysticism, and Healing*. London, William Heinmann.
- Sarup, M. 1996. *Identity, Culture, and the Postmodern World*. Edinburgh, Edinburgh University Press.
- Schieffelin, E. 1985. "Performance and the cultural construction of reality" in *American Ethnologist* vol.12, no.4., pp.707-724.
- Segal, R. (ed.). 1992. *The Gnostic Jung*. London, Routledge.
- (ed.) 1995. *The Allure of Gnosticism: The Gnostic Experience in Jungian Psychology and Contemporary Culture*. Chicago, Open Court.
- Seibert, B. N.d.a. "Cthulhoid Copulations",  
[http://www.phhine.ndirect.co.uk/archives/ktul\\_copul.htm](http://www.phhine.ndirect.co.uk/archives/ktul_copul.htm)
- Sennett, R. 1970 (1996). *The Uses of Disorder*. London, Faber & Faber.
- Sennitt, S. 1997. *Liber Koth*. Logos Press, Mexborough
- Sennitt, S, Smith, J, & Blake, I. 1990. *Mythos and Magick: Three Essays on H.P. Lovecraft and the Occult Revival*. Doncaster, Starry Wisdom Press.
- Sheldrake, R. 1988. *The Prescence of the Past: Morphic resonance and the habits of nature*. London, Collins.
- Sherwin, R. 1992. *The Book of Results*. Leeds, Revelations 23 Pres.
- n.d.a.. "Chaos Magick". <http://www.phhine.ndirect.co.uk/essays/chaos.htm>
- Shual, K. 1995. *Sexual Magick*. Oxford, Mandrake.
- Simon (ed.). 1977 (1980). *Necronomicon*. New York, Avon.
- Singer, B. & Benassi, V. 1981 (1997). "Occult Beliefs" in A.C. Lehman & J.E.Myers (eds.), *Magic, Witchcraft and Religion: An Anthropological Study of the Supernatural*, pp.384-392. California, Mayfield Publishing
- Smart, B. 1993. *Postmodernity*. London, Routledge.
- Smith, P.1999. *Nameless Aeons*. Logos Press, Mexborough.
- Sokal, A. & Bricmont, J. 1998. *Intellectual Impostures*. London, Profile.
- Sontag, S. 1966 (1994). "The Anthropologist as Hero" in S. Sontag, *Against Interpretation*, pp.69-81. London, Vintage.
- Soror Eanna. N.d.a.1 "In The Coils of Chaos: A Chaos Magician's Guide to Working with Entities from the Sumerian Abzu" in *Chaos International*, No.13.



- N.d.a.2 "Deeper Into the Coils of Chaos: A Chaos Magician's Guide to Working with the Sumerian Deity Tiamat" in *Chaos International*, No.14.
- Southwold, M. 1982. "True Buddhism and Village Buddhism in Sri Lanka" in J. Davis (ed.), *Religious Organization and Religious Experience*, pp.137-152. London, Academic Press.
- Spare, A.O. 1913 (1993). *The Book of Pleasure (Self-Love): The Psychology of Ecstasy*, facsimile in A. Spare, *From the Inferno to Zos: The Writings and Images of Austin Osman Spare*. Seattle, First Impressions.
- 1997. *Axiomata / The Witches Sabbath*. London, Fulgur
- Sperber, D. 1974 (1995). *Rethinking Symbolism*. Gateshead, Atheneum Press.
- 1985. "Anthropology and Psychology: Towards and Epidemiology of Representations" in *Man* vol. 20, pp.73-89.
- 1996. *Explaining Culture: A Naturalistic Approach*. Oxford, Blackwell.
- Staley, M. 1994. "Lam: The Gateway" in *Starfire* vol. 1, no. 5, pp.77-100.
- 1996. "The Lam-Serpent Sadhana" in *Starfire* vol. 2, no. 1, pp. 107-116.
- Staley, M., Lowe, P., & Taylor, R. 1994. "Foreword" in *Starfire* vol. 1, no. 5, pp. 5-6.
- Stanford, P. 1996. *The Devil: A Biography*. London, Arrow.
- Starhawk. 1990. *Dreaming the Dark*. London, Mandala.
- Stevens, P. 1991. "The Demonology of Satanism: An Anthropological View", in J. Richardson, J. Best & D. Bromley (eds.), *The Satanism Scare*, pp. 21-39. New York, Aldine de Gruyter.
- Stewart, C. 1991. *Demons and the Devil: Moral Imagination in Modern Greek Culture*. New Jersey, Princeton University Press.
- 2002. "Erotic Dreams and Nightmares from Antiquity to the Present" in *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute*, vol. 8, pp. 279-309.
- Stewart, I & Cohen, J. 1997. *Figments of Reality: The Evolution of the Curious Mind*. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.
- Stoller, P. & Olkes, C. 1987. *In Sorcery's Shadow: A Memoir of Apprenticeship Among the Songhay of Niger*. Chicago, Chicago University Press.
- Strieber, W. 1987. *Communion*. London, Arrow Books.

- Suster, G. 1981. *Hitler and the Age of Horus*. London, Sphere.
- 1988. *The Legacy of the Beast: The Life, Work, and Influence of Aleister Crowley*. London, W.H. Allen.
- Sutcliffe, R. 1995. "Left-Hand Path Ritual Magick: An Historical and Philosophical Overview", in G. Harvey & C. Hardman (eds.), *Paganism Today*, pp. 109-137. London, Thorsons,
- Sutcliffe, S. & Bowman, M (eds.). 2000. *Beyond New Age: Exploring Alternative Spirituality*. Edinburgh, Edinburgh University Press.
- Symonds, J. 1989. *The King of the Shadow Realm*. London, Duckworth.
- Symonds, J, & Grant, K. 1973 (1986). "Editors' Introduction" in A. Crowley, *Magick*, pp.xv-xvii. London, Guild.
- Szasz, T. 1961. *The Myth of Mental Illness*. London, Secker & Warburg.
- Tambiah, S. 1973 (1985). "The Form and Meaning of Magical Acts" in S. Tambiah, *Culture, Thought and Social Action*, pp. 60-86. Massachusetts, Harvard University Press.
- 1990. *Magic, Science, Religion, and the Scope of Rationality*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.
- Taussig, M. 1987. *Shamanism, Colonialism and the Wildman*. Chicago, University of Chicago Press.
- 1993. *Mimesis and Alterity*. London, Routledge.
- Taylor, D. 1986. "The root of all evil", in D. Parkin (ed.), *The Anthropology of Evil*, pp. 26-41. Oxford, Basil Blackwell.
- Taylor, P. 1999. *Modernities: A Geohistorical Interpretation*. Cambridge, Polity Press.
- Temple, R. 1976 (1999). *The Sirius Mystery*. Arrow, London.
- Temple of Set. 1996. *General Information and Admission Policies*.  
<http://www.calweb.com/~reshet/infoadms.html>
- Templum Nigri Solis. 1996. "Anno Chaos - The Pandaemonaeon" in C. Hyatt (ed.), *Rebels and Devils: The Psychology of Liberation*, pp.205-207. Arizona, New Falcon.
- Thee Temple ov Psychick Youth. 2003. "TOPY Manifesto: Statement ov Intent".



<http://www.topy.net/>

Thomas, K. 1971 (1991). *Religion and the Decline of Magic*. London, Penguin.

Thorsson, E. 1988 (1993). *At The Well of Wyrd: A Handbook of Runic Divination*.  
Maine, Samuel Weiser.

Tiryakian, E. 1974. "Preliminary Considerations" in E. Tiryakian (ed.), *On The Margins of the Visible*, pp.1-15. New York, John Wiley & Sons.

Tomas, D. 1994. "Old Rituals for New Space: Rites de Passage and William Gibson's Cultural Model of Cyberspace" in M. Benedict (ed.), *Cyberspace: First Steps*, pp. 31-48. Massachusetts, MIT Press.

Trevor-Roper, H. R. 1990. *The European Witch-Craze of the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries*, London, Penguin.

Truzzi, M. 1972 (1997). "The Occult Revival as Popular Culture: Some Observations on the Old and the Nouveau Witch" in A.C. Lehman & J.E. Myers (eds.), *Magic, Witchcraft and Religion: An Anthropological Study of the Supernatural*, pp.405-413. California, Mayfield Publishing.

- 1974a. "Definitions and Dimensions of the Occult: Towards a Sociological Perspective" in E. Tiryakian (ed.), *On The Margin of the Visible: Sociology, the Esoteric, and the Occult*, pp. 243-255. New York, John Wiley.

- 1974b. "Towards a Sociology of the Occult: Notes on Modern Witchcraft" in I. Zaretsky & M. Leone (eds.), *Religious Movements in Contemporary America*, pp.629-645. New Jersey, Princeton University Press.

Turner, V. 1967. *The Forest of Symbols: Aspects of Ndembu Ritual*. Ithaca, Cornell University Press.

- 1969. *Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-Structure*. Chicago, Aldine Publishing.

Turner, V. & Bruner, E. (ed.) 1985. *The Anthropology of Experience*. Chicago, University of Illinois Press.

Tuzin, D. 1983. "Cannibalism and Arapesh Cosmology: A Wartime Incident with the Japanese", in P. Brown & D. Tuzin (eds.), *The Ethnography of Cannibalism*, pp. 61-71. Washington, Society for Psychological Anthropology.

Valiente, D. 1973 (1984). *An ABC of Witchcraft Past and Present*. London, Robert Hale.

- Whitmore, J. 1995. "Religious Dimensions of the UFO Abductee Experience" in J.R. Lewis (ed.), *The Gods Have Landed: New religions From Other Worlds*, pp.65-84. Albany, SUNY Press.
- Williams, R. 1996. "Undoing Yourself With Chaos Magic" in C. Hyatt (ed.), *Rebels & Devils: The Psychology of Liberation*, pp.181-185. Arizona, New Falcon.
- Willis, R. 1999. *Some Spirits Heal, Others Only Dance: A Journey into Human Selfhood in an African Village*. Oxford, Berg.
- Wilson, R.A.1977 (1992). *Cosmic Trigger Volume 1*. Arizona, New Falcon Publications.
- 1983 (1992). *Prometheus Rising*. Arizona, New Falcon Publications.
- Wilson, R.A., & Shea, R. 1975a (1986). *Illuminatus! Vol.1: The Eye in the Pyramid*. London, Sphere
- 1975b (1986) *Illuminatus! Vol.2: The Golden Apple*. London, Sphere
- 1975c (1986) *Illuminatus! Vol.3: Leviathan*. London, Sphere.
- Wilson, S. 1994. *Chaos Ritual*. London, Neptune Press.
- Wilson, S.C., & Barber, T.X. 1983. "The fantasy-prone personality: Implications for understanding imagery, hypnosis, and parapsychological phenomenon". In A.A. Sheikh (Ed.), *Imagery: Current theory, research, and application*, pp.340-387. New York, Wiley.
- Wimbush, V. 1990. "Sophrosyne: Graeco-Roman Origins of a Type of Ascetic Behaviour" in J. Goehring (ed.) *Gnosticism and the Early Christian World*. California, Polebridge Press.
- Woodman, J. 1997. "Psychologising Satan: Contemporary Satanism, Satanic-Abuse Allegations, and the Secularisation of Evil" in *The Scottish Journal of Religious Studies* vol 18, no. 2, pp. 129-145.
- Yates, F. 1966. *The Art of Memory*. London, Routledge & Kegan Paul.
- York, M. 1995. *The Emerging Network: A Sociology of the New Age and Neo-Pagan Movements*. London, Rowland & Littlefield
- Zebulon. N.d.a. "Dark Entries: An Introduction to the Magick of the Cthulhu Mythos", <http://www.phine.ndirect.co.uk/ktulmyth/darkent.htm>.



Zohar, D. 1990. *The Quantum Self*. London, Bloomsbury.

Zukav, G. 1979. *The Dancing Wu Li Masters: An Overview of the New Physics*.  
Suffolk, Fontana.