

The History of British Magic After Crowley

Kenneth Grant, Amado Crowley, Chaos Magic,
Satanism, Lovecraft, The Left Hand Path, Blasphemy
and Magical Morality

Dave Evans



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Preface

This weighty book presents a study of some related elements of modern magical history and practice in Britain since 1947, the year of Aleister Crowley's death. I give a historical underpinning of the major figures in early 20th Century magic (Aleister Crowley, Austin Osman Spare, Gerald Gardner etc), followed by an overview of the current state of academic research in general, and of history in particular, in this subject.

The book then concentrates on four major areas: the morality underlying the 'Left Hand Path' of magic (also sometimes erroneously known as 'Black Magic'), the life and work of Amado Crowley (the self-claimed son of Aleister), the life and work of Kenneth Grant (a pupil of Aleister Crowley, and I also examine his work using the novels of the American author HP Lovecraft and his association with Austin Osman Spare), and the modern emergence of Chaos Magic, a relatively new and ahistorical, post-modernist-inspired practice, based in part of the works of Crowley, Grant and Spare. I touch on the phenomenon of Wicca lightly sometimes because it is something that has been already researched by others to a good state (and modern magic has not).

Although this is a historical study based on textual research (including internet sources and many unpublished materials), the relatively few years since the period started meant many of those involved are still alive, which allowed for communications and in some cases actual meetings with some very influential figures in the subject area. Those who communicated included (in no particular order) Lionel Snell (aka Ramsey Dukes), Phil Hine, Andrew Chumbley, Dave Lee, Peter Carroll, Kenneth Grant and Amado Crowley; plus a host of other magicians and academics from all over the world, many of who are included in my acknowledgments pages. Thus 'interview' methods that are not strictly historical were used at times (hell, I'll admit it, a lot of it was just totally fascinating unstructured conversations), and the suitability of several academic methods for investigation of the subject in general is examined.

Various fact-narrative problems are identified, investigated and discussed, since magicians appear to be often prone to self-mythologising, with scant regard to what is accepted fact, especially concerning Amado.

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NZ

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Grant and Chaos magicians in general, which can cause headaches for academics who are trying to verify anything.

The work is a 'pioneer piece' so far as academia is concerned, since it discusses several previously unstudied areas of British magic, particularly with regards to the historical examinations of Grant, Chaos magic and Amado Crowley, and as such it should provide both an interesting read and useful source materials for other researchers and interested pagans-magicians alike. This is a book version of my Doctoral dissertation in History, but it has been changed somewhat here and there (and expanded in many places) to make it more accessible to any reader who has a basic knowledge of the world of magic. This is an academic book in structure, there are footnotes, an index, an extensive bibliography and more. Some of that sometimes upsets people who want a light read. This is not light reading (it is not a light subject!), but I do hope it is accessible material.

The reaction to my research happening at all within British academia was 'amazing', both in terms of being amazingly positive and amazingly resistant, and this book (and the thesis that birthed it) are in some ways simply a testament to powers of attrition - on many occasions it was nearly abandoned due to seemingly unsurmountable obstacles being put in the way. I am most grateful to the various folk who provided ladders, digging machinery or other possible solutions at the time.

I am both an academic and a magician. To openly admit that in print carries a slight future career risk. There are many effects on the reflexive academic, who has their own memes and their own personal fictions to deal with, in researching a subject they are intimately involved with on a personal level. Studying a subject such as magic has several levels of 'shock' to overcome, (potentially, depending on the individual academic and the society from which they come) which have been dealt with here. Going beyond the intrinsic prejudices of morality and blasphemy in order to study this subject is important in a nominally Christian society where the last Witchcraft Law was repealed only a little over 50 years ago, and the last executions for Witchcraft were only a few centuries ago.

It is also research in which one meets with unusual and bizarre claims and counter-claims, involving often-fictional matters, all under the guise of attempting to produce an objective piece of writing about history! To add to the reflexive matters that I personally experienced, and unusually

for most academics 'out there' doing research with living people I'm sure, I was variously threatened with cursing, physical harm and legal action with regard to my researches on (ironically) the person of my subjects whose tale stands up to academic scrutiny by far the least, and I had either a most amusing coincidence or a representative of the great god Cthulhu come to pay me a visit when I was probably working along the right lines with Kenneth Grant's material.

It has also to be said that in the process of this work I have been blessed with the kind of 'luck' (or the universe/Gods/Demons smiling on this endeavour, and/or magical currents being harnessed in my favour, whichever the reader wishes to believe) that money simply could not buy and that the 'magical talisman' of a huge sheaf of academic credentials could ever guarantee happening. Since many of these instances, such as 'being in the right place at precisely the right time' to be invited to visit wonderful and unique private collections have been on the explicit understanding that their existence, contents and location remain private I have often had to cite them as such, while still retaining a coherent set of references.

It has been quite a ride. I hope the reader enjoys this book as much as I have enjoyed working on it, and please "allow yourselves to be amazed, or you will miss a lot"¹

Dave Evans

Oxford

12th October 2006 (CrowleyMass)

¹ Ramsey Dukes, *Blast!* (Electronic Book), El-Cheapo/TMTS, London, 2001, p 224

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Dedication and Acknowledgements

A PhD thesis or book, although written by one person must of necessity be a collaborative endeavour with one's research participants, friends and colleagues. The advent of the Internet means that such participation and friendship can be rapid, and extended worldwide, thus I am indebted to a great many people (whom often I have not yet met in person) for one or more of their gracious encouragement, support, feedback, hospitality, selfless sharing of knowledge, historical resources, opinions, their stimulating conversations, sofas to sleep on at night while spending days consulting their book collections, or just plain generosity of spirit for their support in the alchemical and lengthy process that has been the research for and preparation of this monstrous text.

For various reasons several of them are indicated here with pseudonyms (which is not always indicated below by single quotation marks or italics), or not named at all, which is often the case where I have been granted honoured access to very private book and document archives whose owners-custodians desire them to remain un-identified and unpublicised. My deepest apologies go to anyone who is not mentioned and who should be.

Equally, some other persons have not been mentioned here since their actions have been profoundly damaging and-or obstructive to my work and general life in the extreme. Those not named for each reason will themselves know who they are, and which group they come under, in any case. Since just about nobody ever reads this part of books anyhow, I can openly say here that many of the more obstructive and spiteful persons are deserving of damage of monumental proportions, and I look forward to hearing about them receiving just that. Some already have, in ways that are nothing to do with me.

It is often likely that when researching reasonably modern history in a lengthy study period that some of one's more aged research contacts may die. I was half-expecting one or two of the 'elders' to perhaps not be around by the time I finished the process (which has taken nearly five years), but the three kind and inspiring folk who did actually die were tragically before their time, one considerably younger than me, and one had a virtually identical age to mine.

In no inferred order of importance, chronology or alphabet those I can mention with deep gratitude are: Ronald Hutton (whose wisdom, guidance and kind friendship has been a continual inspiration), Lionel Snell "and family", Melvyn Willin, Alison Butler, Francis Breakspear (who has been more like a brother than he knows), Amy Hale (a true star), Phil Hine, Owen Davies, 'Joel Biroco', the marvellous Dave Green, Sabina Magliocco, Robert Wallis, Justin Woodman, Bill Redwood, Geoffrey Samuel, Susan Johnston Graf, Neil Inglis, Bradley Skene, Matt Lee, Ralf Tegtmeier, Peter J Carroll, the late Jhonn Balance, Mr Len Bloomfield; who was a huge inspiration without knowing it (hello Royal!), the many contributors to the Journal for the Academic Study of Magic and the associated electronic forum, Robert Ansell, Snoo Wilson, the quite fabulous Katherine at OccultEbooks, the late Andrew Chumbley, Clive Barker, the always on time Kate Hoolu, Vanessa Chambers, the eternal international fraternity that is the B4Massiv, Tamsin Kilner, Dave Lee, Julian Vayne, Greg Humphries, Kenneth Grant, Michael Staley, Clive Harper, Ben Fernee and Jonathan Davies (both of whose separate kindnesses were simply wonderful at a time of great trouble), the late Martin Booth, Les Normands, participants in numerous pagan 'moots', conferences and events around the British Isles from 2000-2006, Willy Fiorucci, Professor Hoffman, Robert Turner, the late Gerald Suster for bequeathing to me a superb route map, my LJ Tribe for helping keep me sane, Virginia Dare, Jaq Hawkins, Philippe Pissier, Graham King and the knowledgeable and kind staff of the Museum of Witchcraft, Cornwall, whose company I miss hugely, Fortean Times, Mark Pilkington, Marco Pasi, Wouter Hanegraaf, Terry Waite CBE, William Ryan and staff of the Warburg Institute, London, Gavin Semple and all at Fulgur, Hannah Sanders, Christina Harrington at Treadwells, Teresa Chermas & colleagues at Mentorn Television Ltd, London, Mogg Morgan, Robert Anton Wilson, Michael Duffy, The Dunns- without whose unquestioning generosity of spirit this work would have been impossible to start, and indeed finish (the cyclical nature of events was not lost on me!), anyone I know who appreciates the entire meaning encoded in "Yeah, You Do!", Axxxxx, heretics, chaotic explorers, innovators and psychonauts everywhere (you know who you are), Devon & Cornwall Police, Tony Looker, the librarians of Philadelphia, Bristol, Exeter and Manchester (John Rylands) Universities (among very many others), whoever invented 'Red Bull', 'Alobar', creative Kaos in general, the Great God Pan, numerous contributors to the Wyrdglow, AOSgallery, Lovecraft Scholars and Zeelist e-groups (among many others), the invigorating company

and demonstrated joyful wisdom of Si Trance, the Inner and Un-Nameable Head of the Syncretic Order of the Golden Giraffe, Joy Paton, Kate, David & Conor Meharry, the Pastafarian Movement and my late father, Tom, who would have simply loved watching this process unfold, and in some cases simply unravel.

Some of those named above have been most helpful in reading drafts and suggesting improvements, modifications and clarifications to this text, many of which I took on board. Any remaining errors, misunderstandings or confusion are thus mine alone.

Without the shining and magickal example set by the luminously beautiful Lizard Queen of Transylvania on 29th and 30th March 2006 e.v., this hunk of print simply would not be here. Long story.

The original research for the thesis was supported financially by the award of a three-year subsistence grant from the University of Bristol, for which I remain extremely grateful, as this work would have been simply impossible otherwise.

This production is brought to you by the letter W and a squiggly shaped sigil that looks a little like a cat. Or maybe a salamander.

Referencing Conventions, Date Formats, Indexing and Glossary:

Works cited are given in full as a chapter footnote on first mention, for example:

Ronald Hutton, *The triumph of the Moon*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1999, p 14

and then in a recognisable brief form subsequently, such as

Hutton Triumph, p 137

A full author-alphabetical bibliography and name-topic index is supplied towards the end of the book, as is a glossary of some terms which may be unfamiliar to some readers.

Dates are given in British format, for example 11-8-2003 is the Eleventh of August, not November the Eighth, 2003.

Spelling is in UK English except for where certain quotes are reproduced verbatim.

Web addresses referred to in this book may change and does not guarantee that content will remain accurate or appropriate.

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About the Author

Dave Evans was awarded his PhD by Bristol University, UK in 2006, having previously studied Aleister Crowley and the History of Witchcraft at Master's level, and done research work with Spiritual Healers for a Psychology degree thesis, all of this done as a mature student, having spent most of his adult life at 'the day job' and practicing magic since his early twenties. He is currently a travelling freelance researcher.

“You’re researching the history of *what?*...”

“You know that no-one’s going to believe you if you write this subject up honestly” said the magician. *“No-one believed a lot of the political shenanigans that went on in the past, and which probably still do... er, some folk think we never landed on the Moon and that Elvis is alive... so I’m just going to try to write it up as objectively as I can, and they can judge it from there”* I replied, with a broad smile ².

This book is a social history of some important developments in the modern magical subculture in Britain following the death of the highly influential British magician Aleister Crowley in 1947. Crowley was perhaps the most significant public magical figure in Britain, if not the world, during his lifetime (1875-1947), and arguably ever since, and he taught a notable coterie of apprentice magicians and published numerous books and periodicals, albeit often in small print runs.

Since his death the importance of his considerable literary output and methods has become magnified, and broadcast to a wider audience by the continuing post-war development of cheaper printing and mass distribution methods, and latterly *via* the Internet. Thus many groups and individuals have taken on elements of his magical teachings and his works have more students (and detractors) now in the 21st Century than was possible at any time during his life.

The total, all-encompassing and definitive history of such an intricate topic cannot be the content of even this thick book, since within the given date and place constraint, the subject is of such breadth and depth that my time available for research precluded a complete and comprehensive overview. There was also the matter of the original word limit for the thesis on which this book is based as a containing factor, although this re-write for book publication has had many additions plus some alterations to remove some academic jargon, to make it more attractive to a broader range of readers.

This then is more accurately portrayed, after taking a deep breath, as ‘A partial history of some *elements* of the philosophies and magical

² Conversation with anonymous magician, December 2007.

practices of a skewed and not totally representative subset of magicians working in some magical styles in a few areas of Britain, since the death of Crowley at approximately at the end of World War Two'. Not such a snappy title, eh...

Since I have attempted to compress considerable material into this project in order to increase coherence and scope, and to emphasise the inter-connectedness of many disparate factors there have of necessity been some simplifications. I have been particularly brief with some peripheral components, and in some cases this summarising has been positively brutal, such as with the moral philosophical intricacies that underpin some of the discussion.

However in these cases my brevity is admitted, and further reading is suggested for those with an interest in those various additional angles of the material under consideration, some of which should be available to the keen reader through the public library system.

British Magic, or Magic in Britain?

Magic is not in any way confined to Britain, of course.

I suspect that a study of European, African, Australian, Asian or 'American' (both in the North and South of that land mass) magicians in the same time period would be an invaluable comparison to this book, and would indicate both many historical and contemporary similarities in approach, practice, belief etc and some important differences due to cultural variations and perceptions.

It is purely speculation at present, but I would not be surprised to hear that to be a known ritual magician in a country that still has profoundly strong Catholic sensibilities that are intimately tied to the national legal system would be a very different experience to that of the same kind of magician working in an atheist region, or a region less committed to a state religion, for example. Magic is always of interest to those in power, since magicians are by definition not fitting the *status quo* - and those seeming to display particular powers have in the past sometimes even been regarded as potential threats to national security³.

³ Uri Geller, *My Story*, London, Corvi, 1977, p 23

To my knowledge no such academic researches in world magical history that could be used for a comparative meta-study have yet been carried out.

Before describing some of the major magical figures in the period in which this book is based, I need first to define some terminology in use.

Definitions:

First of all, just what is magic? While the dates and geographical location concerned in the title of this book are easily understandable, Magic is a most ambiguous and problematic term, and one that has been defined and redefined in many different ways, depending on the stance of the person doing the defining. In this book magic is used as an academic analytic shorthand term that I have here chosen to define (based on discussions with practitioners and academics and much reading of both practical and academic texts) as:

volitional acts of a ritual nature with an intent of somehow changing the perceived universe and-or the internal consciousness of the operator {or witness(es) or 'target(s)} through means not entirely understood by modern science, and acts not performed primarily to an audience for entertainment and-or financial reward.

That definition is perhaps tending rather towards the practitioners' own self-images, since as is discussed in detail below, academia has in the past had a tendency to whitewash the entire subject as simply delusion or fraud, without apprehending or appreciating the subtle nuances that are often present. There are certainly those individuals within the magical field who are wholly or largely charlatans, and many practising magicians have elements of trickery in their repertoire (as is particularly discussed in my chapters on Amado Crowley), and elements which are at best ahistorical if not downright factually incorrect (and for further discussion of this area see the chapters on Kenneth Grant), but this does not detract from their position of historical importance within the sphere of occultism.

This definition does not include any coverage of the very thorny issue of 'does magic work?'. This is not necessarily a matter of debate in a historical study, since regardless of whether "it" (whatever it is) "works" (what-

*trickery
in magic*

ever one means by that functional term) "it" happens, people practice "it", and thus "it" can be researched on that level.

This stance also means that the agnostic sceptic can read this book with a clear conscience, as no specific claims to the veracity of any particular magical reality are suggested or substantiated, they are only explored. Total cynics (as opposed to sceptics) will probably get no further than the book title in any case, and as a non-academic-tenured wise thinker once wrote "the difference between a cynic and a skeptic is... one is dismissive, the other only *doubtful*"⁴. There is always room for doubt....

There is also scope for adding some religious sub-aspect to my definition, with magic being performed as a means of contact with Divinity (that again being a most difficult concept to define), but that might exclude the hardcore 'Carrollian' chaos magicians⁵, for example, who often concentrate on 'real world results' and have little time for mysticism or the ingress of non-human powers into their wholly self-created world-view, as is discussed in detail in the Chaos Magic chapters which follow later.

This choice of definition is to differentiate magic from conjuring (or illusionism), which describes 'stage magic'. This, contrary to the above description, is here defined as:

performances given by one or more persons with the intent of entertainment for onlookers, often for financial or other reward. These use means which are better understood by modern science than ritual magic, including, but not limited to, optical illusions, sleight of hand, misdirection, theatrical effects (such as smoke, mirrors, production or vanishing of 'fake' objects which appear to be solid but which are not, etc, or illusory escapes such as the use of fake or trick locks), stage hypnotism using of stooges in the audience, camera tricks etc.

However like the content of many such 'compare and contrast' definitions in any field, there is some scope for crossover between the two subsets. Many a good magician will have a grasp (no pun intended) of sleight of hand and suchlike, as the sense of wonder from a good 'conjuring trick' used (without pre-announcing it as such) at the start of a magical ritual can have useful occult effects on ritual participants who desire to

4 Neil Peart, *Ghost Rider*, ECW Press, Toronto, 2002, p 338

5 This will be explored later, the term means those magicians influenced by the work of Donald Carroll

priming

be awed, or if the person in charge of running the ritual wishes to include surprise or a sense of wonder as a possible causal factor for any magical effect which is to be induced in the participants.

For example, in 2003 I participated in a large celebratory group ritual (a marriage ceremony of two of my friends) that was held out of doors in the semi-darkness of a full moon evening, in a small Welsh forest, where two identical-looking magic wands were used to conduct the ceremony. One of these wands was a plain solid rod, and appeared obviously so to the assembled participants, but it was covertly swapped later for another one, identical in external appearance to the first but hollow, and fitted with a hidden battery, switch and a small light source. The substituted electrical wand 'lighting up' with an impressive amber glow at an important point during an invocation to a deity had a suitably positive effect on those present, making them 'awed', and 'primed' for odd, namely more 'magical' things to subsequently happen⁶.

It has long been known in psychological research that if you 'prime' experimental subjects with medical words, for example, they are then much faster to identify other medical terms presented verbally or textually, as compared to non-medical ones, in a word-association task. Similarly, if you prime people with magical referents they will much more rapidly move to associate anything that subsequently happens with what they have just been primed with, ascribing a magical cause, even if the event is, objectively, pretty mundane.

The 'trick' with the wand also made the onlookers pay rapt attention to the proceedings, which was an additional aim of the person running the ritual, which was both lengthy and complicated, thus needing the full concentration of those present.

Similarly, the Russian anthropologist Waldemar Bogoraz (1865-1936) made detailed early studies of native North American peoples, which showed that their folk magicians (shamans) often used such trickery, including 'throwing the voice' and sleight of hand in their work. However Bogoraz was convinced these tricks comprised only a small aspect of their magic; something meant to concentrate and maintain the attention of those present.

6 For example: T.N Carr *et al*, Words, pictures and priming: on semantic activation, conscious identification and automaticity, *Journal of Experimental Psychology: Human Perception and Performance*, 8, 1082, 1972

Trickery seems to be an element running through Western occultism to an extent. For example the mid-20th Century medium Helen Duncan ⁷ underwent testing by The Society for Psychic Research, simply because to have their seal of approval meant that one was considered by the public to be 'authentic' and thus could use this in advertising, and ultimately charge more money for consultations, having been 'approved by science'. This sideline-issue of a financial incentive to pass such tests might ironically have made it "even more likely that they used tricks to try to impress the investigators" ⁸.

There have also been persons who have openly worked on both sides of my operational definition, such as the Czech-born magician Franz Bardon (1909-1958) who as *Frabato* was a renowned stage mind-reader and illusionist in the 1920s and 1930s, and was a practising ritual magician too, in a magical Order related to one of those run by Aleister Crowley.

In the early twentieth-century in Britain, 'stage' magicians were very worried about being associated with any kind of 'real' magical practitioners or mediums, fortune-tellers or clairvoyants, as there were legal implications on this. *The Magic Circle*, a governing body of illusionists, formed an 'occult committee' and during the Second World War they were in part given the task of investigating mediums, in alliance with the police, with a view to bringing about prosecutions under the Vagrancy Act (1824) and occasionally the by then archaic Witchcraft Act (1735) ⁹, the latter of which was ultimately repealed in 1951. *The Magic Circle* accumulated quite a collection of Crowley books and letters during their researches, and eventually, with some embarrassment, sold them at auction once the law was repealed and thus their legal consultancy role vanished, as they then wished to distance themselves from occultism completely ¹⁰.

In such a wide academic research area, sneering and ridicule of one sub-topic tends to spread, and with some tricksters being unmasked as such, the reification of magic as *all* being 'hocus pocus nonsense' is rife,

⁷ Malcolm Gaskill, *Hellish Nell: last of Britain's Witches*, London., 4th Estate, 2001, p 334

⁸ The historian Vanessa Chambers, posting to JSM Discussion list, 8-9-2004

⁹ Gaskill, *Hellish Nell*, is an extensive and moving study of the last prosecution before the latter act was repealed in 1951

¹⁰ *Ibid*, 188. The Magic Circle had maintained an occult investigation committee since the 1930s

and it is important to guard against this *a priori* generalist assumption both in order to remain academically credible, and to retain the respect and co-operation of those whom one is studying. For example while in the chapters that follow I appear to have comprehensively refuted the claimed lineage (and much of the historical narrative) of the magician, author and claimed son of Aleister Crowley, 'Amado Crowley', I stress that his magical system may well work, in that his students may gain some benefit from the practice, even though the 'hook' to join Amado's group, that he is a direct descendant of Aleister, is unlikely.

Similarly, in researching the magician and author Kenneth Grant I highlight some apparent historical errors of fact which are hugely problematic to the terrestrial validity of his story at times, but that does not detract from his major importance and influence within the history of magic, and the value (for magicians especially) of the *corpus* of written materials that he has produced.

Equally the *premises* of some chaos magical techniques (discussed much later) at first sight appear totally spurious, being overtly based on acknowledged fiction, but they still appear to have an effect on the operators. An additional problem is the assumption of one or more pseudonyms by (in particular) chaos writers, so it is not always obvious if different authors are expressing true philosophical or practical accord, or it is simply the same author paraphrasing or praising themselves under two or more pen names.

Under matters of trickery there is the additional consideration that some magical effects or comments may be a 'put on' purely for the amusement of those who are trying to fool the researcher, for whatever reason. A subtlety of approach by the researcher and holding insider knowledge (which technical advantage is dealt with below) help a great deal in combating this potential pitfall. For the record, I think I was only 'put on' once during my research, with a really rather ludicrous claim that was being made, and my facial expression at what I was being told obviously betrayed my opinions on the claim. The discussion immediately changed to something more magically coherent and useful to the research. It may have been that the initial 'put on' was some kind of test of my gullibility, and (presumably) having passed that test I was judged worthwhile to talk to.

to 'put on'
to 'put on'
to 'put on'

How do we KNOW that we know?

As the social historian Christopher Lloyd writes, on the very process of examining how we acquire knowledge *at all*, and from that stance how we might ever justify considering any one branch of knowledge to be superior to any other: "perception, belief and reason are all culture bound... and this applies to scientific knowledge as much as to witchcraft"¹¹. This should be borne in mind when attempting to make any value judgments on the opinions or experiential reports of one person over another, be they academic researcher or magician. Thus we cannot consider our own answers to our research questions to be more "true" than any explanation given by a magician, since absolute truth in History (or indeed anything else) may well be impossible given the culture-bound constraints of the research area.

We must instead, as the social historian Sir Keith Thomas writes, delve into the "mental climate"¹² of our research subjects; which usually has no maps with which to navigate, and so we have to maintain a firm grasp on the imperative that "theories must be judged in relation to whether they constitute adequate solutions"¹³ to the questions being investigated.

This judgment itself is culture-bound, and arguably institutionally bound, since the fiscal and disciplinary environment within which the research is being done may also have bearing on how the work is conducted. Social History is a blend of History plus recourse to the ideas of sociology and other social sciences, which techniques as Lloyd writes, can increase explanatory power considerably at times, but it can never be as empirical as 'hard' sciences such as chemistry¹⁴. However it can be a mediating factor between them, since history must by definition include the history of everything, including the development of the other disciplines. In many respects, this historical approach is considered by some to be both an art and a science, much as is the practice of medicine, or indeed magic itself.

¹¹ Christopher Lloyd, *Explanation in Social History*, Oxford, Blackwell, 1988, p 81

¹² Keith Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic*, London., Penguin, 1991, p ix, Original 1971

¹³ Lloyd, *Explanation in Social History*, 83

¹⁴ *Ibid*, 313

Science, Religion and Magic

This introduces an important point: how Magic sits with Science and Religion. In the post-WW2 period, especially from the late 1960s onwards there was a move among some magicians to couch their theories in a more 'scientific' manner, for example utilising the 'archetype' model of the 20th Century psychiatrist Carl Jung as a way to explain the nature of entities contacted during ritual. Prior to this some magical orders at the turn of the 19th Century had discussed 'angelic' and 'demonic' powers in "purely psychologized terms"¹⁵.

This contrasts to the early-modern period where magic was seen often both as an alternative, and in opposition to, the fledgling sciences of the time. The historian Alex Owens argues that the late 19th Century occult revival was one of magic performed as an "elite, scholarly tradition (which) sought to mobilize a reworked notion of science in the name of the religion of the ancients... occultism in general allied itself with the idea of scientific validation"¹⁶. This may have been a reflection of the ordered, structured, learned Masonic origins of many of the rituals, and of their participants. In orders such as the *Golden Dawn*, one of whose founders was an esteemed physician, and several others were industrial chemists (thus well-versed in the rational, scientific method) this was the case.

Owens also makes the important point that the categories are not mutually exclusive, since science was "never thoroughly secularised in turn-of-the-century Britain" so any distinction between scientists and religious thinkers of that time is blurred, and ambiguous at best¹⁷. The magician and occult philosopher Lionel Snell, writing as Lemuel Johnstone, produced an influential and post-modern book, *SSOTBME*, in the early 1970s. This compared Science, Magic, Religion and Art, considering them to be simply four different ways to explain the world, and how to act in it; none being mutually exclusive, simply being useful contrasting perspectives, any of which can be utilised at will¹⁸.

¹⁵ Alex Owens, *The Place of Enchantment, British Occultism and the Culture of the Modern*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 2004, 114. This truly marvelous book emerged after I had completed 99% of my research, and would have been incredibly welcome 3 years earlier.

¹⁶ *Ibid*, p 8

¹⁷ *Ibid*, p 13

¹⁸ Lemuel Johnstone, *SSOTBME*, London., The Mouse That Spins, 2003, Original 1974.

I have been especially brief with summarising Lionel's elegant and beautifully-argued ideas on this matter, which I heartily recommend to the interested reader, be they magician, scientist, artist or of any religious bent, including atheist.

Spelling

There is also a considerable problem in even agreeing on how to spell the word. Magic with a -k is also commonly used by magicians. This in part derives from Crowley, who used the -k suffix both to distinguish his magick from conjuring tricks, and the additional -k had a symbolic meaning associated with his own particular methods. These included sex within ritual, the -k standing for cup or bowl, signified by the letter K in the Egyptian alphabet (Crowley used Egyptian symbolism extensively) and which in that language referred to the female sexual organ.

Magick has been spelt with a final -k for considerably longer than Crowley's own adoption of the term however, with examples stretching back to at least 1625, with a Mr Lombard producing the marvellously-entitled "*This booke is called the treasure of spirits: and but few men have the right practice of this book, & all that is contained therein is wrought by the art of magick*",¹⁹ not a title that trips off the tongue quite as easily as many. However this may be merely an expression of the vagaries of spelling which beset early-modern usage, where for example a medical doctor could be a practitioner of physic, or of physick, depending on who was writing it down²⁰, and depending often on how that individual had decided to spell their words *that day!* In the later 20th and early 21st centuries the spelling also varies, and several other versions have been introduced (with varying levels of uptake), such as 'majik'²¹.

History, Heritage and Influence

Regardless of the spelling debate, magic cannot exist in a vacuum, it is interdependent both with the wider society in which it occurs, and with

¹⁹ Lombard, R, *This booke is called the treasure of spirits: and but few men have the right practice of this book, & all that is contained therein is wrought by the art of magick*, Exeter Cathedral Library MS 3549F, believed to date between 1603 and 1625.

²⁰ E.g. Grey's *A choice manuell; or, rare and select secrets in physick and chyrurgery*, collected and practised by the ... countesse of Kent, London., William Shears, 1654.

²¹ For example the academic and magician Matt Lee, in personal communication, 18-8-2004.

the majoritarian cultural perceptions of it. As such 'post-WW2, post-Crowley occultism' is in very many ways not the same as pre-war occultism. The very event of that massive, protracted war and the death and destruction that ensued, the introduction and continuation of rationing, changes in consumer confidence, political developments, ongoing secularisation, loss of Empire, increases in international transfer of information, technological advances and many other factors left the face of the wider world in the late 1940s onwards drastically altered from 1939. I contend here that the same is true of magic in the same period, since it exists as an important subculture intrinsically linked to that rapidly changing society.

Similarly, because Great Britain consists of several islands not too distant from the coast of mainland Europe and is thus (geographically speaking) only slightly separate from the rest of the world, a notional 'British Occultism' cannot exist in a vacuum either. Around the turn of the 19th-20th centuries the magical group the *Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn* (of which Crowley was a star pupil) employed Egyptian and Hebraic source materials (among others), and numerous documents found in foreign libraries, museums and overseas private collections. The *Ordo Templi Orientis*, a hugely influential magical group, at one time run by Crowley, were widespread across the world, particularly in Europe (especially Germany) and America, and they made considerable use of non-European source materials too. Also this book has benefited indirectly from some very stimulating contact with academics and occultists from the USA, France, Germany, Belgium, Holland, Serbia, Spain, Portugal and Italy.

As is discussed below, Aleister Crowley was widely travelled and in some cases he was at least partially personally responsible for the importation of some of those 'foreign' elements that subsequently entered the 'British occult' scene and cross-fertilised with extant ideas. With international publishing and book distribution, the travels (and in some cases permanent migrations) of individual magical teachers and latterly the instant world-wide communication which has been opened up with the internet and email, magical writings and techniques from other countries have spread all over the globe and copies of them have multiplied in an exponential fashion. Thus magic in Britain nowadays has become a bricolage, a broad, eclectic and often contradictory hotch-potch mixture that can and does draw upon the Classical myths, various world pantheons

such as Egyptian, Greek, Tibetan and Native American gods, Taoism and Hindu philosophy, the 'romantic' Celtic movement, feminist and gay activist politics, science fiction and fantasy stories, local folklore, new technology and much else besides.

Often this is with (so far as academia is concerned) geographically and temporally separate and inappropriate concepts sometimes being used within the same piece of magic. The magicians usually counter such criticism with a very pragmatic attitude of 'well tough, it works!' Magic is often called syncretic in this respect, it may also rightly be charged at times with cultural appropriation, i.e. theft from 'foreign' tribes. Thus there are herein numerous references to writers and practices from Europe, America and other parts of the world, in that they have had an effect on British magic, without their actually ever being in Britain.

One other question is as to whether modern magicians are practicing, and-or resurrecting/reclaiming an ancient tradition or activity, or whether they are merely bringing about a modern reconstruction of what it is thought went on in ancient times, with often scant evidence of such longevity. That is a moot point, and again straddles the borders between History, i.e. 'what has been', and social science, what is in culture, consciousness and behaviour 'now', and in this area of research History and Social Sciences are as intimately linked and vital for the relevance of the other disciplines as, for example, Political Sciences and Economics are mutually-dependent in the study of Business and International Relations.

This is an important consideration, since undoubtedly many neo pagans believe, often vehemently so, that theirs is a continual lineage of the very same beliefs and magical practices leading back to some far-off time, and that (for example) 'witches' in 2006 do the same as 'witches' did in 1606, (albeit with running water and electricity in their homes). It is the recent history of the development of this kind of mental landscape which to an extent this book investigates.

Others are happy to present themselves as standard-bearers of an entirely modern assembly of magical methods and philosophies from varying sources, which may have some ancient wellspring, or may not. It is their current practice that they are most concerned with, not history, and to be able to appreciate each facet of these wildly differing stances is invaluable.

able to the researcher. In the case of chaos magicians the practitioners are usually very open that their methods are pretty much created in the here and now, having little or no historical referents, while at the same time being happy to draw on other extant methods which do have some historical basis.

As the academic Robert Wallis remarks about the distinctions between the 'ancient' and current practice of Druidry "for the most part, the critics perception ... is clouded by images of ... (the) Victorian ... (form) but the two strands barely resemble each other today"²². The same is true of modern magic, which for a large part has a 'hangover' of imagery borrowed in some cases wholesale from 19th Century Freemasonry (as mentioned above, the leadership of the *Golden Dawn*, inspiration for much subsequent ritual magic, was comprised largely of those who were also senior Masons), but which today is outdated in many instances. This hangover and source-confusion angle has in some cases been influenced, if not specifically steered into very muddy waters by the academic research into the subject, which I now discuss.

Modern Researches

Modern-era academic study of the practice of magic has been notable in many ways, including a paucity of decent research in many areas, and some howling mistakes. Of the work that has been performed, several research disciplines have been involved, including history, anthropology, sociology, archaeology and literary theory. Of areas of study a considerable effort has been expended in the research of older historical periods, and-or of groups outside the British Isles. The material sitting on our own doorstep in recent years has in many cases been shied away from.

I have selected three seminal and significant academic writers from among a very small coterie in this area, (although separated by time and academic rigour). These are Margaret Murray, Edward Evans-Pritchard and Keith Thomas. They are discussed below; as their work has, in different ways, been of great influence on both academic studies of the subject

²² Robert Wallis, *The sociopolitics of Ecstasy: autoarchaeology and neo-shamanism*, PhD Thesis, 1999, Taliesin's Trip, p 12. This work was subsequently adapted and published as *Shamans-neoShamans*, London, Routledge, 2003. The page numberings and section titles given here and in all subsequent citations relate to the discrete and non-continuously page-numbered chapters of Robert's thesis in that emailed form which he very kindly sent me, and will not relate exactly to the layout of his published book, which to my shame I have yet to read.

and the practitioners' own perceptions of the historical backgrounds of their own magical traditions, with more recent modern historical studies of the Witch figure in early-modern periods being performed by such current academics as Marion Gibson and Diane Purkiss.

Murray
 In 1915 Dr Margaret Murray (1863-1963) was a highly respected Egyptologist with several important academic publications to her name (at the time this was still unusual for a woman in any academic field). However with wartime travel constraints (and a temporary illness that made travel difficult) she was unable to work in Egypt, so was forced to look closer to home for new research materials. Murray was formerly an anthropologist, so decided on a 'folkloric' approach to examine her postulate of an unbroken chain of witch-beliefs and practices, based around a pre-Christian witches' fertility cult dedicated to the Goddess Diana, which, she believed, still existed in her day.

In 1923 the tomb of *Tutankhamun* was discovered in Egypt; arguably the greatest single piece of archaeological discovery ever, which attracted massive public interest. This must have been especially galling to the professional Egyptologist Murray, stuck in England; and was perhaps a stimulus for her to continue to make her own discoveries, within whatever material was available to her.

From the 1920s into the 1950s, Murray was feted as a coherent and valued academic; with her books on witchcraft eventually becoming best sellers; which was highly unusual for academic texts at the time (and now!) ²³. Her definitive entry for Witchcraft in *Encyclopaedia Britannica* ²⁴ remained as an authoritative source of reference from 1929 until 1969, and thus her work was most important in moulding the *popular perception* of such matters, *Britannica* often being seen as an unimpeachably authoritative (and physically weighty to boot) source by the layman.

In more recent decades various academics have demolished the veracity of Murray's research. She had abstracted many sources in a highly selective manner, to drastically alter the meaning to suit her own ends. For example the widespread notion of witches working in covens of thirteen seems to come entirely from her very debatable interpretation of just one mention in a trial record from Scotland, and she later sought out any

²³ Hutton, *Triumph*, p 204

²⁴ Margaret A. Murray, *Witchcraft*, in *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, London, 1952, 23, p 686-8.

reference to 'thirteens' elsewhere in the literature in order to bolster this notion; often manipulating data and very selectively quoting, to suit her agenda.

Murray seemed to have been attempting to neatly package up all witchcraft trials into one reified parcel that could be explained in a (by her assessment) sensible fashion. To this end she cited the consistency of witch accounts in trial records as evidence of a coherent and universal belief system among witches of that period; while today this is seen more as both very good evidence of the internal coherence of her *a priori* agenda in what she chose to quote from, and that of the consistent 'by the book' leading and presumptive questions employed by inquisitors of the time, and the understandable willingness of their prisoners to hurriedly agree to any suggestion they may be given as to their actions, however bizarre it may have been, in order to avoid, or to reduce further torture and intimidation. For example, given the choice to (a) admit that you talk to your cats, even if you do not (or even if you do not even have cats) or (b) be subjected to the ministrations of a red-hot poker to your nether regions in order to make you admit to it anyway, which would you choose?

The American literature scholar George Lyman Kittredge (1860-1941) ²⁵ demolished Murray's notion of the universality of the Witches' sabbat by illustrating the total lack of any such references in records of English cases. The historian Elliot Rose's ²⁶ book in 1962 especially served to largely dismantle Murray's thesis, as it exposed some elementary historical errors that she had made. In 1975 the historian Norman Cohn ²⁷ all but destroyed Murray's place in the academia of witchcraft with a detailed exposure of her selective and distorted reporting methods. Murray's work was ironically among the first to highlight the breadth of source material available for academics to work with in this field; however her conclusions also showed the massive danger of holding an *a priori* notion and then manipulating the available data, often using highly selective reporting methods, to support the theory.

E. Pritchard
 By contrast, the English academic Edward Evans-Pritchard (1902-1973) was a groundbreaking anthropologist, whose study of the folk-magical

²⁵ George Lyman Kittredge, *Witchcraft in Old and New England*, Harvard, Harvard University Press, 1956, Original 1929.

²⁶ Elliot Rose, *A razor for a goat: problems in the history of witchcraft and diabolism*, Toronto, University of Toronto Press, 1989, original 1962.

²⁷ Norman Cohn, *Europe's Inner Demons*, London, Penguin, 1975.

practices of the Azande people of East Africa²⁸, and his research methods (a mix of cultural history and anthropological perspectives) are both still well-regarded, and it is his model of the social functions of magic and magical belief that still informs much anthropological research carried out today, on all cultures.

Keith Thomas (1933-) is an eminent social and cultural historian, and unlike Murray's witchcraft writings his seminal *Religion and the Decline of Magic*, first published in 1971 is an exemplar of historical method and demonstrates immense rigour²⁹. While some of his conclusions have latterly been challenged and to an extent modified by later writers, his general model of history is a 'bottom up' exercise, starting with the accounts of individuals; rather than commencing by examining monolithic structures such as states and countries, and often never studying the general populace. Thomas also made a call for interdisciplinary discussion, such as involving anthropological theory in the history of witchcraft, and his work largely stands as a starting-point for research into any early-modern social matters. His book is still required reading for many history undergraduates. So far as his reasoning goes on exactly why we need to academically study magic are concerned, I give a perhaps controversial opinion on this in my concluding chapter.

The reader wishing to grasp a more full picture of 20th Century British academia and how it initially investigated magic could do much worse than read Thomas, Evans-Pritchard and Murray as a starting point.

More recent academic research of 'British' magic has tended to concentrate on either the history of what is now long past, such as Marion Gibson's excellent examinations of Witchcraft trial transcripts and the public reportage of trials³⁰, Diane Purkiss' analysis of the female voice in witchcraft trials³¹, or the findings of members of other academic disciplines than history working in Britain on contemporary practices. Two significant published researchers of this modern area (in anthropology)

²⁸ Edward Evans-Pritchard, *Witchcraft, oracles and magic among the Azande*, Oxford, Clarendon, 1980. Original 1937.

²⁹ Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic*

³⁰ Marion Gibson, *Reading Witchcraft: Stories of Early English Witches*, London, Routledge, 1999 and _____, *Early Modern Witches: Witchcraft Cases in Contemporary Writing*, London, Routledge, 2000

³¹ Diane Purkiss, *The Witch in History: Early Modern and Twentieth-century Representations*, London., Routledge, 1996

have been Tanya Lurhmann and Susan Greenwood³², who both studied modern London magical groups, with Lurhmann becoming famous for her scholarly participant-involvement, which was excellent, and infamous for her *a priori* assumptions (which only emerged in her published book, once she had departed from the groups) that magicians were deluding themselves. This has led to some censure from both her contemporary academics and some of those magicians involved in her research, who (rightly) felt cheated, if not utterly betrayed.

As the magician Phil Hine writes, in this kind of psychological denigration

"our culture has left us largely unprepared for this process (transcendence), branding it a form of madness, to be banished by bright needles and the smug self-satisfied psychologist who explains away our secret dreams, our desires for wildness"³³.

Among other academics working in magical areas, one, Robert Muchembled, a highly respected French professor, has made some howling errors when looking all-too briefly at Crowley in his *History of the Devil*. Some slip-ups may be attributed to translation glitches, but many are simple and basic errors of easy to verify fact that would shame a 12-year old, and there are some very selective moral abstractions and bizarre judgments made about Crowley that detract from what is otherwise a reasoned and well-researched book, and the comments probably say more about Muchembled than they do about Crowley³⁴. A university-based study of the history of magic before 1945 has commenced in some areas, including the work of my colleague Alison Butler³⁵, Brad Verter³⁶ and

³² Tanya M Lurhmann, *Persuasions of the Witch's craft: ritual magic in contemporary England*, Cambridge., Mass, Harvard University Press, 1989, and Susan Greenwood, *Magic, Witchcraft and the Otherworld*, Oxford, Berg, 2000

³³ Phil Hine, *Walking Between the Worlds*, (Electronic Book) 1986, p 42

³⁴ Robert Muchembled, *A History of the Devil from the Middle Ages to the Present*, Cambridge, Polity, 2004, p 216-7. Manifold errors in a short piece of text about the man include getting the continent in which Crowley died wrong, mistaking Sicily for Sardinia and badly mis-spelling the names of Crowley's associates.

³⁵ My friend and former colleague at Bristol University, Dr. Alison Butler has recently completed a PhD thesis, as yet unpublished, on the intellectual foundations of *The Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn*.

³⁶ Bradford M. Verter, *Dark Star Rising: The Emergence of Modern Occultism, 1800-1950*, Unpublished thesis, Princeton University, 1997

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(in literary history) Tamsin Kilner³⁷, but by comparison there has been very little academic *historical* research solely on British magic post- 1945, and it is possible that mine is the first to devote an entire History PhD to the subject.

Modern and credible academic historical research on the post-1945 period has been characterised by having a few, but those being largely splendid, examples. Dr Owen Davies, in his 'cunning folk' books, has touched lightly on the period after 1945, but largely as a postscript for a swathe of his deep research that covered the previous two centuries³⁸. The works of Professor Ronald Hutton on ancient paganism and modern neo paganism deserve mention at a far greater length than I can allow myself here. The dangers of any cries of nepotism (since he was my academic supervisor on this project) are simply and totally defused by the loud applause his several pioneering books on the subject and captivating public speaking have generated on his target audience, and the 'crossover' appeal his very accessible material has, since both academics and lay readers, especially neo pagan lay readers, have gained great benefit from his discoveries. The reader wishing to gain a coherent and comprehensive historical overview of modern paganism who has not read Hutton's *Triumph of the Moon* is missing out hugely.

So far as credibility within academia is concerned, as Hutton writes³⁹, the position he already occupied within the academy (a highly respected Professor of History in a more publicly credible, i.e. non magical, subject area within History) allowed him some leeway within which to risk publishing his more diverse and contentious research, and this was research which started with work on more distant historical periods of paganism and only then worked forwards closer to the present day. This level of security and a 'safe' foundation has not been the case with many other, more junior academics in Britain, which may be in many cases due to the unusual and often xenophobic reactions that their proposed or

37 Tamsin Kilner is currently researching her doctorate on the period 1880 – 1910, on the translation of occult interests into 'mainstream' literature; such as imperial romance and the ghost story, focusing on spiritualism, theosophy, and mesmerism. This is being studied within the discipline of English Literature at Exeter University. Alex Owens' excellent *The Place of Enchantment* appeared too late for a substantive inclusion in my own research, but is highly recommended to the interested reader.

38 Owen Davies, *Witchcraft, Magic and Culture 1736-1951*, Manchester, Manchester University Press, 1999, and _____, *Cunning Folk: Popular magic in English history*, London., Hambledon & London, 2003

39 Ronald Hutton, *Witches, Druids and King Arthur*, London., Hambledon & London, 2003, p 265

actual research can generate in potential university employers. There are risks to be taken in such research, and the potential rewards (not often expressed as financial rewards) are often commensurate with the level of risk involved.

The American psychiatrist and (hugely demonised)entheogenic pioneer Dr Timothy Leary wrote that LSD is a psychoactive drug with the most unusual emotional and psychological effects compared to any other chemical: it can cause terror and panic among people who have never taken it⁴⁰. Being an academic working with the study of magic apparently has a similarly terrifying emanating effect, in that it often hugely frightens or deeply offends those who have no knowledge of, or involvement in, the subject or the research. For someone to study Christianity, Judaism, Buddhism or most other religions or belief systems should not (and generally does not) upset any rational adult observer, but for whatever reasons the occult in general, and Crowley in particular, is different.

This might be because Western academia has to some extent distanced itself from its own cultural history. As the sociologist Malcolm Hamilton points out: "magical beliefs... while no means confined to 'primitive' ... societies, have been studied in most detail largely ... in this type of society"⁴¹. Those critical to the study (and in some cases to the very existence) of magic often see it as some monolithic structure. Reified and stereotyped, the whole of magic is easily dismissed as nonsense and fairy tales by those who do not consider it a subject worthy of academic attention, thus perhaps it has not received the quality or quantity of input from scholars that other subjects have had. A grave error, I think, hence this work.

My research is timely, given that while British academia has, for the most part marginalised or totally ignored modern magicians, in the last decade or so there has been an explosion of somewhat less than academic literature on the subject, and in the past century there have been many books entitled 'a history of magic' (or similar) produced by those who are not historians, but occultists, or else religious or quasi-religious figures who are hostile to magic and wish to popularise a polemic.

The former category includes the magician Kenneth Grant, a very influ-

40 Timothy Leary, *Design for Dying*, San Francisco., Harper Collins, 1997, p 71

41 Malcolm B. Hamilton, *The Sociology of Religion: theoretical and comparative perspectives*, London.. Routledge. 1005. n 28

ential pupil of Crowley's, who is discussed at length in subsequent chapters. Despite the somewhat historical tone on occasions in some of his works, one of his publishing team and a magical pupil, Robert Taylor told me, "I don't think he's too concerned with history; he works within the medium of imagination and myth. In my opinion, to truly understand his work, you must regard him as an 'artist' rather than a 'scientist'"⁴². Others in the former group are Francis King, Richard Cavendish (who has some academic credentials but is primarily a writer rather than an academic researcher) and Dr WB Crow (whose qualification was in Biology, not an academic subject hugely relevant to the study of magic). Their books (of many such similar titles) are Francis King and Isabel Sutherland, *The Rebirth of Magic*, London, Corgi, 1982; Richard Cavendish, *A History of Magic*, London, Weidenfeld & Nicholson, 1987 and William B Crow, *A History of Magic, Witchcraft and Occultism*, Northampton, Aquarian, 1968; all of which can be found with some ease by the interested reader.

In the latter group, the religious polemicists, are such luminaries as the Reverend Montague Summers, who is discussed in a later chapter.

Historians (or any other academics) ignore all of this material at our peril, regardless of the quality or rigour of research that such books may actually demonstrate. Some of it contains work by what it is perhaps most polite to call 'freelance historians', whose views of what happened when, where, to whom and why in magic are in some cases informed as much by speculation and hearsay as by research of any recognisable academic rigour (and indeed the use of any credible source materials). There is also the element of personal agendas being promoted by publication of a particular version of a story, whereby a particular writer might wish to push their own view of occult history if that can be used to advertise their own magical order.

For example Kenneth Grant believes that his own magical group can be traced back to the Priesthood of Atlantis, (a semi-mythical land still not yet proven to exist, but with a compelling quasi-history and presumed huge technological and magical power) thus he writes with seeming authority on that lineage. An appeal to antiquity, within magic at least, has great authority, since to an extent 'oldest is best' in the eyes of some consumers, and the trump card is often to claim that something is 'traditional'.

⁴² Personal communication from Robert Taylor, 6-5-2004

In any case, to the lay reader, a book called 'the history of magic' from an academic or a freelance writer may well have equal weight, and in some cases it is a matter of who gets their book to the shop shelves first, (or who has the cheaper cover price, or the more compelling book jacket design) and academic historians are in danger of being left behind by the freelancers, since once 'a history' becomes commonly read and talked about it enters social consciousness and becomes a 'meme'.

Memetics and Information Transfer

Memes are an invention of the English biologist Richard Dawkins (1941-) ⁴³ who while examining genetic means of transference of biological information by DNA was moved to posit a broadly equivalent model for non-genetic, non-biological transfers, such as how ideas (and general culture) evolve and spread across societies. Memetic theory is a huge subject area, and there is only room here to explain it very briefly, but it has great relevance in religion, history and magic.

Dawkins calls memes 'viruses of mind' in that an idea can be transferred from person to person (like genetics) rapidly, like viruses they can be 'contagious', affecting-infecting large numbers of people rapidly, and that like genes they can sometimes mutate between transfers, for example the phenomena of the 'Chinese whisper', where one piece of information given to one person can, while being orally transmitted across many people, change rapidly and drastically, making it an unstable meme. This is a great danger in using Oral History as a research source, as is discussed below. This is largely the way in which folk traditions are communicated (until someone writes them down) and psychologists use memes as a model of how learning takes place.

Much more stable and highly-infectious memes include such things as established religions; for example the meme that about 2000 years ago the son of (a) God came down to earth, taught a few people his beliefs, was then killed and resurrected, and rose back to heaven, leaving behind some spiritual instructions. This particular meme has survived in a recognisable form through the intervening centuries. The scientific-atheist Dawkins actually regards all religious memes as being pathogenic

⁴³ Richard Dawkins, *The Selfish Gene*, Oxford, OUP, 1976. I would also direct interested parties to UK Memes Central website www.susanblackmore.co.uk/memetics/index.htm for a good introduction to the subject, which is a popular notion within chaos magic, see a subsequent chapter for discussion on this.

'mind parasites' of the worst kind⁴⁴.

Other memes are more ephemeral, such as tastes in fashion, popular music and domestic consumables such as the initial popularity of the Betamax format video player, which can now usually only be found in antique shops only some 25 years since it was a popular domestic item. Unlike damaged genes, memes that are somehow 'faulty' can often survive for a longer time than their biological equivalents.

My chapter on Amado Crowley highlights how one meme that seems patently false, Amado's own micro-historical account of his life with Aleister Crowley, has lasted for decades, and has started to become established as 'fact' in some magical quarters.

Freelancers

This discussion is not to claim that all and any historical research *not* produced in an academic department by 'qualified researchers' is invalid, of course. That would be a profoundly arrogant assertion, and would only serve to perpetuate the 'ivory tower' image that academia has (which is another very compelling meme!), often with some justification, in some spheres. A highly commendable example of a very good freelancer in this field would be the work of Philip Heselton⁴⁵ on the *minutiae* of the revival (or re/creation) of modern witchcraft by Gerald Gardner (discussed below), which work is enthralling and obviously stringently well researched. He is quick to point out the dividing lines in his text between areas that he has verified with numerous compelling sources and which areas of his work are his own theories of what is merely likely, or what is based on less rigorous or credible sources.

Historians are on occasions referred to as the custodians of the past, and in some cases this may be true, but it does not mean that we are either owners of it, or that we should prevent open access to the materials-history is not a private field, it is criss-crossed with public footpaths, and the 'right to roam' should be paramount, regardless of any (or no) university affiliation. The unspoken politics of elitism, and cliques that may on occasions be perceived to permeate academia seem, in this field of magic

⁴⁴ Marek Kohn, review of Richard Dawkins, *The God Delusion*, London., Bantam, 2006, *The Independent*, 29-9-2006, p 22

⁴⁵ Philip Heselton, *Wiccan Roots: Gerald Gardner and the Modern Witchcraft Revival*, Chievelev. Berks. Cavall Bann. 2000

at least, to be slowly dissolving. I would speculate, with no evidence to support my feeling, that a lot of this is because academic researchers who are also magicians are now becoming more involved in the research of their own field. Thus we have seen 'difficult' cliques on both sides of the fence, and are trying to work around all of that, despite occasionally being shot at by both sides, which I discuss later.

Research on the Cutting Edge, or out on a Limb

Happily the state of research into magic in the modern period is slowly changing for the better. This book, as with several other recent and current postgraduate works on various strands of the occult, while all having been carried out by those researchers within their own singular disciplines, (in my case History) like magic are not capable of existing in a vacuum. As an indication of the variety, these are some of the projects that I know about:

Andrew Letcher's 'The role of the Bard in contemporary Pagan movements', 2001, remains (sadly) an unpublished thesis on Druidry. Vanessa Chambers commenced a PhD in Autumn 2004 on 'War, Popular Belief and British Society in the Twentieth-Century' with emphasis on the reliance upon fortune-tellers, mediums, astrologers and spiritualists as well as other 'superstitious' beliefs such as protective folk magic that grew stronger in wartime and the role of popular belief in an increasingly secular society. Robert Wallis' thesis on modern Shamanic practice has recently been printed as *Shamans-neoShamans*. Joanne Pearson has recently produced or edited several prominent academic magical texts, including *Wicca: Magic, Spirituality and the Mystic Other*, for Routledge. Justin Woodman's 2003 social anthropology thesis, 'Modernity, Selfhood, and the Demonic: Anthropological Perspectives on "Chaos Magick" in the United Kingdom' will hopefully be published in 2007, an annotated extract of which appeared as "Alien Selves: Modernity and the Social Diagnostics of the Demonic in 'Lovecraftian Magick'" in the *Journal for the Academic Study of Magic*, 2. Bill Redwood's 'Spiral Bound: Cosmologies, Spatialities and Selves in Contemporary Magick', 2003, is an ethnographic thesis based on over four year's participant observation in/of the western magical subculture, and is as yet unpublished. Helen Cornish's anthropological study of how modern pagans deal with historical knowledge of paganism and how this is constructed, negotiated, mobilised and made meaningful to them was accepted for her doctorate after academic submission in 2005. Jenny Blain's interdisciplinary anthropology thesis on modern Shamanism, *Nine Worlds of Seid-Magic*, was published in 2002 by Routledge, and covered practices on both sides of the Atlantic. I am indebted to many of those named above for taking

the time to freely discuss their work with me, and in several cases for their warm friendship.

Birth of the JSM

As mentioned, the study of this specific area within history is in many respects still in its infancy. To assist and invigorate that 'child' it was my great privilege during my doctoral studentship to be co-founder (with my friend and colleague Alison Butler) of a new peer-reviewed annual academic publication, *The Journal for the Academic Study of Magic*, (aka JSM) published by a firm previously known largely for their 'hands-on' occult practitioner books; Mandrake of Oxford.

A peer-review editorial panel comprising a mixture of distinguished academics and splendidly-keen new Doctoral-level researchers was assembled, and the Journal was first produced in spring 2003, in parallel with a marvellously diverse international conference, *Magical Practice and Belief 1800-2000*, held at Bristol University. A second, larger issue of the Journal followed around a year later, and a third in 2006. As I write, Issue Four is in pre-production.

The shrewd business sense and general enthusiasm of the proprietor of Mandrake, 'Mogg' Morgan, who is all of author, one-time academic researcher and magician, appears to have seen a niche needing this kind of publication, and it has been well received by both magical and academic communities *in general*. There has been some resistance from both the magical and academic world, however. It would be churlish to provide names of the opposition parties, but one 'name' academic told me (comments paraphrased) that 'it was a waste of time doing the thing, as nothing the journal could ever print would be any good, as 99% of what is supposed to be high-quality academic work published on magic was rubbish'. A cute piece of *a priori* reasoning there. Her own published work comprised most of the other 1%, apparently. Due to their obstructive lack of help or even a kind word towards a venture that would ultimately benefit *all* scholars, and to filter out any morbid speculation on whom it might or might not be, their name does *not* appear in my acknowledgements page.

On the pagan front, one occultist posted a fabricated and utterly baseless defamatory quote on an Internet magical forum that was falsely

purported to be taken directly from the Journal website (a site which I authored), and before a copy of the Journal had ever appeared in print, to the effect that:

"Authors attempting to put forward theories of cosmology, metaphysics, psychology, etc., at variance with accepted academic theories will not be published. In particular, theories proposing the existence of types of energy which cannot be detected and measured by currently existing scientific instruments, or which propose the existence of non-biological forms of life (including but not limited to gnomes, sylphs, salamanders, undines, devas, elves, angels, archangels, gods, etc.), or which imply the existence of any form of deity or divine being (whether male, female, or dual-gendered), or which propose the existence of any sort of divine plan for the universe, will be considered 'un-academic'."

and it was only after several 'difficult' emails that I persuaded the author of that slur that a public retraction was in order, which they eventually made in December 2002. The first Issue of the Journal was released four months later.

There have been other similar criticisms from the pagan world, almost invariably (judged from the content of the remarks) deriving from those who have also obviously not seen the journal, which is precisely the kind of censorial and omniscient attitude that some neopagans themselves often criticise some members of the Christian Church for holding about all areas of occultism.

They do have a point, however, so far as the history of much of such research is concerned, since there have been 'betrayals of trust' as is discussed elsewhere in this book regarding Tanya Lurhmann's work.

While the *JSM* was specifically not set up as a research tool for my own work ⁴⁶, the third-party material contained within those editions which have so far been published, the international 'networking' opportunities it has opened up within academia and within the occult world, and the entire experience of producing the Journal has been of immense value in

⁴⁶ As it transpired, the work of running the Journal actually prevented me submitting more than the one article of my own for consideration (on Kenneth Grant), which is the only lengthy piece (not including short book reviews) by me that has appeared in the *JSM* to date.

the writing of this book. On a more general level it has helped in furthering the wider modern study of magic by providing another dedicated forum for scholarly publication where only a few existed before, such as *The Pomegranate* ⁴⁷ and establishing an active and progressive discussion group comprising academics and magicians (and in some cases people who are both). In many cases it has personally led to growing friendships and research/publication alliances between academics and magicians around the world, some of which alliances and friendships are my own, and which continue to be of immense academic value and personal pleasure.

Interdisciplinary Work

Other disciplines, and methodologies borrowed from them, such as anthropology, sociology and psychology (the latter of which I studied for my first degree ⁴⁸) have infiltrated and informed the historical theme here, of necessity, to various and usually small extents to give a style of a slightly 'blurred discipline', but one that should be recognisable as historical. This book is intended to demonstrate that there is great value to be found in our 'catching up' as historians with other areas of the academy in this specific area, to share methods where appropriate, and to begin to provide materials and ideas with which to in-fill a large knowledge gap, namely the sketchy history of the modern practice of ritual magic in Britain since 1947.

The date was chosen for convenience, since a point so close to the end of the Second World War provides a suitable and easily-understandable reference point: "post-war" being a term that adults in Europe can relate to without needing recourse to looking it up in a list of dates. It is also near to the date of the death of Aleister Crowley (in 1947) and very close to the death of Dion Fortune in 1946. Crowley was perhaps the foremost British occultist of that, or any other century; and his work has been highly influential; Fortune's somewhat less so. It will be argued herein that Crowley is vital in the history of modern magic, thus his importance cannot be overstated.

⁴⁷ After a worrying hiatus, *The Pomegranate* is happily now being published again, see www.equinoxpub.com/journals/main.asp?ref=51

⁴⁸ University College North Wales-Bangor, 1996-1999. My first degree thesis, 'The reliability and validity of Healers' colour-classification systems' was published as an electronic book, entitled Dave Evans, *Healing Language and Colour Imagery*, London, El-Cheapo, 2003

Crowley's involvement with the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn in the very late 19th and very early 20th Century and his subsequent magical researches and publication make his writings foundation texts for most of modern magic, and as a muse for the recreation of witchcraft- his influences (whether acknowledged by later writers or not) can be found in the published works of numerous subsequent writers on the subject and it would not be much of an exaggeration to compare Crowley's influences on subsequent Magic to those of William Shakespeare in subsequent Literature. Crowley himself noted a different kind of link, since they were born in very close geographical proximity, Crowley considering himself a superior poet to Shakespeare, which is perhaps a point for lively debate... outside of this book.

It is hardly a conclusive or academic piece of data (since there were probably occultists attempting to 'rig' the online voting) but in a research poll to prepare for televising a list of 'Top 100 Britons' for the British Broadcasting Company in 2002, Aleister Crowley came 73rd⁴⁹, beating such luminaries as Robert the Bruce, King Richard III, Sir Walter Raleigh and JRR Tolkien. However much the result may or may not have been affected by block-votes of occultists, *no other magician or occult figure made it into the top hundred*. This is quite probably because there has never been another Crowley-like figure that might have attracted such widespread voting interest among occultists.

The unofficial title of my original thesis, as described to my friends and magician research subjects, and which has subsequently been adapted for the book title was always "what happened in British magic after Aleister died", since it conveyed my task in a few simple words. That is not to imply that any of my research subjects are in any way not intelligent enough to understand the original weighty academic title (quite the reverse; since I am in truly awe of the cognitive and philosophical power of many of those whose thoughts are expressed herein), but merely to keep things on a simple and informal footing from which to proceed.

Such an informal title also generated largely smiling responses, which helped, or on a few occasions led to a swift turn of the heel and my conversation partner leaving the room, which probably also helped in that it saved me time. Crowley tends to polarise attitudes in those that

⁴⁹ BBC Television Great Britons website. An opportunity sample based on 30,000 respondents voting by telephone or online, with no means to prevent block or multiple voting, thus not a statistically safe survey.

know anything about him, there is no middle ground, it seems. Several of my informants were so delighted that such magical areas were being researched (and in some cases being taught at undergraduate level) that they themselves are investigating entering, or re-entering academia as mature students to study in this area, and one has already done so. An example of the kind of taught-course material on offer is from Dr David Green, a sociologist at the University of the West of England, who teaches a marvellous-sounding Year 2 undergraduate degree module within a mainstream sociology course. *Magic, Mystery, and Modernity*, examines the Renaissance, enlightenment, Magic and Psychoanalysis, Crowley and Thelema, Nazism and the Occult, Contemporary Satanism and ritual abuse, Magic and the fictive, Art and the occult, Chaoism and the post-modern, Paganism, nature and protest, *Techgnosis: Magic, technology, and cyberspace*, The Great Mother Goddess: Feminism and women's mysteries. If I had my undergraduate time again, I would be on that course...

Using the years soon after the end of World War Two was similarly convenient and expedient, since as it was very close to the deaths of Crowley and Fortune the date provides a sensible 'zero-point' for a history of what I have chosen to call 'post-Crowleyan' magic, since everyone else in academia seems to prefix their work with post-something or other. Since my book start-point is defined by the 'end-point' of Aleister Crowley, a short biography of the man is essential here.

Aleister Crowley

Aleister's birth name was Edward Alexander Crowley and he was born in 1875 to a rich family who made their fortune from the brewing industry. They were staunch Christians, of a sect known as the Plymouth Brethren. Crowley's upbringing was, even by Victorian standards, very harsh and austere, with reading materials at home being limited to the Bible and religious tracts. His schooling was brutal: scripture-based and entirely inimical to individual development.

Unsurprisingly, Crowley rebelled. He loathed the Brethren and when he went up to University he enjoyed excesses of fine foods (becoming a great fan of curries), alcohol, drugs and sex with one or more partners of either gender, and enjoyed both intellectual and physical pursuits, becoming a very high-standard chess player, and world-class mountaineer. The seasoned

explorer Crowley was allegedly later one of the first Westerners to popularize the use of drugs such as Peyote in Europe⁵⁰, and as a creative poet his command of language was on occasions astonishing, as described by a journalist friend: "(Crowley) left me gasping...he talked like fireworks"⁵¹. As a part of his command of language Crowley soon recognised the lack of poetic flow in his given names, changing them to 'Aleister'⁵².

Crowley was threatened with expulsion from University for his various misdeeds (many of them sexual or Bacchanalian) and for his library studies which were often very far from the curriculum, however this expulsion did not occur, since his father had died while Aleister was young, and during his latter years at University, Crowley finally inherited a huge sum of money from the Estate. He avoided expulsion by dropping out of academia and instead indulged in more debauchery, intense occult study, travel and mountaineering. Crowley joined the London-based magical group the *Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn* in 1898 and showed a great talent for magic, which had long interested him.

Internecine squabbles subsequently destroyed the order from within, and Crowley then traveled the world, exploring, climbing mountains (including setting some mountaineering records which stood for decades until the development of modern equipment pushed climbers further) and learning occult techniques from India, Egypt, China and South America. In Egypt in 1904 he claimed to have clairvoyantly received *The Book of the Law*, (also known as *Liber Al*) which subsequently formed the basis for his new world religion and a complex philosophical system. He continued to travel, research occult systems, write copiously and teach magick. In the 1920s he ran a magical commune in Sicily before being expelled in 1923 by Mussolini's government for being an 'undesirable', and after more wanderings he eventually returned to England, from where he ran his magical order, the *Ordo Templi Orientis*.

His public reputation suffered from repeated media harassment and he took several libel actions. One of these was extremely unsuccessful, and he was bankrupted by the ensuing legal costs in 1935. He spent the last years of his life writing and relying on donations from followers and friends, and by the mid 1940s Crowley was completely addicted to

50 Francis X King, *Sexuality, Magic and Perversion*, New York., Citadel, 1974, p 118

51 William Seabrook, *Witchcraft, its power in the world today*, London., George Harrap, 1941, p 174.

52 Martin Booth, *A Magick Life*, London., Hodder & Stoughton, 2000, p 47

heroin, which his doctor had ironically prescribed as a respiratory medicine for his asthma and chronic bronchitis⁵³. He wrote prodigiously, worked on his highly individual re-design of the Tarot card deck⁵⁴ and received many guests, including having Kenneth Grant (1924-) stay for a period to work as secretary and magical pupil. Grant has subsequently published considerable Crowley material, and commentaries on his works, as discussed in subsequent chapters. In the autumn of 1947 Crowley became considerably more ill, and died, aged 72.

That is a terribly brief summation of the life of a fascinating character who has inspired over a dozen biographers already. Some important angles of what developed from his methods and magical philosophy after his death are the subject of the second half of this book.

One of the other major influential characters who will be discussed in this book is the British artist and occultist Austin Osman Spare (1888-1956), who has been taken up as major influence by magicians from many different 'denominations', since Spare synthesised his own magical methods and produced an individualist philosophy which is of great appeal to modern magicians; and has had wider appeal to artists, musicians and anarchists. Similarly to Crowley, during his lifetime Spare was a minority figure, if not a maverick, and like Crowley it is only *post-mortem*, following latter more mainstream publication since the 1970s, and promulgation of his ideas by word of mouth and the Internet that he has become a more known and significant figure, his methods in particular being seen as a way to move beyond the rather staid image of pre-war magical practice. There follows a brief biography:

Austin Osman Spare

There is often great import placed upon the worth and efficacy of 'liminality' in magic. Anything that is 'on the edge' between two or more states can often be magically useful; thus some rituals are performed on the very shore of the sea, being a liminal place between earth and water, or a working might take place in view of both the setting sun and the rising moon, since it is neither "day" nor "night", similarly a ritual timed for exactly midnight is on neither one day nor the other. Spare was allegedly

53 *Ibid*, p 483

54 Aleister Crowley, *The Book of Thoth*, York Beach, Maine, Weiser, 1974. Original 1944

'born liminal' since it was once unsure whether his birth occurred in the last few moments of 1888 or the first few of 1889, but as it transpires it seems that he was born on 30th December 1888. However, this liminal theme seemed to continue throughout his life, where he bordered on greatness, wealth and fame through his artistic achievements, but lived in poverty largely on the edges of society. Spare was described in his obituary in *The Times* as both a seer and possessed of an "other-worldliness so often depicted in romantic fiction and so rarely found in real life"⁵⁵. It is also rather odd that a by-then unknown artist would have their obituary in a major newspaper at all....

Spare (who is often referred to in the occult world simply as AOS, from his initials, or *Zos*, his magical name) was born the son of a policeman in Victorian London. He began to teach himself to sketch as a child and was later trained in art at the prestigious Royal Academy, holding his first exhibition at the very tender age of 16. His style developed from very precise draughtsmanship to a more unearthly and often surreal depiction of the inhabitants of his own subconscious, or the fairy world, but these were not the pleasant creatures with shimmering wings so popular with his contemporary artists, his style being decidedly more warped and threatening.

AOS soon grew to largely despise the superficial 'arty scene' of Bohemian London. He withdrew to live a simple, but not entirely ascetic life in shabby rented rooms, surrounded by his cats. There he spent his days drawing, painting, teaching art to students, writing and working magic. He exhibited and sold a mix of commercial and occult artworks from his "second home" - any local Public house. AOS was allegedly taught his early magic by a witch called Mrs. Patterson, about whom little is known⁵⁶, much of the information deriving from Kenneth Grant (see subsequent chapters). Spare used the pen and the brush for magical purposes⁵⁷ rather than the voice as was more common in 'normal ceremonial magic' (which at that time partially copied Masonic ritual techniques to a large extent); where extensive verbal invocations and supplications to non-human entities were employed. Spare was possibly, by today's standards, dyslexic⁵⁸, which may have influenced his use of pictorial, rather than

55 Spare, Austin, Obituary of, *The Times*, 1956

56 Hutton, *Triumph of the Moon*, p 302

57 Austin Osman Spare & Frederick Carter, *Automatic Drawing*, undated Photostat, Original 1916.

58 Kenneth Grant, *Beyond the Mauve Zone*, London, Starfire, 1999, p 33

linguistic magic, although he also wrote extensively, using often bizarre language, such as invented or confabulated words. Spare joined Crowley's magical order, but soon left the group to develop his own system: precisely the individualistic synthesis of a personal magick under control of the Will that Crowley advocated. As well as Crowley, Spare also met the major figure in the revival of modern Wicca, Gerald Gardner, who is discussed below.

Spare published several books and magazines but they did not sell well while he was alive. His first magical book, *Earth Inferno*⁵⁹, was written in 1904, when he was just sixteen, and published in an edition of 265 copies. *A Book of Satyrs* followed this in 1907 (300 copies, with 300 more in 1909). *A Book of Pleasure* appeared in 1913, in approximately 800 copies, and *The Focus of Life* in 1921, with 650 copies. *The Anathema of Zos* (probably 1921) was his last published book in life, with 100 copies produced. Had it not been for the efforts of Lionel Snell and Kenneth Grant (among others, as discussed later) it is likely that an author who had produced less than 2500 actual physical copies of his entire written works in life would have remained in obscurity after death.

There were also two periodicals for which AOS was co-editor and contributor: the beautifully-produced art quarterly journals, *Form* (1916-17 and 1921-22, production being interrupted by the First World War), and *The Golden Hind*⁶⁰ (1922-24) which were probably influenced, at least in the luxuriant publishing style and quality of the materials used, by his earlier work on Crowley's own periodical, *The Equinox*⁶¹.

The elaborate and beautiful style of the latter expensive magazine was doomed to failure with the advent of the general economic depression. Subsequently, no doubt chastened by the experience of a major failure in publishing, Spare designed, produced and sold a much more pragmatic item: a sigilised deck of divination cards, to be used for predicting the winners in horse racing⁶². The production of such a seemingly mundane and practical tool to make money is not uncommon among magicians

59 Austin Osman Spare, *Earth Inferno*, London., Original 1905. Undated modern photostat

60 _____ & Clifford Bax, (Eds.), *The Golden Hind*, London., Chapman & Hall, 1922-24.

61 Aleister Crowley, (Ed.) *The Equinox*, periodical 1909-14

62 Austin Osman Spare, *Two Tracts on Cartomancy*, London., Fulgur, 1997, Original 1936.

who find themselves in straitened circumstances, Alex Sanders (1926-1988; the 'King of the Witches', also a psychic medium and ritual magician) and his magical assistant Derek Taylor ran several home businesses, including a horse-racing bet advice service in Sussex in the 1980s when strapped for cash⁶³, and Crowley was on occasion reduced to selling home-made 'vitality pills' (containing tiny traces of his own semen and a great deal of inert material) when donations from followers became irregular and cashflow dried to a trickle.

Kenneth Grant befriended Spare in 1949 and subsequently published extensively about him, and magic in general, for which see my later chapters. AOS had not been in good health for some time, but was suddenly taken seriously ill and died in 1956; nine years after Crowley, and his rare and in some cases unpublished works then remained the preserve of a privileged few for around 20 years. In the mid 1970s, partly due to Kenneth Grant and Lionel Snell's publications, AOS was taken up by a new generation of magicians and his methods (along with Crowley's) became the cornerstone of the new synthesis of Chaos Magic (discussed in later chapters). AOS is also very popular with experimental occult artists and musicians, such as the bands *Coil* (whose founder, the late Jhonn Balance, was a devoted champion of Spare's work) and *Psychic TV*, who are discussed briefly in a later chapter. Original artworks and books by AOS now command high prices and are much in demand among occultists, art collectors and investors, and his numerous writings and scraps of art have been extensively recycled in recent years.

Having mentioned Gerald Gardner several times, a very brief biography is necessary as he is a significant figure on the peripheral development of magic, and a central player in the development of modern Wicca, also known as witchcraft, which in part draws on the works of Crowley, who Gardner knew, and of whom he was very briefly a magical associate.

Gerald Gardner

Gerald Brousseau Gardner was born in 1884 and spent much of his life working as a civil servant and plantation manager in the far East, where he spent his free time collecting native weapons, and studying both the weapons and the religions of the indigenous peoples. On his return to

⁶³ The documents supporting this view are currently within a collection still being indexed, held by the Museum of Witchcraft at Boscastle, UK, and of which I was an acting archivist until I moved away from that geographical area.

Britain in 1936, aged 52 he retired, and soon afterwards settled in Hampshire, where he became involved with The Rosicrucian Theatre, a group of occult-minded thespians. This (he alleged) brought him into contact with a surviving ancient witch cult, of the kind discussed by Margaret Murray (see above). Gardner claims to have worked magic with this cult until 1946, when he met the aged Aleister Crowley and joined Crowley's magical order. In 1946 Gardner wrote a novel *High Magic's Aid*, which claimed to represent the rituals of witchcraft, and this was published in 1949. The repeal of the archaic but still occasionally-enforced Witchcraft Act in 1951 cleared the way to allow more factual publications to emerge with less fear of censure, and Gardner produced *Witchcraft Today* in 1954, under the guise of an anthropologist who had worked with the witches, rather than as a leading practitioner. Gardner's take on Witchcraft involved much nakedness, some flagellation and the ceremonial use of numerous sharp weapons; all of which were Gardner's own tastes (he had been a staunch naturist for some years). Gardner continued to write, sometimes in association with Margaret Murray, and he ran his own witchcraft museum on the Isle of Man for some years. Now widely credited as the motivating force behind the modern witchcraft revival, Gardner died in 1964.

Gardner's life and the provenance of many of his claims have already been debated at length in several books and are outside the scope of this book, the best scholarly and stringent introduction to the matter is Ronald Hutton's, *Triumph of the Moon*, chapter 11, of which this section is largely a précis.

The various claims of an enduring witch cult lasting for thousands of years to the present day also now seem largely on a continuum of incredibly unlikely to actually impossible, and the interested reader is directed to the whole of Hutton's *Triumph* for an extensive and excellent account of a more likely route for the history of modern witchcraft.

Historical Approach: Methods and Outlets

Aleister Crowley started his correspondence; meetings, meditations and magical rituals with "Do what Thou Wilt Shall Be The Whole Of The Law". It is the prime phrase of his philosophy, and so it is perhaps fitting to begin this section with his salutation, with the *caveat* that doing 'what I wilt' herein is done under will but with consideration to historical method and academic conventions.

What is history? Arguably, history is anything that has happened, including the events of five minutes or a thousand years ago. One problem of 'doing history' in modern magic is that it is, in many respects, such as the very new area of chaos magic (see later chapters)- still an evolving beast. I may well have encountered and written about things in my research that are already 'out of date' in some respects by the time this is printed, since the subject is still to a large extent 'immediate'. Heterogeneity of magical belief and practice within the disparate, inventive and eclectic selection of magical practitioners who are involved is challenging to the process of recording and writing history, and it is this area in which the book may already have in some respects been overtaken before it is even finished. An academic writer in 50 years time may have a far better perspective of chaos magic, in particular, on the assumption that the rapid developments within that area will have slowed in the intervening years, and allow for a more comprehensive overview.

'Doing History' on modern magic in a time-frame that is so close to, and often overlaps onto, events of the present day allows for the experiences of those still alive to be included in the narrative flow, unlike for example a modern study of witch trials in the 1500s, or a new historical interpretation of the Elizabethan court magician Dr John Dee. Both of these would rely on texts and artefacts alone, since all protagonists are long dead. A study of the modern era also means that many more physical reference sources are likely to survive, since the deleterious effects of passing centuries, such as the death of witnesses and the ravages of flood, fire, war, theft, loss, vandalism, official censure and bookworms on archives, which often afflict the sources used by the scholar of the early-modern period, have not had a chance in my research area to accelerate to a point where sources are

limited. Quite the contrary, in fact, since my kind informants have at times swamped me with voluminous, wonderful material that I have in some cases simply not been able to use in the time and space available here.

Participant interviews of varying formality (mostly highly informal) give the priceless and humbling opportunity of taking living eyewitness testimony, which is very 'fresh' primary source material. This was hopefully somewhat less contaminated with the re-telling or selective editing and embroidering that may otherwise have occurred with the passage of time and passing through the minds and agendas of intervening writers and researchers over the centuries. However there is also a problem of selective and subjective memory in those still surviving.

From the Horse's Mouth

The process of using Oral History (which was largely popularised as a 20th Century phenomenon following the advent of cheap portable tape-recorders, and latterly digital MP3 recorders, which speeded up the process hugely) is also fraught with difficulties and opportunities, as it on the one hand gives a voice to minority groups and individuals who may otherwise be unheard or marginalised, but also allows a considerable opportunity for 'noise' to enter the 'signal', such as other agendas, which are discussed in the relevant sections below, and with repetition the unfixed signal can be permanently distorted, in a 'Chinese Whisper' effect.

However listening to a human voice also allows for emotion and tone to enter the narrative flow, which would, if in print at the first instance when being researched, be a matter of the selective interpretation of the researcher, not the witnesses themselves, since even the re-punctuation of a simple sentence can sometimes drastically alter the meaning, let alone any words which are changed or deleted. The historian Arthur Marwick wrote in 1970: "a history based on non-documentary sources... may be a sketchier, less satisfactory history than one drawn from documents; but it is history all the same"⁶⁴, and even that quite accommodating view could now largely be seen as Western-centric, divisive and biased to those cultures and subcultures that actively produce textual records.

To some extent magical subcultures are less concerned with written records and more involved with practicing their rites; which means that

⁶⁴ Arthur Marwick, *The Nature of History*, London, Macmillan, 1970, p 142

less than might be expected (or even zero) verifiable text may be available in some cases. The historian in this area has to be flexible, and be of the mindset that whatever is produced from well-conducted research is valuable history, regardless of whether it can be cited back to print sources.

In the case of magical and religious matters this additional input is vital, since 'initiated' viewpoints will pick out materials of which the lay researcher might be completely unaware, or might even perceive as something else entirely. There is also the danger in researching minority areas that reflexive reactions will colour the conclusions, and with Oral History there is at least the chance to reduce this, since the initial words are those of the witness, not the academic. As the historian Rebecca Jones importantly remarks, the activity is a valuable joint construction of the interviewer and interviewee, but with an added dilemma of how (and what) to edit after transcription, the editing process being believed by some academics including Loreen Brehaut to be potentially a vandalism of artefacts⁶⁵.

Where editing has been used in my text on received comments or book quotes it is indicated by dots ..., where my own words have been inserted to clarify anything then these are in brackets, my paraphrases are indicated as such and in some few cases (all indicated) I have removed details from comments on request as the speakers decided *post-hoc* that they did not wish to be quoted on various specifics which might identify them.

In some cases, such as my attendance at rituals, it was certainly not appropriate to produce a notepad, tape-recorder or camera; in those instances notes were made at the most convenient time afterwards. However I believe that the areas under study deserve to be more fully recorded in this manner, so long as all the participants agree beforehand. Apart from all else, it will provide a useful resource for future researchers perhaps yet to be born; to whom I here offer my sincere best wishes and trust that my efforts are of some use to them.

Search for the Right Tools

Since the numbers of magicians in Britain are open to debate, and in any case relatively small (of which more later), when compared to various other

65 Rebecca Jones, *Blended Voices: Crafting a Narrative from Oral History Interviews*, Online, and Loreen Brehaut, "A Terrible Responsibility: Editing the Spoken Word for Print" *Oral History Association of Australia Journal* 21 (1999): 28, cited in Jones

'special interest groups' such as 'single-issue' political pressure groups, for example, my methodology has, of necessity, been varied and often *ad hoc*.

This is however largely a qualitative and narrative-rich methodology, based on documentary sources for the majority. There are a few facts and figures, and some dates, but there is no extant scientific methodology of actual units of measurement that I could have used for this research, and so it is best to admit that at the beginning. There is no standard measure of veracity, for example, although some practitioners (and indeed some academics) seem to think that they louder and more often they make a claim, the more true that makes it....

We simply do not have the right tools (yet) to assess many such areas, so the research was carried out in the frame of mind of 'let's try to make some alternative methods' (including attendance at modern rituals, which is far from an orthodox 'historical' tool) and 'let's try to make things happen with what we've got as methods', which stance is discussed below. These methods are alternative both in the meaning of 'having a choice', and in some forms, as being of 'opposition' to an academic science that would perhaps try to define magic by only measuring the electrical changes in a magician's brain in the midst of a ritual that had so much more sensory data present, such as smell, sounds, objects, movements, words, lights and with the magician working from a rich cultural 'tradition' or paradigm (a meme, in other words).

As the academic Robert Wallis writes "a compartmentalising, positivist and empirical interpretative framework does not seem to be the ideal tool for gaining entry to spiritual aspects"⁶⁶ and although metaphor is understood by Westerners to be a purely literary tool, in the study of magic "metaphor may remain a useful tool for explaining alien... experiences in terms understandable to Westerners"⁶⁷.

Although there are areas where generalisations can and have been made, often this work is in the realm of micro-history or case study, from which a generalisation to other groups or individuals may not be entirely possible (as was indicated earlier when talking of the absence of comparative studies of magic on continents outside Europe), or indeed such a leap of interpretation may be simply foolish to attempt in some circumstances.

66 Wallis, *Sociopolitics of Ecstasy*, Taliesin's trip, p 1

67 *Ibid*, p 16

As well as many months spent with texts, at various times the research has comprised face-to-face interviews of varying formality, terrestrial letters, a massive number of emails, personal meetings, the acquisition of a considerable and at one time huge and ever-growing collection of occult books (university history libraries being often a scant hunting ground for modern magical books - as would be expected with a new and controversial subject area in the canon), mining of unpublished papers and electronic manuscripts for minutiae, consulting pagan and magical periodicals (some of which have been in continued existence for decades, some of which are ephemeral, only running to one or a few issues, and often at irregular intervals), 'hanging around' in occult shops and on magical newsgroups and discussion groups on the internet, negotiating invitations to consult several private collections, visits to academic libraries and museums, countless weeks searching websites, attendance at various rituals and occult events and both being in the audience and on the podium at several conferences (being events with varying overt or professed levels of academic rigour) and similar public events.

Although it is a marvellous opportunity for direct communication that is denied to the 'historian of dead people', one of the limitations of emailing someone that one does not know in person, or does not know *well* is the two-dimensionality and artificiality of the dialogue. On many occasions I have subsequently telephoned or met the magicians concerned, wherever possible, to acquire a more rounded view of them, since it is a very easy matter to misunderstand someone one has never met when 'talking' within the context of email without nuances of speech, body language and general demeanour, and it is even easier to cause offence by propagating any such misunderstandings in print by misinterpreting the meaning of a quotation.

A more slovenly and lazy approach would be to have maintained this research purely from an armchair, or in libraries, without consulting those living persons who might be of assistance, visiting no events nor witnessing rituals. An additional factor in the breadth of materials in use is the incidence of any skewed perspectives, hidden agendas and (in the case of material posted or published on the internet, often without the intervention of a wise editorial hand) simple errors of fact and the intent to promulgate personal points of view, many of which may be *totally* ahistorical. One of the dangers of internet postings is that such material may often attract more readers over time than a more factually correct and

verified printed version of any given anecdote, which item might only reside in a finite number of print libraries, and as such the more false tale may acquire a veneer of 'truth' simply through weight of numbers of readers, and often through being reposted onto other websites, thus creating an accumulating audience. In such areas I have been careful to take little or nothing on trust without some kind of external verification, as will be seen especially in the later chapters on Kenneth Grant and Amado Crowley.

The methodology used has been varied, stringent, sometimes *ad-hoc*, but tailored; often on-the-hoof to suit the group or individual being researched. An example of this would be that on several occasions I worked with individuals who were on either side of a vast doctrinal gulf within magic, and thus their own personal beliefs had to be respected, as was reflected in my different ways to phrase the same basic questions. This has been a flexible course of research that has been steered in some directions sometimes as much by what materials became available as by my central intent, and original proposed thesis title. This steering has led me on occasions to some wonderful, important, voluminous and unpublished materials that have had to be put aside for now, since they would not fit the scope of this piece, but I intend to continue working with those in future.

At times my interviewees wished to impart material that I had not asked for, but that they considered important, and in such cases the material was all noted, if not actually finding its way into this finished book. I felt that to ignore the internal impulses to speak in my volunteer research subjects would have been both churlish and unprofessional in the extreme. Marginal and small groups are often denied a 'voice' and I hope that I have countered this to some extent.

A suitable metaphor for the rather free-form aspect of the research method might be *sometimes* 'flying an aircraft by eye, and following the landmarks in a general direction of the desired destination, rather than flying purely by instruments'; with the latter being more suitable an overall methodology for a piece of scientific research in a 'hard science' discipline such as biology, where a stringent method of standardisation of testing and repeatability is entirely necessary to achieve coherent and useful results.

On the few occasions that I attempted, with informed prior consent of the interviewees for ethical reasons, to tape-record our conversations the various machines involved steadfastly refused to work, despite the fitting of new batteries and their having been tested and found to be in working order immediately prior to the interviews. This was annoying, but also amusing in that those who had consented to being recorded remarked that this often happened when they tried to tape-record their own lectures and suchlike, often ascribing a magical cause for the equipment failures. For example, the magician Lionel Snell gave a talk at a book launch at Watkins Bookshop, London, in April 2002, and at least three tape-recorders and a video camera in an audience of around 50 people 'went down', having all been working perfectly earlier in the day, and being functional shortly after the talk. In retrospect, the presence of an impersonal machine would perhaps have formed an intrusive, artificial buffer, a 'technological barrier' in the dialogue, and thus perhaps have prevented certain information from being imparted, and the notepad method seemed to be more open and 'friendly' in any case.

In some aspects the research methods bordered on the Sherlock Holmes' end of the scale, seeming more like the work of a private detective than an academic, and more than once in the heat of the 'chase' after information a friend forcefully told me to metaphorically take off the 'deerstalker' hat and relax for a while.

As this indicates, while to an extent the data available to modern researchers of magic are virtually limitless, the time and facilities to interpret this data is limited: by research funding, by lack of intuition and imagination, by 'burning out' when chasing elusive or frustrating leads and by fear - of either or both of the subject and in some cases of 'coming out' within academia. The latter important point leads me to discuss reflexivity.

Reflexivity: Magician-as-Academic

My first degree was in psychology. Back then at university 'fresher' social events the conversation always started with "what course are you doing?" and my reply often generated a stereotypical eye-rolling fascinated but slightly fearful response along the lines of "ooh, you're not going to psychoanalyse me are you?" No, but it often provided a useful piece of anecdotal background data for some later paper on Social Psychology. Psychology is not the same as Psychoanalysis, in the same way that 'real-life'

magic is not the same as the Hollywood or cartoon image of a witch turning someone into a frog....

I imagine it to be much the same experience a medical Doctor has in new social circles, with conversation partners perhaps discovering they have a medic in their sphere and then talking about nothing but their own health foibles and asking advice. The subject of studying magic attracts considerably more academic (and more general) opprobrium; fear and stereotypical nonsense than studying psychology ever did, in my experience. To be researching magic academically, and modern magic at that, often opens one up to many assumptions, most of them puerile, some of them baseless and all of them demonstrating a lack of awareness of the subject to a greater or lesser degree, with the same fascinated-ly rolling eyes and a comment along the lines of "ooh, will you turn my ex-boyfriend into a frog?" (No. Please go away). Many academics, fellow students and friends have become guarded, if not downright phobic, when first hearing about my research subject presented here.

While studying magic academically is specifically *not* about learning anything practical such as how to turn people into frogs (although often I have wished for that fabled ability, in order to prevent a re-run of the same old tired line of mockery of my studies by others), an element of reflexivity is appropriate here.

Human interaction is always reflexive, that is to say, the *a priori* acculturated meanings held by each individual must impact on the way they interact with any other individual or any subject matter. For example, a fundamentalist Christian investigating the occult will take with him or her into the study a series of attitudes and beliefs, which must of necessity colour their academic approach, and their conclusions. They simply would not be human if this did not occur. These *a priori* beliefs would be different if a devout Jew, Muslim or Atheist studied exactly the same subject, or if they studied the religion of one of the others. In this way, the results that might be expressed on a study of the same material may be wildly different, depending upon the underlying make-up of the author. For many years this factor was largely ignored by academia, but more recently it has come to prominence in the social sciences, where the reflexive stance of the researcher is considered to be a vital part of the environment in which the research is being carried out, and not, as previously, though to be completely neutral, objective and apart. As

the American Religious Studies expert Russell McCutcheon writes: "in recent years there has been a virtual revolution in the way scholars conceive of themselves in relation to the people they write about"⁶⁸.

In other disciplines reflexivity is very much a necessity, for example modern anthropologists are apparently now all-but required in their work to directly interact on a participant level with their research population, even if that means becoming a nominal member of the 'Tribe' or neo Tribe (the latter of which is described below). The current academic anthropologist and magician Dr. Justin Woodman, for example, in researching his thesis on modern magic, took this expectation to the logical extreme and actually joined a magical group, *The Haunters of the Dark*, formed in order to study the process⁶⁹.

In the study of history, personal involvement and reflexivity has been generally seen as rather less important, and was usually wrongly consigned to the domain of "self-indulgence" the error of which assumption is highlighted by Ronald Hutton⁷⁰, since often 'a participant involvement'-style methodology has been impossible on any practical level. For a 21st Century academic to actually become their research subject, in this field being perhaps a 16th Century witch (or equally an accuser or judge of a witch) is out of the question since the study subjects are all long dead and the reality of their day-to-day activities is quite occluded by the progress of the intervening centuries. Thus reflexivity becomes to an extent irrelevant on a face-to-face level, but any inherent disdain, fear or love for the subject will still have an effect on the direction the research goes, and the written conclusions made.

With researching the history of more modern magic, however, this area is much more immediate and important since I have living research participants with whom I can interact and report on, and I could thus behave (or be perceived by them as behaving) with charitable neutrality, dismissive superiority or some other attitude, depending on my own mindset. Thus there is some room here to necessarily disclose my own reflexive location within the research.

⁶⁸ Russell T McCutcheon (Ed.) *The insider-outsider problem in the study of religion*, London., Cassell, 1999 p 289, in Letcher, *Role of the Bard*, p 11

⁶⁹ Woodman, *Modernity, Selfhood, and the Demonic*, pre-press disc copy kindly supplied to me by Justin, 2004

⁷⁰ Hutton, *Witches, Druids, p 259*

I have been interested in the occult since I was a child of nine, and have been an active practitioner of various forms of magic since I was 20 (I was 42 when I completed the bulk of the research), thus in a few places my methodology is bordering on the auto-ethnographic, since I am personally placed within the subject, and have been so for over half of my life, and for virtually *all* of my *adult* life. By contrast I have only been an academic postgraduate researcher for a few years.

To not categorically state my position here would be disingenuous, and by implication that omission, if 'exposed' only later, may indicate that I had 'something to hide' in some way, both within the lines of this book and in my wider academic life. The fear of professional ostracism and perhaps a subsequently more limited career path in future academic work is still a real one (and I do not have a job in academia as I sit here editing the original thesis into this book form), but one that is easing over time as studies of this area increase in both frequency and disciplinary spread, and as more and more academic-magicians are seen to not be 'dangerous lunatics with wild ideas that could damage the academy's reputation'. I firmly believe that 'honesty is the best policy' in any case.

The presupposition that I am a Christian Westerner who actually could 'go native' is also rather demeaning. It is demeaning to both myself, and to all of those academics in the UK and in many cultures around the world whose religion is not Christianity. They stoically manage to perform outstanding research in their various fields regardless of any assumed religious 'handicap'. Although underpinned by a philosophy that is either nominally Christian dualist or atheistic, Western science is not in itself a Christian entity, and as such should not be 'missionary' in its outlook. In any case, much of our scientific methodology ultimately comes from learned sources that arose within a notional 'Arabian-Muslim world'⁷¹ not a Christian one. The use of 'Arabia' here is not intended to be pejorative, but merely to denote the larger historical Arabic-speaking Muslim world from which much of modern Western science emerged, without becoming sidetracked into a lengthy discussion of the early modern history of science.

In any case, as the academic archaeologist and shamanic practitioner Robert Wallis points out, when studying new spiritual components that are within our own culture, *we are already native*, so there is nowhere to

⁷¹ See for example: Ed Ingram, *It was Islam that did it*, *Philosophy Now*, 23, 18-20, 1999, or any modern textbook of the History of Science.

actually 'go'⁷². The implicit fear of 'going native' is that one will descend into irreconcilable and simplistic 'savagery'. This is a notion derived at least in part from the novel of Joseph Conrad, *Heart of Darkness*, originally published in 1902 and written at the time when Britain still had an empire, and which explores the alleged perceived inherent savagery to be found within all men, but in particular the African native. However as a privileged white European male I find that 100-year old, and *in any case originally published as fictional*, notion both insulting to me (and to 'savages') and massively racist to us all. The white man is as capable of being inherently savage as anyone else.

In any case, they are certainly not 'primitive' or 'savage', as the terminology of 'going native' would imply. As Andrew Letcher (another who is both academic - that rare creature the double-PhD - and magical practitioner) admirably points out, academia and occultism are in some ways on similar paths when this methodology and 'insider' background combine; since

"scholars... are concerned with the... physical 'doing' of ritual... (and) research is performed (by)... challenging the traditional iron-cast divisions between the world of the scholar and the world of the informant"⁷³.

The insider view can provide a nuanced understanding that is simply beyond the outsider. If this view is well managed, avoiding the temptation to provide self-indulgent commentary over supplying pertinent data and using rigorous methodology this insider knowledge is a useful resource, not a liability. If anything, the entirely 'scholarly' detachment that would be required of a harder 'scientific' subject would be more of a liability in this area of research, where it is vital to at least engage with, if not actually experience the subject matter in order to have any hope of properly understanding it.

I would equate this to attempting to write with authority about motor cars while always being based solidly on the pavement, never sitting in a car or learning to drive. Understanding the mindset, passion and enthusiasm of the practitioners, if not the minutiae of their magical theories and practices is important, providing that any researcher is not simply 'playing at wizards', or making a polite pretence at involvement

⁷² Wallis, *Sociopolitics of Ecstasy*, Introduction, p 3

⁷³ Letcher, *Role of the Bard*, p 5

for the sake of the feelings of their research subjects, but that they take the process seriously. Not taking the process, the magicians and their experiences seriously is perhaps the biggest crime the modern academic of this subject can commit. If we can open up a sensitive and sensible line of communication to the world in which magicians live and work, and enable a two-way dialogue, on an equal and respected footing the modern historical study (and in other disciplines) will come on in leaps and bounds, to the benefit of all concerned.

It is perhaps appropriate to give some personal examples here of how 'insider knowledge' informs such research.

Participation within magical rituals requires compliance with tacit and often complex, and in some cases contradictory codes of conduct, plus some prior knowledge. So that the reader might have some idea of the varied nature of being a magical insider, two examples are necessary.

One example would be that many magical groups utilise the compass points to physically mark out their magical circle, and to these points are ascribed one of the four magical 'elements' of Earth, Air, Fire and Water. From my experiences I can attest that quite *which* element is ascribed to which compass point can vary considerably between groups and individuals, it is in some ways a defining *lingua franca* for that particular group, or that area of practice. Failure to know beforehand which point marries up with which element *within that particular group* can lead to one being treated to a greater or lesser extent as an outsider, and on occasions marginalised within ritual and within post-ritual socialising.

At one event in Summer 2003, attended by around 30 persons, I was invited to ritually 'open' one of the quarters, a ceremonial process whereby the relevant ascribed elemental force for each cardinal compass direction is verbally addressed in suitable respectful tones and invited to attend and preside over the imminent magical proceedings. After the ritual the quarters are then 'closed' in a similar ritual manner, by bidding the elemental force depart, with thanks. This process can be seen metaphorically as the opening and closing brackets to a mathematical equation, the ritual itself within those brackets being the numbers and symbols of the 'equation'. In practice this process is usually performed with four persons, one opening (and later closing) one quarter each. Despite having performed this ritual act with that group on previous occasions, I had to refuse

the invitation. I freely admitted that I was unable to recall the 'quarters' system of this particular group accurately, and do as asked, as I had for some months been personally practicing a magical system which was based on a cosmology of thirds, not quarters, and had successfully 're-programmed' my magical practice to suit this system⁷⁴. The notion of a system based around a triplicity and not a quaternary method is a new idea within magic, and as such perhaps quite 'heretical' to those habituated to the much more common 'quartered' system. This resulted in some unspoken suspicion (and later huddled mutterings) towards me by some present, both for the presumed heresy and for having forgotten a method that they may hold sacrosanct, or at least very dear. That is an example where it didn't go quite right.... As Andy Letcher remarks "ritual involves more involved social processes than those revealed during the process itself"⁷⁵.

Conversely, much as I have found when travelling in France, Italy, Spain, Portugal and Egypt as a tourist, any attempt to communicate in the 'home language' is welcomed (however clumsy and inarticulate my attempts may actually be) and facilitates an entrée to areas that might be otherwise closed. One such example is my halting speech in Arabic to a taxi driver, which became a decreasingly stilted conversation over the course of a journey, followed by an invitation to a meal with his family in his home village, enabling me to see a side of Egyptian rural culture that would not otherwise have presented itself to a more reserved tourist. Similarly, when researching in the pagan world, some open expression of communal or shared knowledge or experience can lead to invitations to events, introductions to other people and-or disclosure of material which may not have been disclosed to someone presenting themselves purely as an academic, with no 'insider' knowledge or commonality of experiences.

The language example is relevant here. In studying psycholinguistics, academics have recognised a phenomena called 'code-switching', whereby social groups of mixed-tongue bilingual and monolingual people tend to mediate the language in which they are conversing relevant to the subject matter, and subjects which are more private or in some way more 'privileged' than others may be suddenly taken away from the realm of a common language interaction within the whole group to a more exclusive language, perhaps one that only a few of the bilinguals and none of

⁷⁴ Adamai Philotinus (Lionel Snell), *The Good The Bad The Funny*, London, TMTS, 2003

⁷⁵ Letcher, *Role of the Bard*, p 10

the monolinguals speak, in the process creating an in-group and an out-group simply by the choice of words in use⁷⁶. I have seen this occur within academic groups where the use of lengthy Latin quotes (indicating a differing early education, having studied Latin at school or not) dropped into conversation can divide the group, and I believe that the same happens within magical discussion. In all cases, the insider view is a privileged position, since one is taken along with the discussion when the 'code is switched', (whatever the actual code is) unlike an outsider who would be totally excluded.

A second, and more 'positive' example or participant observation is that in 2003 I was on several occasions a participant at neo-pagan rituals celebrating the nature of the Horned God, a magical figure ascribed in various cultures to mythical and powerful part-man part-animal nature-spirit creatures. The costume for this involved the manufacture of a snout-shaped helmet, covered with 'fake fur'⁷⁷ and with two real stag antlers fitted to the outside. When worn this gave the effect of a stags head on a human body; precisely the kind of animal-man figure often associated with divinity in numerous historical artefacts, perhaps most notably on the various magical depictions on the Danish *Gundestrup Cauldron*, a beautiful item unearthed in the late 19th Century and believed to pre-date Christianity by at least a century. The horned figure in general is thought to represent *Cernunnos*, a pagan deity similar to the British *Herne*, or *Pan*⁷⁸.

The Horned Helmet and I took part in some 8 different rituals that summer. Some of these were very public, such as two at the Glastonbury Music and Arts Festival in Somerset, some to large gatherings of pagans, and in the autumn of that year a 'handfasting', a neo-pagan wedding (which while being intensely meaningful to participants has no status under UK law), within which the horned figure was particularly appropriate, not least because the wonderful setting was a Welsh Oak forest by moonlight, precisely the kind of terrain in which a real stag would thrive,

⁷⁶ For an academic overview of the subject see articles within Peter Auer (Ed.), *Language, Interaction and Identity*, London., Routledge, 1998

⁷⁷ This was both a practical and ethical choice, deer skin had not been available anyway, but if so it would have been uncomfortable and heavy to wear for the required lengths of time, the helmet weighed some ten pounds in any case, and deer skin acquired from the death of an animal rather than antlers which are naturally shed might have upset any vegetarian or Vegan members of the magical group. This indicates how one has to tread carefully with varying sensibilities!

⁷⁸ For further information on the Cauldron see any book of Norse Myth and History

and with wedding ceremonies to some extent being concerned with celebrating fertility, the symbolism of the stag was most apt.

At two of these occasions I appeared from the undergrowth 'by surprise' (actually a well-rehearsed and choreographed act done on cue, arranged beforehand with the ritual organiser, but unbeknownst to the vast majority of those later present at the ritual) and recited a series of invocatory, poetic statements that had previously been produced 'semi-clairvoyantly', the nature of which process need not occupy the reader here, and which neatly summed up the magical concept of the ritual being performed. During the first two lines of the recitation, and from then onwards, my being was filled with what I can only describe as a hugely powerful divine presence.

The effect was most noticeable to those persons standing close by, who hearing the power and a 'special nature' with which the words were being delivered compared to my normal speaking voice, were alerted to some magical effect occurring. I finished the recital and stood by while the rest of the ritual was conducted, including the passing round and communal eating of a shared symbolic cake, but attempting to suppress my hysterical laughter within the helmet, since the successful invocatory experience, while not new to me, had been immensely strong, and incredibly enjoyable. In the case of the Horned God it is also highly sexual. I was unable to hold a 'sensible conversation' with anyone after the ritual for some 90 minutes, during which time I was swept along on a tide of total joy. It was over three hours later that I felt mentally 'safe' to drive my car home. Language is often unable to convey the depths of such religious experiences, but I can find commonality between my feelings then and the written experiences of both Christian Saints and occultists.

A watching historian who had neither insider knowledge nor experience of ritual (or of a successful invocation of a divinity) might have viewed the event in a completely different way, to the effect that 'someone in a stupid plastic-furred stag costume lurched out of the bushes like a clown, read some disjointed poetry very loudly, and laughed a lot... then they all ate cake.'

This is not to criticise the outsider perspective, but merely to say that there is so much more going on internally and subjectively in ritual, which is often very hard to historicise from outside. The 'bonding' nature of the

experience in those group events had significant effects on the openness of subsequent discussions on magic with those who had witnessed my invocatory experience, and had thus received 'proof' that I was serious about magic, as well as academic work.

Comparing ritual performance with theatrical performance, as the outsider may often have recourse to do, usually having no other referent, is often unproductive for the academic; an 'explanatory fiction', since it merely describes one intangible action with another⁷⁹. In the case of magical ritual it can also be profoundly insulting to the participants, since it implies there is a play-acting or 'sham' element to their actions.

As a slight digression, I have stated, with some candour and possibly the risk of academic ridicule, the experience within the Horned Helmet. There is less career risk here than may be assumed, since being currently a freelance researcher I have no tenure-track position to risk by being open and honest. However future employee-position jobs in academia may be slightly more difficult to find, being a 'self-outed' magician. Since I would not wish to work for any organisation that did not want to employ anyone on the grounds of holding any particular (and completely legal) belief, then the act of self-disclosure is actually saving my time in the long run.

In any case, it is, as the researcher Andy Letcher, himself an academic and magical practitioner writes: "irrelevant to the scholar whether those narratives refer back to a tangible event or not"⁸⁰. What is important is that the narrator re-tells them *as if they happened*, and then acts accordingly. This is the important angle for historians of magic, since those actions (or their retelling, and belief in them) did happen in a form that can be historicised, while the absolute verification of such things as the presence or influence of non-human entities encountered in rituals cannot.

From my own perspective as a practitioner I can merely assume that the experiences I have had many times during diverse rituals were broadly analogous to those which many ritual participants and diverse religious visionaries have experienced over time, and which I have read descriptions of, but that cannot be proven, historically, to have occurred. As Wallis remarks,

⁷⁹ Letcher, *Role of the Bard*, p 10

⁸⁰ *Ibid*, p 186

"in effect, it doesn't matter how close anthropologists get ... (to involvement in the subject material) so long as their findings express the level of insight and constructive, critical evaluation that one's academic peers require for outstanding scholarship"⁸¹.

I would wish to add that the same requirement is true for historians and any other researcher. As Letcher valuably points out, our various spiritual "experience is subjective and cannot be assessed or measured, it forms an *invisible currency*"⁸².

But it is a currency nonetheless, and if it cannot be counted in a scientific form that is meaningful to academics, then it can at least be acknowledged to be present, and to have value rather than be ignored completely, even if as Letcher again writes: "within ... alternative spiritualities, there is a predisposition to entertain beliefs about the world which would be considered fanciful by the mainstream"⁸³. It is the *presence* of the belief, and the effects on the individual and on the world of holding that belief, not it's likelihood of being accurate (judgment of which is always reflexive in any case), which is concerned in the recording the history of magic, since academia simply does not have the requisite tools to measure or verify the existence of internal religious experiences as such.

Many beliefs outside of magic are also fanciful when examined with a truly scientific rational mind.

All religions, for example.

However despite being 'within' the subject to that extent, the specific areas I have researched here are, for the most part, areas where I am slightly without, by being not a formal member of any of the occult groups described here (even if I have been at times, or perhaps still am philosophically or methodologically aligned in some or other way to one or more of them), or a pupil of any of the individuals mentioned. This might be seen as akin to a Christian historical researcher working on areas of the history of the Church, or the history of various Christian groups of which he or she has some or other level of knowledge, but no direct practical involvement.

81 Wallis, *Sociopolitics of Ecstasy*, Introduction, p 4

82 Letcher, *Role of the Bard*, p 206, emphasis original

83 *Ibid*, p 210

I am moved here to make some further specific clarifications. My chapters on Kenneth Grant (which were published in edited form as a journal article a few years ago) have, apparently, led to some speculation among some occultists that I am a member of his Typhonian OTO. My denouement of Amado Crowley has equally led to some speculation that I am a member of the 'Caliphate' OTO (who are inimical to Amado); with the associated implications of academic bias towards one of other of those groups.

I am not, and have never been a member of either group. Being a member of both would, doctrinally, be close to as hard as being both a Muslim and a Christian simultaneously, in any case.

We should also beware of making any moral judgments of the practitioners here; as the sociologist Doug Ezzy points out: "we are not above or beyond the others we study, for the social processes that bind them bind us too"⁸⁴. To this end, some chapters to follow needfully address in great depth the social processes of morality, both in general, and morality within magical practice, which is a foundation of how moral judgements, and thus often initial reflexive stances regarding magic are formed, and I argue that those moral stances on magic still permeate academic attitudes to studying the area, and the wider culture in which we live.

In common with Andy Letcher⁸⁵, mentioned above, my methodological position is "going native in reverse" since prior to commencing academic study (in any discipline) as a mature student, as I mentioned above, I had been involved in the practice of various forms of magic for over 20 years.

Also in complete agreement with Letcher, I regard this as a positive advantage with only a few handicaps, since first-hand experience of magical ritual is vitally important in order to even attempt to understand modern magical history and practice. I feel that to attempt to study magic without even a slight grounding in the practices and beliefs would be to provide oneself with semantic, theoretical and cognitive hurdles which might not only prove insurmountable in preparing an 'initiated' thesis, but the misunderstandings which could occur within the process without some level of 'insider' knowledge, and without access to the doors that are opened

84 Doug Ezzy, review of Susan Greenwood, *Magic, Witchcraft and the Otherworld*, *Pomegranate*, 16, p 42

85 Letcher, *Role of the Bard*, p 16

to 'card-carrying occultists'⁸⁶ could lead to a gross distortion of fact, if not complete misunderstanding and generate such enmity that future researchers might encounter great hostility as a result.

This kind of distortion could create immense friction, discord and distrust of academics within the magical subculture, such that future researchers (whether insiders or not) might have increased difficulty in gaining privileged access in future. An example would be Dr. Joanne Pearson, working in the 1990s, who when performing her doctoral research encountered hesitant comments from her research interview subjects of the nature "you're not going to do another Tanya (Lurhmann) on us are you?"⁸⁷ I have been far luckier than Jo, in that I have largely been received and treated by magicians in my researches with a generosity, kindness and open-ness that I found both touching and heart-warming, and a manner which is itself an object lesson to academia in how to behave towards other people. This is perhaps due to the additional passage of time since Lurhmann allowing wounds to heal somewhat, due to the areas (both subject and geographical) in which I researched being somewhat different to Dr. Pearson's, or that my informants had either simply not read Lurhmann's book, or if they had they simply did not care about her. The latter point is important. As academics we often assume that anyone out there actually gives a damn about what we write, and this is not the case 100% of the time.

Being both academic and occultist however made writing a thesis which serves the purpose of examination for a Doctoral qualification often difficult, since having been an 'insider' for so long it was hard not to unconsciously assume a certain knowledge base in my primary readership for the thesis, who are academics in History, and thus inadvertently skip over some areas which require some further explanation. The readers of the book will be a different crowd to an extent, and for the most part would have hopefully 'got it' much more easily; to this end I have tried to edit out some of the more 'hand-holding' gentle explanatory areas of the thesis from this book version. In any case, I provide a short glossary, which can be found here as Appendix 1.

While it is true that, as the sociologist Doug Ezzy writes: "all worlds, mundane and alternate, are socially constructed... shaped by the social

⁸⁶ A term of convenience. Very few occult groups have a formal membership card per se.

⁸⁷ Hutton. *Witches, Druids*. p 261

background of the magician"⁸⁸, not all of them communicate with each other terribly well. I trust that I have overcome this hurdle satisfactorily.

⁸⁸ Ezzy. *review of Greenwood, Pomegranate*. 16. p. 42.

How many UK occultists?

Before going on in more detail it would be very useful to give some context to the book as regards the actual numbers of people who might be currently involved in magic in Britain, since hard numerical facts are in short supply, and speculation is much more common. It is usually pretty wild so far as numbers are concerned.

I have heard it said ⁸⁹ that one very small Cornish village has 13 different secret traditional covens of witches in operation, which would imply that there are 13 x 13 people involved (13 being the 'traditional' number for a coven, or at least the number derived from Margaret Murray, as discussed above), thus 169 separate occultists are 'working in secret' in a very small place that has a population of less than 3000. Even if there are less than 13 people in each coven, this is obviously still nonsense, as no covert group work of that magnitude would go undetected in such a small location, and that many witches in one place would not go unnoticed, as for outdoor rituals on important seasonal dates like the equinoxes they would all need a separate and reasonably large piece of land to perform ritual work in, and the village in question is simply not that big, and that number of cars (or perhaps a hired coach for them all!) zipping around in different directions and all trying to park in remote locations would be noticed.

Despite the ludicrous mathematics involved, this kind of bizarre speculation is not uncommon, and the only consistent factor I can identify in such tales is the sheer magnitude of most unlikely inflation of numbers, thus there is a huge need to clarify how many people are involved in occultism in Britain.

A few 'names' are examined very closely in this book, which is to a large extent a micro-historical account. Participation in magic in Britain is a minority activity: that much is certain, but even though I am drifting into a social statistical area here I feel it necessary to examine the actual

outnumber real magicians a hundred to one' ⁹⁰, and there indeed seem to be many more individuals who collect books about magic than who actually practice the art. This is possibly for financial investment reasons, rather than magical interest, since limited print runs in this minority field often mean that a book appreciates rapidly in value.

This is certainly something that occurs sometimes after the death of the writer, as was witnessed with the sad demise of the magician and academic Andrew Chumbley in 2004, when his book values at second hand resale, which were already high, increased in an exponential and quite insane fashion within hours of his death becoming known.

While collectors may not be everyday participants in any activity of a magical nature, simply purchasing the book hopefully indicates at least an outline level of interest, as if not, how do they know which books are the best to buy to best get a good return on their investment? Many limited print-run magical books have disappeared without trace, or have never appreciated in financial value for a variety of reasons (one reason often being that they are not of much interest to anyone). The purely speculative buyer with no magical knowledge or interest who simply buys one copy of every title in small print runs in magical topic areas is not going to make a great deal of money from such a strategy, as for every 'hit' that appreciates in value rapidly, there are going to be many that actually go down in value as they are 'second-hand' copies. In any case, whether all or only some readers are practicing magic, and how often such practices may take place, it is rare that a practical magic book sells huge numbers of copies by comparison to other subjects. For example Mogg Morgan, the proprietor of the specialist occult publisher Mandrake of Oxford, is very happy if he sells around 7000 copies worldwide of a very popular new practical magical work by one of his 'name' authors ⁹¹. The sales seem to be thinly spread around a great many authors selling smaller numbers of their books rather than a few heavyweights who sell thousands.

Since there is no organised central 'church' of all pagan faiths, or any clearing house for comprehensive information, the garnering of accurate sta-

The Occult Census

The British occult equipment supplier and bookseller the *Sorcerers Apprentice* (SA) ran an ambitious survey in 1989, which they called *The Occult Census*⁹². However this was based on elective self-reporting of an opportunity sample, being persons who were contacted either *via* the shop's own customer mailing list, or *via* the non-homogenous and *ad-hoc* distribution of the census form to other known occult shops and some known magical groups around the country, with participants having to send the completed questionnaire back to the shop by mail, or handing it in in person.

Mail-back questionnaires are notorious for a low response rate, however the SAs work on this did generate some pretty useful results, if one bears some *caveats* in mind. There was a geographically-skewed picture, with 21% of their responses coming from the North-East, the SAs' 'home' area, since the shop is in Leeds, and 12% coming from the neighbouring North-West, which gave a total of 33% of the *Occult Census* responses from an area of the country which, by comparison to the then most-recent Official Population census, held only 22% of the national population at the time. By contrast, the South-East area had a population of 16% of the total for the country, but only supplied 8% of the *Occult Census* replies.

One other example of the statistical glitches in the *Occult Census* is that it showed 4% of respondents self-labelling as Satanists, which proportion seems rather higher than the more recent 2001 Government census figures (see below) would indicate⁹³. One reason for this may be that the SA sells more nominally (and subjectively) 'satanic' items of merchandise and books than many other occult shops do, thus probably drawing in more 'satanic' customers than the others, so those results cannot be held as entirely comprehensive or representative.

It is also likely that many Satanists would simply not be interested in completing any surveys, up to and including the Official Census, since such actions may be perceived as bowing to authority, which would be anathema to their own individualist principles. The tenets of Satanism

⁹² All material here from Sorcerers Apprentice, *The Occult Census*, Leeds., SA Press, 1989, p 9-10

⁹³ Sorcerers Apprentice website www.sorcerers-apprentice.co.uk/homepage.htm

are discussed further in subsequent chapters.

Despite these problems of interpretation, the SA should be warmly credited for at least attempting this unique and daunting task; the intention of which was primarily to gather factual information to counter some of the hideous fundamentalist propaganda then in circulation after a large media-driven 'satanic ritual abuse' scare; which is also discussed in subsequent chapters. It was 'a damn good first attempt'. They received slightly over 1000 replies, from which they extrapolated a British population of occultists numbering 250,000; by means that are not made clear.

This result somewhat overstates the findings of the historian Ronald Hutton who subsequently estimated (in the late 1990s) that for neo pagan druids, plus witches who were initiates of known traditions the numbers were around 16,000, plus another 90-120,00 non-aligned neo pagans, or members of smaller, named groups⁹⁴, so the SA figure, assuming that there had not been a huge 'die-off' or emigration of occultists in the intervening years, could be considerably over-estimated.

The UK Pagan Federation, an umbrella organisation for pagans of all types, failed to provide me with their membership numbers despite several polite advance requests over a long period of time, despite my explaining the purpose of my project, and despite my being able to cite senior PF officials who could confirm my *bona fides* as a researcher. This is a shame, and something I put down to general PF inefficiency rather than malice or any wish to conceal information. While having an actual number of members for the PF which may be an indication of a minimum number of pagans in Britain (a minimum because one would have very odd reasons to join if one was not a pagan, presumably, unlike for example some golf clubs who may have very many 'non-playing members' who only use the clubhouse bar and never swing an Iron) it cannot be a maximum, since PF membership costs money (£12 *pa* in 2004) and is subject to some minor vetting, both of which factors may put people off.

This assumes also that those people were the kind to join organisations in the first instance; which in my experience many occultists are *not*.

It should also be remarked that while there is talk of (neo) pagans, witches, magicians and occultists in this book, the terms are ill defined and some-

⁹⁴ Hutton, *Triumph*, p 400-401

times but not always interchangeable. Not all magicians would consider themselves to be witches, pagans or neo pagans, and not all (neo) pagans or witches would consider themselves to be magicians. Some witches also practice magic (however some basic tenets of witchcraft are arguably at least in part a more 'religious observance' practice than that of simply performing magic). 'Occultist' is an umbrella term that includes everyone, except those who prefer to be called 'Esotericists'. Confused yet?

The numbers of (neo) pagans are likely to be considerably higher than the numbers of practising witches, and this number is also likely to be higher than the number of practicing magicians, since (neo) paganism is more often a lifestyle-choice matter as much revolving around ecologically-friendly behaviour with a spiritual tang rather than an active practical religious-magical stance.

National Census on 'Religion'

Since this book is in part about the history of current practice, it is entirely appropriate to consult the latest available official statistics. Regarding the 2001 UK census results, the minority religion results for the question 'religion held' were released on request to a third-party pagan website⁹⁵, from which Table 1 below, has been derived (results are for England and Wales only, although from qualitative commentary found on the Census Office website these are apparently not hugely different *in proportion* to those of Scotland).

For the purposes of comparison, non-denominational 'Christian' made up over 71% of the total, with many other Christian-based faiths being named separately (such as Roman Catholic, Methodist, Greek Orthodox etc), which if accrued would take the overall 'general Christian' percentage even higher. Over 160 different faiths were mentioned on the Census, less than twenty of them being easily ascribed to a pagan or magical source. There is an additional *caveat* that within those 'pagan' groups it should not be assumed that any particular name delineates an easily reified group- as Robert Wallis points out there are at least sixteen different Druid groups in the UK, some competing, some in a loose con-

⁹⁵ Crown copyright. 2003. Licenced to The CursusWalker website, www.cursuswalker.co.uk/ See also UK National Statistics Office Census website, www.statistics.gov.uk/census2001/default.asp based on results of a snapshot census held on 29th April 2001. Participation in the census itself was compulsory, but not all questions, including religion, were mandatory.

federation, and "with such a plurality of ... voices... it is not possible to present a single picture of what Druidry is"⁹⁶. The same difficulty would most probably be true of most, if not all, of the other nominally 'neo pagan' faiths named in the published census data.

Also there is the major problem of the interpretation of self-labelling, since any term cannot be assumed to translate equally across individuals choosing it. For example it is only since the 1960s or so that Druidry has become overtly neo pagan, having formerly been for the most part "impeccably Christian" and some Druid groups still are that in many respects⁹⁷, so it is possible that much older Druids may not be performing the same magico-religious acts as younger ones, despite sharing the same generalist label.

Sheer numbers are also a problem. Writing in 2001, Andy Letcher discussed the membership figures of numerous Druid groups, with The Order of Bards, Ovates and Druids (OBOD) having around 3500 *worldwide*⁹⁸. *Santeri(a)* and *Vodun* are also very similar methods, being based on the folk-magical processes forcibly (if accidentally) exported to the Americas during the slave trade, which have subsequently spread to other parts of the world in the spiritual luggage of more volitional migrants, yet they are separated on the census. Similarly, the 'Northern Tradition' paganisms of *Asatru* and Heathenism are intimately related, and share many similarities. Spiritualism has little or no magical content, being largely a passive, receptive activity. It is here assumed (admittedly without any evidence) that 'own belief system' includes at least some neo pagans. Taking the figures as given and *making the very large assumption* that additional neo pagans would also be among the 42,000 unspecified 'other religion' and 'not stated' (see below) rather than "no religion" it might appear that of the census respondents there are around 120,000 neo pagans in England and Wales. Were the proportions of neo pagans among the not stated-no religion respondents the same as in the rest of the census the figure would be more likely to increase by only another 70 or so individuals.

⁹⁶ Wallis, *Sociopolitics of Ecstasy, Taliesin's Trip*, p 2

⁹⁷ Letcher, *Role of the Bard*, p 25, and Philip Shallcrass, *Druidry Today*, in Graham Harvey & Charlotte Hardman, *Paganism today: Wiccans, Druids, the Goddess and ancient earth traditions for the Twenty First Century*, Northampton, Thorsons, 1996, p 26, cited in Letcher

⁹⁸ *Ibid*, p 45

	NUMBER	% rounded
ENGLAND AND WALES	Total 52041920	100
Selected Neo Pagan Faiths:		
Ancestor Worship	98	0.001
Animism	401	0.001
Asatru	93	0.001
Celtic Pagan	508	0.001
Druidism	1657	0.004
Heathen	278	0.001
Mysticism	158	0.001
New Age	906	0.002
Occult	99	0.001
Own Belief System		
Pagan	30569	0.059
Pantheism	1603	0.004
Santeria	21	0.001
Satanism	1525	0.003
Spiritualist	32404	0.063
Vodun	123	0.001
Wicca	7227	0.014
Total	79404	0.165

Table 1, Minority Neo Pagan 'Religious Affiliation' in England and Wales: Respondents to the 2001 National Census

The very notion of a stated religion on a census form is also problematic within magic, since varying definitions of 'religion' can often raise ire among magicians, or even exclude some magical practices, such as chaos magic, from the definitions I distilled earlier. This aspect is discussed further in a later chapter.

So, the figures are not huge.

A convenient model to employ here is the notion of the neoTribe. While researchers of other countries have used the model of a 'tribe' for a religious and-or social grouping, research on Westerners has moved to the model of the neoTribe, a term coined in the early 1990s by a French

sociologist, Michel Maffesoli⁹⁹. In this model the neoTribe is composed of an affiliated group who are together by choice, and who whilst in the tribe show all the attributes of a traditional, that is to say, non-Western 'tribe' structure. These include, but are not restricted to, commonalities of belief and activity, and the notion of loyalty to their compatriots, and to group ideals.

However, an individual is able to move very easily between many such neo-Tribes for, as the researcher Andy Letcher remarks "unlike anthropological tribes, our contemporary social life is marked by membership in a multiplicity of overlapping groups in which the roles one plays become sources of identity" albeit often more temporary than 'blood' tribes, where the role is often imposed for life¹⁰⁰.

Additionally, emphasis on original 'tribalism' in Western paganism is based around a "strong sense of shared collective identity... but membership is *elective*" and not simply based on familial links or matters of caste or tradition, as many other religions can be¹⁰¹. Letcher's thesis also highlights the 'detraditionalisation' within contemporary paganism, "providing evidence for the emergence of new traditions, identities and structuring forces within the neo-tribe"¹⁰². In the mid-1990s the Religious Studies scholar Paul Heelas coined the notion of 'detraditionalization', in which there is a "decline of the belief in pre-given or natural orders of things"¹⁰³, for example the notion that the religion one is born into will be the religion one follows for life. So, anyone can change their religion, and the results of the next official census in 2011 may show considerable changes for neo pagan groups (compared to the assumed relative stability over time of more orthodox religions) as a result.

Additionally, in the neo pagan world, anyone can be a member of several disparate and seemingly not totally congruent groups simultaneously. For example a chaos magician of my acquaintance is also a member of a Druid order, has been a Wiccan, has considerable knowledge of Thelemic magic and works with Afro-Caribbean magic too. However neoTribal theory

⁹⁹ Michel Maffesoli, *Time of the Tribes*, London., Sage, 1991, in Letcher, *Role of Bard*, p 6-7

¹⁰⁰ Letcher, *Role of the Bard*, p 7

¹⁰¹ *Ibid*, p 6-7

¹⁰² *Ibid*, abstract.

¹⁰³ Paul Heelas, *Detraditionalization and its rivals*, in *Detraditionalization*, Oxford, Blackwell, 1996, p 2 quoted in Letcher, *Role of the Bard*, p 5

has been critiqued for being a racialised, Western notion of what a 'true' that is to say genetic, tribal structure may be, and ignores the elective elements of choice and cultural blending present in modern Western society¹⁰⁴, but for the purposes of this book it serves as a convenient meme.

The academic Marion Bowman's assessment of modern affinity among some neo pagans for 'all things Celtic' is similar. In the mid-1990s she called some of these individuals holding such beliefs 'Cardiac Celts', being individuals who may not be genetically 'Celtic' (whatever that debatable term actually means in terms of any traceable or identifiable magical, cultural, linguistic or genetic heritage) for whom "spiritual nationality is a matter of elective affinity"¹⁰⁵, a choice made in the heart, not made by the blood. The same may be true of anyone who takes on a spiritual practice that is 'non-traditional' for their own genetic or national make-up.

As with all social surveys, the interpretation of the 2001 Census can only be as good as the questions asked and methods used. For example as it was done by surface terrestrial mail this survey would not have covered all mobile, transient and travelling communities in the UK. Of these, many more than the average may hold 'new age' or neo pagan beliefs, since from experience of talking to many such folk it seems that members of travelling communities seem proportionately more likely to hold neo pagan and-or tribal beliefs than static-dwelling individuals, and since they are mobile, nomadic groups they would probably have been missed by the Census-takers' necessary methodology of a postal questionnaire¹⁰⁶.

Also, as the Office of National Statistics own commentary on the figures points out: "the religion question was voluntary, and 4,011,000 people chose not to answer it (7.7 per cent)"¹⁰⁷. In addition over 42,000 fell under 'other religion not described', or 'other religion' which means that in principle the numbers of any faith represented in the survey could increase by any number from one to over 4 million. If the 4 million or so

¹⁰⁴ Letcher, *Role of the Bard*, p 8

¹⁰⁵ Marion Bowman, *Cardiac Celts: Images of the Celts in Paganism*, in Graham Harvey & Charlotte Hardman (Eds) *Paganism Today: Wiccans, Druids, the Goddess and Ancient Earth Traditions for the 21st Century*, London., Thorsons, 1996, p 245-6. For a more detailed discussion of what 'Celtic' might actually mean to academics and practitioners, and how the nature of 'taking on a name' can be viewed in similar areas see Wallis, *Sociopolitics of Ecstasy, Taliesin's Trip*, p 13 onwards

¹⁰⁶ Letcher, *Role of the Bard*, chapter 3

¹⁰⁷ UK National Statistics Office Website, comment on ethnicity www.statistics.gov.uk/census2001/profiles/commentaries/ethnicity.asp

abstainers contained the same *proportion* of members of various pagan groups as those who disclosed their beliefs, then the number of pagans would increase by a little over 6,000. There must remain an additional *caveat* in all such surveys that neo paganism, magic(k) and Satanism are still in some cases (perceived as) societally and legally contentious issues. For example to openly state that one is a Satanist on an official form, as 1525 individuals did on this census, which form also gives considerable other personal detail (including one's name and address) and which data is at the full disposal of those in power, might be a personal risk considered not worth taking by many.

Introducing oneself in person as a Satanist to complete strangers would have a startling and probably socially dangerous effect, and it is likely that doing so on an official form would be not much less risky. As the occult philosopher Lionel Snell wrote in 1979, sticking to principles (such as in this case being a 'public' Satanist) is "politically most convenient... (for the ruling powers, since) it helps the government if it can reply on its opponents to come out onto the streets... once they are on the street they can be shot"¹⁰⁸.

Spoofing Data: Jedi Knights

Some of the respondents to the Census in Scotland perhaps rather unwisely gave their religion as 'cannabis', a drug that is still illegal. Such self-identification to a crime, with an address provided, would seem to be a reckless act, or perhaps indicates an *entirely* spurious response (including name and address) on their forms, so it is possible that some data for other categories are also spurious, and that this is better concealed. There is also, for perhaps the first time in the National Census figures, the problem of *deliberate and orchestrated* mass spoofing.

Prior to the Census being issued there was an online campaign for fans of the Star Wars science-fiction films¹⁰⁹ to respond to the religion question that they were a 'Jedi Knight', which was a group of mystical warriors in the films, who were possessed of special magical powers, similar to those alleged for Zen Buddhists. It was rumoured that if enough people

¹⁰⁸ Ramsey Dukes, preface to Liz Angerford & Ambrose Lea. *Thundersqueak*. El-Cheapo/TMTS, London., 2001, p iii

¹⁰⁹ A series of phenomenally successful motion pictures from 1977 onwards, (Director George Lucas) which were among the highest-ever grossing at the box office and have spawned a massive merchandise industry since then. See Star Wars Official Website

gave that answer then the British Government would be obliged to make it an official and recognised religion, which is a nonsense, but a compelling meme. And a meme that spread well. The National Statistics report states that "the number of people who stated Jedi was 390,000 (0.7 per cent of the population)"¹¹⁰, a figure ironically probably far in excess, by perhaps threefold, of the total number of revealed adherents of all and any particular strand of 'real' neo paganism or magic in the UK.

It was also in excess of those in extant and mainstream religions who self-identified as Jewish, Sikh, Buddhist, Church of England, Roman Catholic or Methodist (although many other members of the latter three types would probably have responded under the umbrella of 'Christian'; it is not suggested here that figures for these religions are actually so low as they might appear, which highlights another problem in interpreting these figures). However it is possible that given the magical nature of the Jedi in the films, some neo pagans may have been far happier labelling themselves on an official form as Jedi than as some form of named, and more recognisable neo pagan creed. This may also be because some neo pagans are often keen to assimilate any new magical referents that appear in modern culture, and the Jedi Knights have many special magical-like powers.

Magical Group Membership Figures

Moving away from the census figures, so far as other named magical groups are concerned their own claimed numbers of members are usually relatively small by comparison to those of more formal organised religions. For example the 'Caliphate' Ordo Templi Orientis, an organisation based on the teachings of Aleister Crowley, state they have over 4000 members worldwide of which around two thirds were in the USA and they claim to be active in 58 countries¹¹¹. My OTO contact in the UK was sadly unable to provide a breakdown of those figures to give solely UK membership numbers.

An anonymous informant also tells me that he believes the OTO to be 'cooking the books' and the figure includes all members who have achieved progress into a higher grade in the organisation; thus a member who

¹¹⁰ UK National Statistics website, comment for ethnicity www.statistics.gov.uk/census2001/profiles/commentaries/ethnicity.asp

¹¹¹ OTO website. www.oto-usa.org/member.html

progressed through five successive grades over a period of time would be counted 5 times, thus distorting the figures. The informant also believes that this figure includes all enrolled members over a considerable period of years, so that many of the 4000 or so will have died or left the group. Without being an insider in the OTO and having full access to membership records I cannot confirm or deny this claim, only report it with caveats. In any case I have no wish to ignite OTO-related flame wars, so I must at this point merely call the claim uncorroborated.

The chaos magic group the Illuminates of Thanateros were only prepared to say their international membership figures are "smaller than the Caliphate!"¹¹². *The Fellowship of Isis* (FOI), another international pagan-magical group had over 8000 members in 1987¹¹³ and it is likely that this number is now well in excess of 11,000¹¹⁴ since the FOI is in part an affiliation group, with many smaller, keenly recruiting groups gathering under its umbrella. The figure is again worldwide. The magician Amado Crowley claims to have many thousands of students (again worldwide), but as will be seen in a later chapter, that claim is one of many he makes with seemingly little foundation.

Thus it can be seen that membership of magical groups in Britain is based around a minority group of perhaps at most some tens of thousands of people, and that probably at the low end of 'tens of...', rather than many hundreds of thousands, and certainly not millions. In many cases, when discussing particular groups within magic, the numbers involved are far smaller, down to hundreds, or dozens in some cases, but their influence within the history of modern magic (and wider culture) is still significant, usually via the Internet or publication routes instead of direct experience.

Where we go next

Having discussed the underlying rationale behind this research, including defining some terms, making a statement on reflexivity, describing the eclectic methodology in use, and examining the numbers involved in magic, I will now outline the areas researched. As mentioned, a close examination of underlying morality is required. This is followed by a

¹¹² Dave Lee, UK Section Head for the IOT, personal communication, 20-4-2004

¹¹³ Adherents.com database (Online) www.adherents.com/Na/Na_282.html

¹¹⁴ Phil Hine website www.philhine.org.uk/writings/ess_olivia.html

discussion of magical morality relevant to a post-Crowleyan magical environment, to put subsequent discussions into a cultural and societal context.

Following this I then discuss 'Amado Crowley', who claims to be Aleister's son and magical heir (a claim which is pretty much shown to be false), and Kenneth Grant, who was a pupil of Aleister's, still runs a magical order based on Crowleyan themes, was a literary executor after Crowley died, and is a most important and arguably central figure in post-Crowleyan literature. This gives a useful comparison of two directions in which Aleister Crowley's magical legacy has been taken since his death. Grant was also a close friend of Austin Spare and has spent over four decades publishing and analysing Spare's work, which task continues to date. I then move on to cover Grant's work with the occult themes which he believes are to be found in the work of the American horror novelist HP Lovecraft, which leads in to a discussion of the use of fiction and belief-shifting within magic.

This is a particular tool in the new and still-developing, eclectic field of Chaos magic, which itself draws heavily on the work of Aleister Crowley and Austin Spare, and a brief history of this strand of magic is given, with the caveat that since it is so novel and current, any attempt at historicising it is bound to be overtaken by events. My conclusion discusses the role of academia in the study of magic and suggests ways in which the future study of this area might benefit from a more cross-disciplinary approach.

Pushing the boundaries

Blasphemy, Inversion and Morality

The fictional character Harry Taylor is used in a 'pulp' occult novel to make the valid point that:

"for centuries we have begged with pomp and ritual for the intervention of divine power...we have tried to interest God in our tiny affairs...we make the sign of the cross, we ask for the assistance of Saints... is it so very different if we pay the magician, instead of the priest; if instead of invoking the aid of the Lamb, we call on the Goat?" ¹¹⁵.

Knowledge of the history of morality is vitally important as a foundation in the study of magic, since moral attitudes have always informed the manner in which magic has been represented and culturally received, from early-modern times to the present. Moral attitudes underpin the way that accounts are written, and as discussed earlier it is also a matter of general reflexivity that most readers would bring with them an already formed moral stance on the veracity of magical practice, ranging from open acceptance of the belief, to scepticism, to absolute Christian condemnation of the practice as devil worship. The reader will doubtless have their own experiences of this, and their own reflexive beliefs.

However academic research into magic should concentrate on what magicians do write (or say) and have believed, not what the moralist outsiders say that they *should* believe, or what academia may wish to assume *a priori*. Equally, since magic is most often something practised in private, it is something that has been taken out of the public domain by an act of volition and-or perception of possible persecution. It is also perhaps seen as a major threat to organised religion by making the personal belief-sphere the primary one (rather than it being in a 'regulated building', at least in planning permission terms, such as church, mosque, synagogue

As an essential means to contextualise the post-Crowleyan subject material of the book, the following chapters examine the general moral and spiritual atmosphere of Britain in the 20th century, including the influence of the previous centuries in which this atmosphere developed, and the wider European influences. This includes examinations of the problems of defining blasphemy at all, and whether magic is actually blasphemous, details of modern blasphemy prosecutions and similar official and media sanctions against persons or groups who were perceived to be so, and, to the surprise of myself, and probably many readers, *the complete absence of any successful prosecutions for blasphemy against British magicians in the 20th century.*

I also discuss the role of 'carnavalesque' and inversionary behaviour, the Christian Church's attitude to magic as a whole, wider attitudes to homosexuality and Satanism, the emergence of the modern 'Green' movements in the spiritual re-awakening in Britain, the consequent 'moral imperative', the historical use of 'Satanic' labelling as a social/moral panic tool, secularisation in general; especially after World War Two, and in specific with regard to attitudes to magic, and the use of the Devil in advertising, all of which have relevance to the cultural reception of magic.

I then move on to a brief historical overview of post-war moral stances, including the materialist versus spirit debate and the 'occult revival' that began in the early 1960s, moving forward to the end of the 20th century, where apocalyptic prophets vied with Western technology and capitalist politics for control of beliefs.

Roots of Blasphemy and Inversion

When attempting to place the practice of magic in a (nominally) Christian country into historical context, as well as taking prevailing general morality into account, as discussed later, it is also important to specifically ask at the outset about something that seems often to be assumed to be true. Is the historical practice of magic in a Christian country actually a blasphemous act?

"There shall not be found among you ... one who practices witchcraft, or a soothsayer, or one who interprets omens, or a sorcerer, or one who conjures spells, or a medium, or a spiritist, or one who calls up the dead. For all who do these things are an abomination to the LORD, and because of these abominations the LORD your God drives them out from before you".

Not being in any way a Bible scholar I consulted several different 'mainstream' versions of the Bible ¹¹⁶, finding the quote virtually identical in each version, apart from that some versions substitute 'detestations' for 'abominations' in the final line of the quote.

However the overall message seems clear; that the practice of magic or witchcraft is both sinful and a blasphemy against God, providing that early-modern (or current) practices called that are actually equivalent to those practices mentioned in the Bible.

This seems unlikely, since in a stringent review of modern research (from all over Europe) on early-modern times, the religious historian Richard Horsley found interchangeability of basic terms such as witch, cunning folk, wizard and conjurer within communities, and in other areas the terms in use varied hugely from hill to hill and village to village. Thus to even think that such terms would have equal meaning over any length of time and over wider geography seems fallacious. He concluded that in the early-modern period "there is apparently little *popular terminological basis* for a clear designation of a concept of witchcraft" ¹¹⁷.

However as Horsley also points out, in early-modern Europe: "all magic done by (non-Christian) supernatural powers, beneficent as well as maleficent, was viewed as diabolism" regardless of the actual local labels in use ¹¹⁸. This, and the perceived threat of a 'conspiracy of witches aligned under Satan in opposition to Christianity' was what made the involvement in magic crucially change from a merely civil accusation, for example often revolving around matters of property and personal dispute, to the presumption of a heinous religious offence. Since a crime against a

neighbour was far less important, legally, than a crime against God, this led to an associated huge increase in potential penalties if found guilty of the latter.

Horsley also provides a contrasting and useful example of early-Modern 'spin', when examining various studies of European and English witchcraft he concludes "whereas learned Christian demonologists on the continent believed the devil fundamental to witchcraft, the common people in Essex held no such belief"¹¹⁹. This notion is borne out by examination of accusation testimony given by 'rural people' from all over Europe, which revolves around *maleficium*, things like simple cursing of a neighbour or their chickens to make them stop laying eggs for example, and not flying to the Sabbat, sexual intercourse with devils and suchlike.

Those kind of accusations tend to derive from the interrogators of the accused witches *post hoc*, once they were under arrest, often merely for being accused of *maleficium* by their neighbours¹²⁰. This all gives weight to the concept that if such a large portion of the population was so ignorant of Christianity in the first place, then they were not actively blasphemous, since they cannot have had any conception of the hurt that must be *intended* for something to fit the definitions of the term.

However within that same early-modern society, 'normal', i.e. secular, blaspheming was seemingly pretty commonplace. The eminent social historian Sir Keith Thomas gives an example of dutiful Elizabethan-era church congregations who rushed from their sombre worship to a bawdy tavern, whence "a stream of blasphemous jokes signified their release from unwelcome restraint" of being in church¹²¹.

Thomas goes on to give many instances of 'normal' blasphemy (i.e. not magical or witchcraft-related) which attracted censure, including details of a Cambridgeshire tailor of 1601 who ridiculed the gospels by raising his ale pot and deliberately quoting scripture that "upon this rock I will build my church", meaning the beer, rather than anything religious¹²². The invitation to drink in Rabelaisian imagery is a ritual of

would have either known or appreciated the subtler points of that¹²³. In 1623 a Bromsgrove man mocked the Mass ceremony itself by passing a pin to a friend while mocking a dead mutual friend, saying "take this in remembrance that Parkins of Wedgebury died for thee"¹²⁴.

The image of some (undated) notional 'past golden age' when Britain was 'Godly' in any form, let alone devoutly Christian seems to be flawed, in any case. Keith Thomas states that in Britain "in the seventeenth century the godly came to see themselves as a tiny minority in an unregenerate world"¹²⁵ (not so different to the 21st Century in fact) perhaps in some part then because "the clergy often pitched their discourse far above the capacity of their listeners"¹²⁶, leaving them cold, confused and probably bored witless. As an example of this, one very old man who had most likely heard over two thousand sermons in his lifetime, when quizzed about the nature of Christ and God, gave simplistic and naïve answers that God was simply "a good old man", and Christ merely "a young man"¹²⁷, with any further detail impossible to elicit from the man's pitiful knowledge of scripture.

A leading Puritan theologian of the time, William Pemble, felt that this old man might as well have been a stone pillar or a pew for all the spiritual benefit he had gained from the tremendous amount of time he had spent in church during his life. Similarly, "in Essex in 1656 there were said to be people as ignorant of Christianity as the Red Indians" were¹²⁸.

A further possibility regarding a perception of magical practitioners as blasphemers is the early-modern period apparent use of Biblical verses as charms by 'cunning folk'. These local healers or 'village wise persons' readily used Church techniques or materials, perhaps out of ignorance of the 'blasphemous' appearance of their acts, but in full knowledge of their clients' power of belief in the scriptures or any other Christian item to have occult or miraculous effects. As Keith Thomas wrote "the medieval

¹²³ Mikhail Bakhtin, Rabelais and his world, in Julie Rivkin & Michael Ryan (Eds.), *Keith Thomas on witchcraft*, Oxford, Blackwell, 2002, p. 27. Original text

Church ... appeared as a vast reservoir of magical power, capable of being deployed for a variety of secular purposes"¹²⁹, for example a Bible laid on a restive child's head would ensure sleep¹³⁰, and consecrated Host and Holy Water fed to horses would prevent their theft¹³¹.

Ironically, unless there was some subterfuge involved (or a complicit Priest selling the material 'on the side'), the sanctified host and water itself was probably initially acquired by theft (another sin to compound the insult to the sacraments) from the Church environs. There was also a tradition of 'do it yourself' secular magic, using Christian sources. One example is a spoken charm to stop toothache, which required the sufferer to cite the pain endured by Christ on the cross to guard them from recurrence¹³².

"Trying to catch an eel with a handful of butter"¹³³

The title of this section reflects the slippery difficulty of defining blasphemy at all. In more recent centuries, contravening the notional 'mocking the Bible and/ or God' example of blasphemy has been less of an issue. Indeed, until 1998 in the UK, as the law lecturer Anthony Bradney writes "to say precisely what constitutes the law of blasphemy is difficult if not impossible."¹³⁴ but the historian David Nash adds that the notion of "blasphemy... dictates that ideas and arguments have a social reality and objectively quantifiable social effects"¹³⁵. So from those comments it appears that while we cannot now actually say what blasphemy is precisely, it is perfectly real and influential in both the history of society and the 'here and now'.

¹²⁹ Thomas, *Religion and Decline*, p 51

¹³⁰ Barton Holyday, *Motives to a Good Life*, Oxford 1657, p 129, in Thomas, *Religion and Decline*, p 51

¹³¹ John Deacon & John Walker, *A Summarie Answer to al the Material Points in any of Master Darel his bookes*. London., 1601, p 210, in Thomas, *Religion and Decline*, p 51

¹³² John Shinnars (Ed.) *Mediaeval Popular Religion, 1000-1500*, Ontario, Broadview, 1997, p 288

¹³³ A fondly remembered quote from the old local water bailiff (and folk-magic wart charmer) from the area in which I grew up; meaning 'something that was very difficult indeed'.

¹³⁴ Anthony Bradney, *Religions, Rights and the Law*, Leicester, Leicester University Press 1993 p.82, cited by the UK Parliament Select Committee on Religious Offences website www.parliament.the-stationery-office.co.uk/pa/ld200203/ldselect/ldrelof/95/9515.htm

¹³⁵ David Nash, *Blasphemy in Modern Britain: 1789- Present*, Brookfield, Vermont, Ashgate, 1999, p 51

The Oxford English Dictionary¹³⁶ of 2004 defines blasphemy simply as "irreverent talk about God or sacred things", the root words being from the pre-Christian Greek *Blapto-*, to injure, and *Phemi-*, to speak¹³⁷, thus to 'hurt with words (spoken), and the 'God' in question being the Christian deity only. It would appear from this literal definition that magical rituals would, for the most part, be immune from accusations of blasphemy, since they largely have nothing to do with the Christian God, unless they are performances of a specific and deliberate inversion ceremony, such as a 'Black Mass' (discussed later), and any words employed are often used in a private sphere, rather than given aloud within a church or some other public place, or used in print where Christians would perceive them, and potentially be offended.

Inversion and Carnival

When discussing these inversions of Christian morality, the notion of a society that on occasion falls under the apparent control of the 'Lord of Misrule' is important. As the modern historian Stuart Clark points out, in early-modern Europe at various festivals and carnival times, socially-sanctioned inversions of order were allowed, and indeed encouraged, since the almost theatrical street activities permitted under a 'ritual licence' (or actually presented on the theatrical stage as fictions) had beneficial societal effects; allowing for "the deflation of pretentious wisdom... open expression of grudges borne"¹³⁸; which allowed the community to 'let off steam' on a regular, but regulated basis, ultimately strengthening community bonds.

These occur(ed) in what the Andrew Letcher, a specialist in Religious Studies, calls the "temporary tribal zone", being both an area in physical space and a cerebral space with a commonality of community consciousness¹³⁹. On occasion in history, but rarely, this regulated misrule became an actual revolution and overthrew the ruling local society, but such instances were very rare indeed.

¹³⁶ *Oxford English Dictionary*, (Online) www.askoxford.com

¹³⁷ *Nuttall's Standard Dictionary of the English Language*, London, Frederick Warne, 1919, p 73

¹³⁸ Stuart Clark, *Thinking with Demons: the Idea of Witchcraft in Early Modern Europe*, Oxford, OUP, 1997, p 26

¹³⁹ Letcher, *Role of the Bard*, p 131

However, as Clark writes, the prophesised disorders of the 'last times' heralding the Christian apocalypse, were also believed to be characterised by:

"the supplanting of social and moral values by their opposites" with the alleged Witches' Sabbath being a festival of total inversion, with passion subsuming reason, "physical depravities, physical reversals involving left-handedness.... discordant music and nauseating food", with the danger to early-modern society from witches being proclaimed in pure socio-political terms, them being "enemies of the state" and for their individual renunciation of God being a "notorious traitor and rebel", thus any inversionary acts attracted great potential suspicion and fear from "the guardians of absolute meanings" i.e. the Church and State¹⁴⁰.

The 'Carnavalesque' model used to describe this general behaviour is derived from the writings of Mikhail Bakhtin (1895-1975), an influential Russian philosopher of language. Having witnessed the Russian revolution first-hand, Bakhtin's take on carnival was that it was a necessary (and fascinating) out-take from normal, 'monolithic' life: that is a society controlled by church or state. Carnival, especially the ancient *Saturnalia*, was an essential expression of a language and a dialogue (in terms of words, body and imagery, not merely speech) of humour, inversion and debasement of authoritative structures. He was greatly influenced by the allegorical novels of the French physician, humanist and satirical writer Francois Rabelais (1490-1553) in this area, as, in a slightly different context, was the magician Aleister Crowley (1875-1947) in his magical philosophy.

Bakhtin wrote:

"It could be said (with certain reservations, of course) that a person of the Middle Ages lived, as it were, *two lives*... the *official* life, monolithically serious and gloomy, subjugated to a strict hierarchical order, full of terror, dogmatism, reverence and piety; the other was *the life of the carnival square*, free and unrestricted, full of ambivalent laughter, blasphemy, the profanation of everything sacred, full of debasing and obscenities, familiar contact with everyone and everything. Both

¹⁴⁰ Clark, *Demons*, p 24-8, 349, 76-9, 91, 87, and Olde English quote from William Perkins, *A Discourse on the Damned Art of Witchcraft*, Cambridge.. 1610 in Clark. p 88. fn 26

these lives were legitimate, but separated by strict temporal boundaries"¹⁴¹.

While a useful model up to a point, Bakhtin's ideas have since been criticised for being too simplistic and dualistic (since they are dogmatic and absolute, *all* carnival *must* be thus, and his model allows for no 'grey area'), and, since carnival is by definition a Catholic festival, it is too 'southern European' to apply to other, Protestant, countries, or indeed any non-Christian location.

Bakhtin was however a *philosopher* of language, and subsequent historical research into who was actually being mocked in carnival found that it was more often a scapegoat, an outsider group such as homosexuals, foreigners or Jews, than an authority figure or the *status quo* in general that was denigrated. Thus, carnival, or festival, was a time when the overwhelming social order was actually subtly re-imposed, under the guise of a libertarian free-for-all, since the timing, duration, location and extent of carnival was all still (in general, but with some genuinely rebellious events excluded) regulated by the ruling powers. The object of ridicule was often an 'awkward' liminal social group such as the Jews, that the elite would actively wish to have mocked, and kept under continual threat of mockery, since such social oppression is a tool of control, and Bakhtin's model ultimately has too many holes to be totally useful. Andy Letcher gives a far more extensive and learned analysis of the theory behind Bakhtin and Carnival (in his Chapter Six of *The Role of the Bard*), of which my comment here is in part a very short and brutal précis.

Stuart Clark also makes the important point that for inversion to signify anything there has to be a cognitive, mental aspect, where the 'thing to be inverted' has a powerful meaning and hold on society in the first place, and an interdependence on it¹⁴², such as, in early-modern times, the act of blasphemy within Christianity. In the nineteenth Century Oscar Wilde was often able, in court when defending himself against charges of immorality and indecency, to defuse a difficult line of questioning by using his rapid, ready wit and command of language. The academic Michael Foldy sees this as "an effort on his part to 'carnivalize the moment' ... to devalue the meaning of the proceedings... to turn the

¹⁴¹ Mikhail Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevskii's Poetics*, Ann Arbor, Michigan, Ardis, 1973, original 1963, p 129-30, emphasis original

¹⁴² Clark, *Demons*, p 26

whole thing into a joke" ¹⁴³. As the influential anthropologist of ritual Victor Turner (1920-1983) wrote, "nothing underlines regularity so well as absurdity or paradox" ¹⁴⁴. One example of this would be the act of overtly mocking Christ in 1600; which could have an earth-shaking public effect then, but perhaps exponentially reducing over time in 1700, 1800, 1900, 1950, 1975, 1982, 1985, 1987... etc

Even if not exponentially so, inversion *is* becoming less shocking over time. For example, in later 20th Century Britain there were very few major incidents (discussed below) of perceived blasphemy that attracted legal action, meaningful punishment or major censure. Wilde was among them in the 19th Century, but on being quizzed on the alleged blasphemy in his story *The Priest and the Acolyte*, he simply replied, "the word 'blasphemous' is not a word of mine" ¹⁴⁵. Wilde escaped blasphemy prosecutions, but was eventually tried several times until some other charges were made to stick.

This gradual erosion of taboos is an artifact of the passage of time, as Anton LaVey, the modern founder of the Church of Satan (discussed in a later chapter), wrote in 1972: that due to their relative 'tame-ness'

"there are virtually no Satanic rites over one hundred years old that elicit sufficient emotional response from today's practitioner... (i.e. to have a magical effect, just as) ... one no longer reads a Victorian romance for sexual titillation" ¹⁴⁶.

Equally, and something that is not always realised in these more permissive modern times, talk of, let alone indulging in sexual activity itself was still often taboo in the earlier 20th Century. In a contemporary text (originally published in 1933), the researcher Havelock Ellis remarks on several of what were then called 'morbid conditions' including masturbation ¹⁴⁷, and showed the (to him) surprising results of a study in which the 13% of female respondents who admitted to having indulged in *fellatio* and/or *cunnilingus* had all suffered no ill effects whatsoever ¹⁴⁸. Good for them.

¹⁴³ Michael S Foldy, *The trials of Oscar Wilde: Deviance, Morality and Late-Victorian Society*, New Haven, Yale University Press, 1997, p 8

¹⁴⁴ Victor Witter Turner, *Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-Structure*, London, Aldine, 1969, p 176 in Clark, *Demons*, p 27, fn 58

¹⁴⁵ Foldy, *Oscar Wilde*, p 7-8

¹⁴⁶ Anton Szandor LaVey, *The Satanic Rituals*, New York., Avon, 1972, p 25

¹⁴⁷ Havelock Ellis, *The Psychology of Sex*. London.. Pan. 1967, p 98

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid*, p 295

However, any deviation from the norm of heterosexual activity, of that only being *via* the 'missionary position', and always within a Christian marriage was seen as a major taboo in these times.

Daring to Speak Out

Blasphemy prosecutions in modern times

Since he was pilloried in the press for being evil, depraved and anti-Christian, and labelled 'the wickedest man in the world'¹⁴⁹, it would be reasonable to assume that the very public and often deliberately shocking magician Aleister Crowley (1875-1947) would be the most likely modern occultist to have been prosecuted for blasphemy, but the reader may be very surprised to learn that he was not.

This was at least in part due to his own very careful attitude regarding the law. Crowley's own books were on occasion printed overseas to avoid British legal problems due to their pornographic content (for the time), and an inbound shipment of his volume of erotic poetry *White Stains* was impounded by British Customs officials and destroyed in 1924 for this reason¹⁵⁰. A recent Crowley biographer, the late Martin Booth wrote that his poetry in general was "beautiful, erotic and exotic in a manner now foreign to British poetry"¹⁵¹. Of Crowley's poetry book *White Stains*, Crowley's literary executor John Symonds calls it "light erotic verse"¹⁵², which, in the more permissive 21st Century it now seems to be, one example describing among Crowley's enthusiasm for any kind of sexual acts, his great liking for sodomy: he writes of his various female partners activities, who "offer cunt and cheek... til one, divining me aright, points to her buttocks, whispers 'Greek!'"¹⁵³. His paintings were also often considered erotic-cum-pornographic in his time. One gallery owner wrote in late 1939 that he would be unable to publicly exhibit a cache of Aleister's arguably (at the time) immoral pictures as

¹⁴⁹ Richard Kaczynski, *Perdurabo: the Life of Aleister Crowley*, Tempe, Arizona, New Falcon, 2002, p 309

¹⁵⁰ Flyleaf for Aleister Crowley, *White Stains*, London., Duckworth, 1986 (originally published in a print run of 100 copies, 1898). It is believed that perhaps only 13 first edition copies of this very little book now exist, and in August 2004 one of these came up for sale on the open market for the quite staggering sum of 4000 UK Pounds (Ben Fernee, Caduceus Books Sale list, 17th August 2004)

¹⁵¹ Martin Booth, introduction to *Aleister Crowley: Selected Poems*, Northampton., Aquarian, 1986, p 16

¹⁵² John Symonds, introduction to *Aleister Crowley, White Stains*, London., Duckworth, 1986 (original 1898), p xii

¹⁵³ Extract from 'A Ballad of Passive Paederasty', Aleister Crowley, *White Stains*, p 67

"I am frankly scared of the Press", despite this instance being during wartime, with the British press presumably having much more important things in the wider world to write about¹⁵⁴.

Crowley was involved in several court cases during his life, but these were usually for libel (or mundane matters of financial debt), and in some of them he was the plaintiff in any case, than ever for any blasphemous acts. Although he was expelled from Italy in 1923 for his rather dubious public reputation, this was rather more of a political than religious act in the Italy of Benito Mussolini. The aim was to remove Crowley's seemingly rebellious and individualist commune of *The Abbey Of Thelema* on Sicily from an authoritarian Fascist country, and was not a prosecution *per se*.

That Crowley was *never* prosecuted anywhere for blasphemy is very striking, since of all the magical figures of the 20th Century (or any other) his written output might seem the one most suitable for a prosecution. It includes references to ritually crucifying a live frog, which he had previously baptised as Jesus Christ¹⁵⁵, and in 1910 he wrote a scathing satirical play based on the Bible, *The World's Tragedy*, featuring Jehovah as a vulture, a reading experience that is both painful (or painfully funny depending on your reflexive stance) and learned, and which his former secretary Israel Regardie called

"one of the most bitter and vicious diatribes ... that I have ever read... his hatred of Christianity was not a blind unreasoned prejudicial emotion... (but) indelibly rooted in his own personal experience... added to by extensive study and research"¹⁵⁶.

As has been well-reported in both biography and various autobiographies¹⁵⁷, Crowley had been raised in a suffocatingly strict Christian sect, the *Plymouth Brethren*, whose tenets included that just about the only book that it was permitted to read was the Bible. Crowley called himself 'The Great Beast' in later life after being compared, unfavourably, as a

¹⁵⁴ Letter from W Edgar, of the Claridge Gallery, Mayfair, London., to Gerald Yorke (one of Crowley's representatives), 21-12-1939. Yorke Collection, Warburg Institute, Microfilm 10, Roll 3.

¹⁵⁵ Aleister Crowley (John Symonds & Kenneth Grant, Eds.), *The Confessions of Aleister Crowley*, London., Routledge, 1969, p 808-809.

¹⁵⁶ Israel Regardie, introduction to *Aleister Crowley, World's Tragedy*, Phoenix Arizona, Falcon, 1985, (Original 1910, without the Regardie introduction), p vi-vii

¹⁵⁷ See for example, Crowley, *Confessions*; Booth, *Magick Life*; Regardie, *Eye in the Triangle*, Las Vegas, Falcon, 1989

child to the Beast in *Revelations* by his censorious mother¹⁵⁸.

As mentioned above, in several legal cases Crowley was in fact the plaintiff, although one judge did comment in a Christian manner on Crowley's depravity at the culmination of a trial in which magic itself was, to an extent, being morally judged as a side issue to the actual legal case, which was merely for personal libel. In 1934 Crowley had sued a writer, Nina Hamnett, for his being labelled by her in her book as a black magician¹⁵⁹, which he objected to. The thrust of the case revolved around morality including an almost surgical examination of the stance of Crowley's published works by the defence, and Crowley lost spectacularly. The shocked Judge remarked that in over forty years engaged in legal work "I thought I knew of every conceivable form of wickedness... I have never heard such dreadful, horrible, blasphemous and abominable stuff as this"¹⁶⁰. Despite the judge's words, which seemed to open the way to, if not actually be for, a prosecution for blasphemy, no such case was ever brought against Crowley.

Daring Not to Speak

The best-known blasphemy case in the UK since the end of World War Two was nothing to do with magic. James Kirkup's poem about homosexual love in the life of Christ, *The Love That Dare Not Speak Its Name* (entitled from a remark made about homosexuality by Oscar Wilde) was published in 1976 and attacked by campaigners for the Christian Moral Right. This text has since been a totem in several legal battles over obscenity, blasphemy and freedom of speech in the UK. The graphic poem is written from the first-person viewpoint of a homosexual Roman centurion, who is witness to Jesus being crucified. When Jesus is finally taken down from the cross, the centurion kisses him and engages in oral sex with the just-dead Christ: "the shaft, still throbbled, anointed with death's final ejaculation", and he then sexually penetrates Christ's wounds. The poem also speculates that Christ indulged in regular homosexual activity both with his disciples and Herod's guards, and the poem calls Judas "a great kisser"

action, albeit perhaps as a 'test case', the private UK website from which I was given permission to quote the poem, and use as a news source, must remain un-named.

The newspaper *Gay News* first published the poem, and not surprisingly they soon found themselves at the centre of a furore among moral campaigners, and eventually the newspaper suffered a successful blasphemous libel prosecution, privately brought by the self-appointed 'public standards' campaigner Mary Whitehouse (1910-2001) The late Mrs. Whitehouse also founded *The National Viewers' and Listeners' Association* in 1965, a very active (if never huge in terms of number of active members) pressure group, which believed that sex, pornography, and violence in the visual media (especially Television) led to increased sex, pornography and violence in society. The association continues after her death, now under the online umbrella of Mediawatch¹⁶¹.

This was the first successful prosecution for blasphemy in the UK since 1922¹⁶², that case having been centred on a slightly bawdy, humorous pamphlet entitled *Rib-ticklers, or Questions for Parsons* self-published by one JW Gott, who was harshly sentenced to nine months hard labour, despite his being elderly and in poor health, to great public disapproval at the severity of the sentence¹⁶³. Denis Lemon, the publisher of *Gay News* was subsequently convicted of blasphemous libel, but received a fine of £1500 (plus costs) and a suspended 9-month prison sentence (the latter of which was subsequently dismissed on appeal). This was probably a relatively light sentence considering that the law at the time gave no suggested maximum fine or term of imprisonment¹⁶⁴. In 1976 the sum of £1500 (plus whatever costs were added) would have been quite punitive however, since the average British weekly wage at that time for a man was around £70 a week, and for women £45¹⁶⁵.

So although not astronomical a fine (or a direct jail sentence) this was not an escape from punishment by any means, since it equated to almost

161. Mediawatch www.mediawatchuk.org/mainsite.htm

162. Cyber Rights and Cyber Liberties UK website www.yc4all.nl/cyaman/linkpoem

6 months' average wages (although one assumes that the publisher of newspaper would have been earning somewhat more than the average, disregarding the probably part-vocational nature of his work), not including the legal bill. And of course then, as now, solicitors would be charging considerably more than the average worker's wage per hour, so the legal bill would have been significant.

At around the same time as the *Gay News* trial, the British film-maker Derek Jarman (1942-1994), who later worked with the magically-inspired musicians of *Coil* and *Psychic TV* on some film projects, ran into official censure (but not prosecution) over his 1976 film *Sebastiane*, a graphic, violent and homo-erotic re-telling (in 'rough' street Latin with English subtitles) of the life of Saint Sebastian during his conversion to Christianity and his general homosexual odyssey during that time¹⁶⁶.

More widespread examples of apparent blasphemy soon appeared. The 1979 film of *Monty Python's Life of Brian*, a masterful satire on the life and death (by crucifixion) of 'Brian', an inhabitant of Judea around 2000 years ago who was mistaken for the Messiah, caused considerable complaint and some public demonstrations, but was widely shown at cinemas with impunity (and is still regularly re-shown on British TV), as was Martin Scorsese's 1988 graphic film *The Last Temptation of Christ*, which, similarly to Kirkup's poem, explored the sexual life of Jesus. In 1996 some fundamentalist religious groups attempted to provoke the prosecution of the UK Lesbian and Gay Christian Movement for merely linking to Kirkup's poem from their website (i.e. not even re-publishing the poem), but since the link was to a non-UK based website, the vagaries of international Internet law at that time meant that prosecution attempts came to nothing, since the poem did not 'exist' in the UK as such. Genesis P Orridge, someone who very much existed in the UK, is examined in the next chapter.

¹⁶⁶ *Sebastiane* (Dir. Derek Jarman), 1976. Internet Movie Database www.imdb.com/title/tt0075177/

Genesis (PO) and Revelations

Although not prosecuted for actual blasphemy, the modern English musician, artist and occultist 'Genesis P. Orridge' (Neil Megson, 1950-) often known simply as GPO, famously fell foul of the media and Law on several occasions. He was criticised in Parliament in 1976 for his controversial artworks, a collection called *Prostitution*, which involved exhibiting 'pornography' to the public, in a week-long publicly-funded display at the Institute for Contemporary Arts in London, and with transvestite security guards on hand to ensure the safety of the artworks¹⁶⁷. There was further media outrage when it emerged that GPO was being awarded public arts funding, and thus taxpayer's money, to take the exhibition on a European tour¹⁶⁸.

Under the name of *Psychic TV* Orridge had formed a band dedicated to musical eclecticism and magical experiment, their performances being in part ritual (ab)use of sound samples, the creation of 'auditory magical sigils' and the destruction of consensus language in order to find meaning. A large magical following built up around the group, a non-organised 'magical order' that was later dubbed *Thee Temple Ov Psychick Youth* (*sic*), usually known as TOPY. Sigils are explained in the glossary, and Orridge's promotion of unusual inversionary spellings is justified by the remarks that

"in earlier times, persons of great temporal power did not feel constrained to 'common' ... usage, and commanded the language to their semantic whims (we) re-appropriate the language by deliberately mis-spelling and changing the meaning and connotation of words into a language more in tune with our values. In so doing, we symbolically declare war on societal conditioning"¹⁶⁹.

His previous band was called *Throbbing Gristle*, that term being North of England slang for an erect penis. The band *Coil*, mentioned elsewhere

¹⁶⁷ Genesis P Orridge website www.genesisp-orridge.com/index.php?section=article&album_id=11&id=17

¹⁶⁸ Sex show man's amazing free tour', London Evening News, 26-10-1976, p 1, reproduced in collage within Various, (Genesis P Orridge, Ed.), *Painful but Fabulous: the lives & Art of Genesis P Orridge*, New York., Soft Skull, 2002, p 43

¹⁶⁹ Aloas Kino, Thee Spelling ov Magic(k), TOPY website www.topy.net/breathing_goat.html

in this book was formed after the demise of *Throbbing Gristle* with TG member Peter Christopherson being a founder member of Coil. TG had been similarly dedicated to challenging taboos (including writing songs about famous murders, the use of provocative sexual imagery such as penis piercings (for example an account of a performance art piece by Orridge which included a live penile piercing can be found on the weblog of Joi Ito)¹⁷⁰, 'tribal' tattoos, overt paramilitary costume, and spitting fake blood over their audience¹⁷¹.

As a result Orridge had been the recipient of numerous threatening phone calls, and had even turned them into art, by using the answer-phone tapes of death threats as a backing track for some published music which must have infuriated his critics even more¹⁷².

The late Conservative MP and Queens Counsel Sir Nicholas Fairburn (1933-1995) dubbed TG the 'wreckers of civilisation', in a similar way that Crowley was called 'the wickedest man alive' by the press, a delicious soundbite *via* which the band's future infamy was assured, and that appetisingly wicked label has unsurprisingly been recycled in some of their own publicity materials¹⁷³. As to whether he is a magician or not, Orridge sees magick and music as almost synonymous:

"there's the moment of possession between the performer and the audience body... the performer is the shaman's drum... the instrument of a shamanic process or a sexual process ... a form of possession on the behalf of the group of people... a holy experience"¹⁷⁴.

The media and the law famously harried Orridge in 1992. After lurid allegations of ritual sexual abuse had been made against him in a TV documentary, *Dispatches*. This was aired on Channel 4, exposing the

¹⁷⁰ http://joi.ito.com/archives/2004/07/21/genesis_porrIDGE.html

¹⁷¹ Sonic Envelope, Interview with Genesis P Orridge www.sonicenvelope.com/interviews/gen.html

¹⁷² 'Death threats', Track 11 from DOA *The third and final report of Throbbing Gristle*, (Compact Disc) London., Mute Records, 1991. Original audio cassette released in 1978. For comprehensive online information about Orridge Disinformation (Online) www.disinfo.com/archive/pages/dossier/id220/pg1/, Orridge's own site at www.genesisp-orrIDGE.com/, the David Keenan book mentioned below and the excellent *Painful but Fabulous* anthology mentioned above.

¹⁷³ Simon Ford, Uneasy Listening: Throbbing Gristle, *Guardian*, 12-3-1999, at GPO's website, *Ibid*

¹⁷⁴ Sonic Envelope (Online) Interview with Genesis P Orridge, see above.

'discovery' of some explicit videotapes that were believed to portray him performing ritual sexual abuse of children. GPO's house was subsequently raided by the police and several *tons* of art and other materials were removed; his life's work. He was out of the country at the time, exploring the Far East and doing famine relief work. With warning of likely arrest, and in justifiable fear of a literal 'witch hunt' and subsequent physical injury at the hands of a media-enraged mob, he stayed out of Britain for some years.

GPO's fellow artists to some extent lay low and destroyed some pieces of art that may have been misinterpreted by police 'analysts.' There are some parallels here to the 1923 expulsion of Crowley from Sicily, as discussed above, and Orridge alleges that his being pilloried on TV and raided by the police was a vendetta conceived and executed by a right-wing fundamentalist Christian group¹⁷⁵. He has only latterly felt safely able to return to the UK for any length of time, a factor that contributed to the break-up of his marriage.

The supposed 'new' ritual abuse videos were actually footage that was ten-years old at the time C4 aired them; some 'underground film'-style performance art pieces collectively entitled *First Transmissions*. They included the filmmaker Derek Jarman (mentioned above) reading from Chaucer, the depiction of magical-sexual rituals with adults, and performances of blood-letting. The content was specifically not anything to do with the ritual abuse of children (or indeed any kind of abuse), as the media claimed at the time. With supreme irony the production of the films had originally been part-financed by the same television company, Channel 4, who showed the 'exposé' documentary which led to the wider media's concerted attacks on GPO, and Channel 4 rapidly changed their stance as regards the veracity of the documentary's allegations when this fact was publicly revealed, to their huge embarrassment.

For more on this matter see David Keenan's superb book *England's hidden reverse: a secret history of the esoteric underground*, this most creditable and fascinating study gives a far more comprehensive overview of the matter than space here permits.¹⁷⁶

Orridge's work has been highly influential among musicians (the current

¹⁷⁵ *Ibid*

¹⁷⁶ David Keenan, *England's hidden reverse: a secret history of the esoteric underground*, London., SAF, 2003, p 223-8.

popular musical genre of 'Industrial' is arguably derived from his own work), artists and magicians, and he certainly fulfils the modern role of a focus or figurehead for inversion and challenge to taboos, including at the very basic level of denying even a common language. Orridge's most recent (and ongoing) art project is *Breaking Sex*, involving undergoing cosmetic surgery, body modifications and various prosthetic implants to give a non-specific gender role and appearance, from which hermaphroditic perspective Orridge believes that S/He can better understand the world, art and his own life, and of course continue to challenge society's perceptions¹⁷⁷.

Blasphemy is about the One God...

Blasphemy is not only something to affect Christianity, of course, but in the UK the law, being much behind the times in a multi-cultural society, at present only provides protection for *Christian* sensibilities. The British-based Indian author Salman Rushdie (1947-), a lapsed Muslim, famously fell foul of allegations of blasphemy against Islam in 1988 when he published his fourth novel *The Satanic Verses*, an allegorical satire on good and evil, and which arguably mocked the Muslim faith. The publication of the book resulted in book-burnings, demonstrations, death-threats (including a bounty being put on his head) and a *fatwa*, an official death sentence, from the fundamentalist Muslim community¹⁷⁸. Rushdie fled into hiding and needed bodyguards to protect him for many years afterwards.

It should also be pointed out that there is no chance of any magician attempting to prosecute a Christian for blaspheming against any deity which may be held sacred in magic, however much hurt may have been felt, since UK law is inherently pro-Christian in this respect.

All Magic is Evil?

The attitude of some Church groups to occultism is that it is *all* derived from, or under the control of, Satan, and is thus blasphemous and evil by definition. Although on a power-dynamic level the church is now largely separate from wider secular society, it is often the case that religious speakers claim to be (albeit un-elected) representatives, if not actual moral protectors of all of British society, and that thus they hold that occultism is regarded as absolutely evil by all of that society. 'Occultism' in this context includes everything from newspaper horoscopes to full-blown magical ritual, and this occasionally results in the Church opening itself to extremes of ridicule. For example, despite his own injunction that "careless sensationalism will not help our reputation as Christians"¹⁷⁹, the fundamentalist Christian author Roger Ellis warns how simply listening to Reggae music can lead into involvement in voodoo¹⁸⁰, apparently (and this is his only stated reason) since both derive from the Caribbean. Perhaps fortunately he does not warn of any occult danger that, for example the fans of cricketers from the West Indies, or the eaters of bananas or sugar from those islands might also be unwittingly exposing themselves to. The inherent and simply foul racism of the comment remains, of course.

The Devil has the best Tunes

Other Church figures sometimes cite rock music as a satanic influence, and it appears that only one notional occultist, Amado Crowley, overtly agrees with that view. Amado is the self-proclaimed son of Aleister Crowley and is discussed much further in some following chapters. In the early 1990s Amado claimed that "today's pop scene is the devil's happy hunting ground"¹⁸¹ for converts to Satan. Despite having allegedly amicably met with the musician and magician Jimmy Page (who is

a great fan of Aleister Crowley),¹⁸² Amado cites Page's rock band *Led Zeppelin* and their alleged delivery of subliminal evil messages in musical lyrics by backwards-masking techniques as being a prime example of the danger of rock music to the world's youth¹⁸³, and even more bizarrely Amado claims that the campaigning groups Amnesty International and Greenpeace are a manifestation of an occult evil conspiracy¹⁸⁴.

The 'backwards masking' phenomenon is an as-yet unproven belief based on playing recorded song lyrics backwards to ascertain if there are 'hidden' messages within. One Led Zeppelin song allegedly contains the (backwards) line "here's to my sweet Satan" (although despite playing the alleged subliminal backwards sample forwards many times it still sounds more like a series of belches to my ears). There has however been a high-profile court case where a music fan's suicide had been blamed on such a backwards message in a record by the heavy rock band *Judas Priest*, but the band concerned were found not guilty, largely because any psychological mechanism by which any such alleged reversed message may be comprehended and thus affect behaviour has not been scientifically explained.

This 'the Devil is in Rock Music' stance is not a new view, it being espoused consistently since the early 1970s especially by the US Christian Fundamentalist movement, as discussed by Bob Gilbert in his excellent *Casting the First Stone*¹⁸⁵. Amado cites *The Beatles'* use of Aleister Crowley's face on their famous 1960s record sleeve¹⁸⁶ *Sergeant Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band* as further evidence of the close ties between the occult, rock music and the dangerously 'permissive' generation of the 1960s. The whole related chapter of Bob Gilbert's book on this matter might have been a major source for Amado's comments, since their words are remarkably similar over many lines. However with some freelance

¹⁸² _____, *The Secrets of Aleister Crowley*, Diamond, Leatherhead, 1991, p 7. For around 20 years, Page, the group's guitarist, was the owner of Boleskine House near Inverness, Scotland (see sale announcement in Daily Mail, 19-10-1990, p 47), one of Aleister's former residences. Page is also a major collector of Crowleyana in particular, and

further research¹⁸⁷ no concrete support for the Beatles being devotees of Aleister Crowley's Magick has yet been found.

Amado's position on this, as in many other aspects of the occult is unusual. As a more common example of Christian authorities and occultists crossing swords on this matter, in the early 1980s a vicar in High Wycombe in Buckinghamshire attempted to prevent the local multi-screen cinema complex from running a 'horror film theme night' for Hallowe'en, (a neo pagan festival which has some historical precedent for being celebrated in earlier times¹⁸⁸), since it encouraged dabbling in the occult and Satanism, in his opinion. This was not long after a women's pre-natal yoga class had been banned from using a local Church hall for their practice of 'occultism'¹⁸⁹. Ironically there was an active Church of Satan cell already extant, although rather subtly present, in the town at that point, plus at least five other kinds of pagan-magical group¹⁹⁰, so to some extent the Vicar had missed his chance of 'prevention'.

The musician and noted decadent Marc Almond was initiated into the Church of Satan in the early 1980s "in a wood...very near where the Hellfire Club used to meet". The Hellfire Club were a group of aristocratic dilettantes of the 18th Century who met either in a man-made cavern at West Wycombe or the nearby Medmenham Abbey¹⁹¹. This general attitude of 'othering' might of course simply be an echo of the fascination-horror theme; regarding anything non-Western, such as yoga, of 'Colonialism' as discussed below, but it is a common attitude in fundamentalist Christian circles.

Perhaps spurred on by these occasionally ridiculous posturing of some areas of the Church, various groups have gone on the offensive (meaning both in desire to cause offence, and in an attacking mode). The heavy rock band *Cradle of Filth* (producing recordings from 1996 to present) are one of several bands (and merchandisers) who wear

¹⁸⁷ Francis Breakspear, *The Beatles' 'Sergeant Pepper' LP and Aleister Crowley*, www.occultebooks.com/essays/fb/fb2.htm

¹⁸⁸ The reader is directed to the excellent Nicholas Rogers, *Hallowe'en From Pagan*

and sell deliberately inflammatory T-Shirts bearing such messages as "I Love Satan" (for which the band were apparently arrested in Vatican Square, the very heart of the Roman Catholic Church, during a beautifully stage-managed publicity drive) and in other locations (on a piece of merchandise on sale worldwide): "Jesus is a Cunt" for which they received considerable criticism from various church groups. Several fans of the band were apparently arrested in the UK simply for wearing these shirts (which may also have been a clever publicity stunt), thus adding to the group's credibility, and presumably boosting record and merchandise sales among both the stereotypical disaffected youth who were already fans of the band, and those simply amused by the joke ¹⁹².

Rather than being practicing magicians the band appears to have only a moderate affinity with occult imagery, but the latter t-shirt incidents appear to be the closest that any notional occultist has come in the last hundred years to being tried in the UK for blasphemy. On those measurable terms, of recorded arrests or prosecutions at least, involvement with the occult is not blasphemous, since private activities which may mock the Christian religion but which are not witnessed by Christians, or written about in a form which Christians are likely to read (literally injuring them by hurtful speech about their God, as in the dictionary definition), are by the vague definitions of the offence, excluded.

It was perhaps in this vein, of knowing that without being published he would probably never be prosecuted for blasphemy, and possibly not for any other moral offence, that led Crowley to write one of his most scabrous limericks later in life, an economical verse attacking both several personal enemies and the State's interference on literature, which had prevented him publishing some of his works in the UK, as mentioned above:

"There was a Philosopher, Spencer,
who never knew pleasure intenser, than once,
when he saw Mr George Bernard Shaw
attempting to bugger the Censor" ¹⁹³.

Herbert Spencer (1820-1903) was a scientific natural philosopher, and George Bernard Shaw (1856-1950) was a writer, playwright, literary critic, socialist and vegetarian teetotaler; none of which would have particularly endeared him to Crowley. Shaw had also been a lover of the actress Florence Farr, who herself had been both the nominator for membership and the eventual initiator of Crowley into the *Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn*, which started his magical career, so there may have been some sexual jealousy of Shaw on Crowley's part.

Legal Eagles

These examples give an indication that while the concept (and seemingly very commonplace act) of blasphemy is not new, there are huge difficulties of practically defining the act, let alone gaining a successful prosecution. The role of the media is seen to be crucial in recording how the historical erosion of notions of blasphemy (and its likelihood to be used in Law), and inversion have accelerated within a framework of a perceived general 'moral decline' running in parallel, or at least in correlation, with secularisation in Britain during the later 20th Century, which is dealt with below.

It should be noted that actual blasphemy, in the literal definition, is rare. Modern reports of 'such matters being common', or their perception as a social threat should be viewed with huge scepticism, for, as Jean La Fontaine wrote of some early-modern cases of witchcraft trials for general social *maleficium*: "in some cases...stories of diabolism were invented after the execution of the accused and further elaborated three-quarters of a century later" ¹⁹⁴. The same went on in more recent times, with allegations of Satanic Ritual Abuse (SRA) made against non-occultists in England and elsewhere in the 1980s and 1990s. This may also have a bearing on the honesty of answering 'Satanist' to the official Census form, as discussed earlier.

While there is not space here to cover that area in detail, a brief overview of necessary Official investigations, made long after numerous children

alleged phenomenon of SRA did not occur¹⁹⁵.

As the freelance researcher Gareth Medway (who is an academic, but in the field of physics) highlights in his excellent and sensible study of the history of Satanic matters, the only 'abuse' that did occur was that of numerous sociologists, care workers, medics and police officers probing (and photographing) the anuses of large numbers of young children in their desire to prove that wholesale sexual abuse had taken place. It had not, but what was the repeated probing and photography, if not abuse in itself?¹⁹⁶ From that (and considerable other evidence that Medway cites in a very readable fashion in a super book) it should also be concluded that organised large roaming groups of 'abusing Satanists' do not exist either. There is often such rumour and counter rumour, and conflicting, escalating information and the adding-on of demonic details that the reader becomes numbed by the various claims, as Medway again writes: "when one Expert says that there are ten thousand human sacrifices a year in the United States alone, and another Expert ... (claims) 2 million... one starts to wonder if... there are *any* human sacrifices a year in the United States, *or anywhere else*."¹⁹⁷ I would add that one also has to wonder about 'experts'...

More recently, the historian David Nash, in a study of the Law on this matter, called for the repeal of all British blasphemy law, making the perhaps pragmatic-theological point that any God should be strong enough to need no recourse to mere human imperfect and haphazard law:

"when they do this ...(repeal the blasphemy law) most people will realize that their God does not need the inadequate and barely credible protection of a confused Court or a frightened Board of Censors"¹⁹⁸

¹⁹⁵ The official report into the matter is Jean la Fontaine, *The extent and nature of organised and ritual abuse*, London, HMSO, 1994. For a wider view of the SRA matter the reader is directed to La Fontaine, *Satanism, Athlone History of Witchcraft and Magic*, Gareth Medway, *Lure of the Sinister, the Unnatural History of Satanism*, New York, New York University Press, 2001, and for a case study of the effects on local communities of the invasion by police, social services and the media see Stuart Bell, *When Salem came to the Boro'*, London, Pan, 1988

¹⁹⁶ Medway, *Lure of the Sinister*

¹⁹⁷ *Ibid*, p 323, emphasis added

¹⁹⁸ David Nash, *Blasphemy in Modern Britain: 1789 to the Present*, Brookfield, Vermont, Ashgate, 1999, p 277

Morality and Montague Summers

Now that the notion of blasphemy has been dealt with, it is necessary to broaden into a discussion of magic and general morality since World War Two. Jean La Fontaine writes,

"demons were versions of the pagan gods from whom pagans had been believed to draw the powers of magic. By the Middle Ages, learned magicians were suspected of summoning and using demons in their magic in ... Faustian contracts. *The practice of magic came to be associated with demons and hence with extremes of evil*. Its practice in the twentieth century has been given similar connotations"¹⁹⁹

These connotations are, for the most part, not derived from the magicians themselves, but from lay and Church observers, who are by definition reflexively biased outsiders to, and opponents of, the magical world.

It should also be noted that some of the 'authoritative' sources in use by Church and lay 'experts' alike suffer very badly under the most cursory level of scrutiny of their credentials. One example would be 'The Reverend' Montague Summers (1880-1948), an alleged freelance historian of the earlier 20th Century whose various compelling damning polemics on witchcraft and magic, both in ancient and modern times are still used as source materials by some (often self-titled) 'experts' among fundamentalists²⁰⁰. A taste of Summers' style might indicate how far away from modern attitudes he was:

"I have endeavored to show the witch as she really was - an evil liver: a social pest and parasite: the devotee of a loathly and obscene creed: an adept at poisoning, blackmail, and other creeping crimes: a member of a powerful secret organization inimical to Church and State: a blasphemer in word and deed, swaying the villagers by terror and superstition...an abortionist... a minister to vice and

¹⁹⁹ La Fontaine, *Satanism, Athlone History of Witchcraft and Magic*, p 85, emphasis added

²⁰⁰ For example the "Ankerberg Theological Research Institute" in the USA. www.johnankerberg.org/Articles/apologetics/AP1003W3.htm

inconceivable corruption, battenning upon the filth and foulest passions of the age"²⁰¹.

One can almost see the flecks of spittle flying from the corners of his mouth...

This seems to be a continuation of the devout and extreme 'fire and brimstone' Christianity of an earlier century, being worryingly reminiscent of Edmund Spenser's *Faerie Queene*, from the late 16th century, which described the Witch in terms of her "deuilish deedes and hellish arts ... (which she would use to)... hurt far off unknowne"²⁰².

However a major theme running through this book is that *in magic appearances can be deceptive*, and there is a need to always look beyond the mask.

In line with that notion, Summers was *not* the devout Christian cleric he would appear. Despite his habitual wearing of priestly clothing his 'reverendship' was unorthodox, from a 'breakaway' Christian group and is almost certainly 'fake', having no clerical validity²⁰³. He was an avid accumulator of erotic writings and pornographic homosexual photographs, and was once charged with paedophilia²⁰⁴. It seems very likely that he also conducted a 'black mass' in 1918²⁰⁵.

For a time the magician Aleister Crowley and the supposedly devout cleric Summers were neighbours and regular and apparently convivial dinner companions²⁰⁶, but Summers later criticised Crowley's central magical text, the profoundly anti-Christian *Book of the Law* as being the words of Satan²⁰⁷ and Crowley later denied he had ever met Summers²⁰⁸. Even so, this 'supping with the Devil' is highly unusual social company for a supposed cleric, who was also friends with the horror-occult nor-

201 Montague Summers, *The History of Witchcraft and Demonology*, London, Senate, 1994, xvi, Original 1925.

202 Edmund Spenser, *The Faerie Queene*, Book 3, Canto 7. London, Penguin, 1988. Original 1596.

alist Dennis Wheatley, with the two exchanging Christmas presents (of signed books) over several years²⁰⁹. Perhaps Wheatley saw through Summers' façade, however, since his one of his novel characters, an evil occultist called Canon Copely-Style, seems too close a resemblance to Summers in appearance, mannerisms and speech to have been mere coincidence²¹⁰.

And yet nowadays Summers is used as a reference source by those who would have probably been the first to try to have him imprisoned had he been alive today....

Black Mass

As was mentioned above, the 'Black Mass' is worthy of mention in a discussion of magic and morality, since in early modern times the notion of direct inversion of this Christian rite was one allegation made against witches. However regarding stories of allegations of the 'Black Mass' sexual intercourse with the devil and suchlike, the historian La Fontaine makes the crucial remark that "all these beliefs are ideas held by outsiders *about* Satanists... they are not the beliefs of any recorded members of such cults"²¹¹ prior to the second half of the 20th century.

Since then, with the influence of mass-media Occult fiction paperbacks (for example the lurid output of Dennis Wheatley, influenced as it may have been by his associate Montague Summers' luridity) and various lowest-common-denominator films it may be that re-enactment of Black Masses which mock Christianity have actually garnered some popularity among dabblers and those wishing to give a performance, generate offence or psychologically challenge the viewer, for whatever reason(s), magical, theatrical, psychodramatic or secular.

In his discussion of how the popular image and historical development of the Black Mass (over the centuries from 1500 to the present) is meaningless to modern Satanists, one of their number, Anton LaVey wrote "the Black Mass developed from a literary invention of the church, to a depraved commercial actuality, to a psychodrama for dilettantes and iconoclasts, to an ace in the hole for popular media"²¹².

The salacious hunger of the media is important here. LaVey made the useful point that "murders sell more newspapers than garden-club meetings"²¹³, and "killers... can conveniently be labelled 'Satanic' though their only connection is a copy of *The Satanic Bible*. Such selective flights of fancy eliminate all reference to Christian murders in hotel rooms wherein

rests a *Gideon Bible*"²¹⁴.

The witch and magician Alex Sanders performed a version of the Black Mass for film cameras in 1969. This comprised an invocation to a statue of a crucified figure that Sanders addressed as Lucifer, followed by a Mass consecration ceremony involving a naked woman (his young wife, Maxine) as a living altar for the wine and host, and the gradual unclenching of Sanders, who started the rite wearing several layers of ecclesiastical-styled robes and accoutrements. Midway through the ritual Sanders appears to become bored with all of the play-acting, and threw the host, which was by then impaled on a ritual dagger, into a magical circle, where he, by now completely naked, was joined by some rather attractive naked women, and they engaged in general pre-sexual frolicking of the kind that would not have greatly challenged early 1970s film audiences, and looks really very tame nowadays compared to other films on general release.

The finished film, *Legend of the Witches*, achieved little by way of public showing in cinemas, probably due to the explicit content of the mass ceremony. There was also a magical cursing ceremony in the film. Apart from a known video copy owned by Sanders himself, it had apparently not been seen by any large public audience in the UK for over 15 years (some videotape copies apparently existed in Germany, and a DVD re-release of the film appeared in 2005). The original print had been gathering dust in the British Film Institute in London for many years, after being mis-shelved and seemingly 'lost'²¹⁵.

When the film was found and shown to an audience of approximately 40 pagans, magicians and witches at a private event in the winter of 2003, the reaction was mixed, with several (including some in positions of authority in the pagan world) muttering that the film must not be

²¹⁴ Anton Szandor LaVey, *Satan Speaks!*, New York., Feral House, 1998, p 100. The Gideon Bible Society claimed (in July 2004) to be distributing the astonishing number of around one million copies of either the entire Bible or the New Testament portion of the Bible per week, worldwide, in hotel rooms, schools, hospitals, prisons and other institutions. Gideons International Website (Online) www.gideons.org/ Gideons International,

screened to a wider audience for the damage that might be done to the current somewhat more 'respectable' public façade of witchcraft by such images. The irony of a 'suppressed faith' wishing further suppression was rather delicious, and of course the pagans had no power to prevent the film's re-release in any case.

However, despite Sanders' failing to keep up his pretence of the mass for the entire filming, I have witnessed a rather more serious mock Catholic 'Black-ish' mass performed to a fuller extent in 2004. This was done *ad-hoc* in a magical setting by a serious and committed occultist, and I can attest to the very powerful emotions the ritual can raise, even in my greatly lapsed (and never-Catholic or entirely committed at that) Christian-by-birth, and now something-else sensibility.

Due to the highly sensitive nature of this event I am honour-bound as a person and ethically-bound as a researcher to reveal specific details of neither location nor participants, since to do so might allow them to be identified.

The Mass took place in a room in southern England. The room was decked out with some overtly Christian religious imagery (including a 6 foot square brightly-coloured hand-painted banner of 'Christ crucified' which had been specially made for the occasion), all of this erected in a room that was otherwise mostly used as a 'conventional' magical temple.

The event comprised a truncated version of the Latin Catholic Mass with some English passages spoken too, performed by a male figure in Priestly garb (black ecclesiastical robe, white dog collar, a pseudo-ecclesiastical purple sash-scarf draped over their shoulders, wearing a crucifix and holding a rosary), who performed the 'consecration' of host and wine to backing music of some ethereal Gregorian chants ²¹⁶, and who dogmatically controlled the ritual consumption of the sacrament (orally, as in the standard Christian Mass) by those present.

The 'Priest' (in fact an experienced ritual magician) stayed 'in character' for some time, this being of a stereotypical 'kindly elderly Irish priest' (who was named for inversionary/punning purposes, Fa(r)ther Down)

²¹⁶ While a Christian source, Gregorian Chanting is a common musical background for 'New Age' practices, since the plain-song is beautiful, relaxing and gives an atmosphere of sanctity and antiquity. The use in the fake Mass was thus doubly inappropriate, adding to the inversionary effect.

in manner, accent and language. Then the mass moved on to what was promised to be a very lengthy sermon on the nature of sin (to the utter consternation of one person present, who believed the remark), but which then ended very abruptly with an aphorism from the magician Aleister Crowley about sin: "the word of Sin is restriction, do what thou wilt!" amid much ribald laughter, since the cross-context of a Catholic, and thus by implication a restrictive and ascetic service which culminated in encouraging sin was a beautiful piece of inversion.

Unlike the Sanders' filmed mass finale, which was seemingly on the spur of the moment, or due to his boredom, this mass was obviously planned to end thus, as an added psychodramatic shock for magical purposes. Remaining consecrated host and the un-used wine was deliberately saved, and employed in a sexual magical rite shortly thereafter.

It must also be considered that since the Black Mass is such an emotionally charged concept, for an occultist to talk about it at all may be a case of humour, and not reality. For example the spoof Satanist Hugo L'Estrange wrote about many matters which would be horrific to a member of the clergy (and the many occultists) but which did not actually happen. Despite the example, the Black Mass performed by occultists as an *actual blasphemous mockery of the Christian God* seems to be rare. Often rituals may involve some similar imagery, but largely they are about something else entirely, often a psychodramatic performance, for to have any impact, a Black Mass needs to be performed by those who are in some respects Christian, even if they are heretical. For many magicians Christianity is meaningless, thus a Black Mass is equally meaningless - it would be like polling vegetarians to see if they prefer Beef to Lamb and expecting to receive any useful responses.

For the one pseudo 'Black Mass' that I have witnessed I have seen hundreds of other magical rituals that are far-removed from re-enactments or mockeries of church services, and I have concluded that black masses are far less common than fundamentalist Christians would wish to believe, but slightly more common than the 'never' that (equally fundamentalist) pagan apologists would also have us believe. Most black masses of the kind that are exposed in newspapers are, it seems, purely theatrical shows provided for some kind of lurid entertainment purposes, by actors not magicians, and at a very lucrative financial return for those putting on the show to a paying audience.

Moral Philosophy '101'

Although this book is concerned with events in magical circles in Britain after the death of Crowley right after the Second World War, the philosophical and historical roots of those relevant current morals that are an essential underpinning to post-Crowleyan matters are far older, and derive from (philosophically and geographically) a far wider secular and religious society than just Britain. Since magic does not exist in a vacuum, the broader moral environment in which magic has grown over time has had a particular and definite influence on the directions in which magic, or at least 'some magicS' discussed herein have evolved.

Thus it is necessary to outline and understand those influences, and to deviate from a strictly historical stance in order to explain the relevant philosophies and other factors, including a general decline in the public's ability to perform moral analysis at all, as secularisation expanded, which the historian Alex Owens sees as both a symptom of 'disenchantment' with the world, and a gateway for new forms of non-Christian belief such as occultism²¹⁷.

As the occultist and author Dion Fortune (Violet Firth, 1890-1946) wrote in one of her novels in the nineteen-thirties "in these materialistic days... folk had given up believing in spiritual evil even more thoroughly than they had ceased to believe in spiritual good"²¹⁸, this being perhaps a reflection of a growing secularisation following the end of the First World War, and into the immediately pre-World War Two years.

After an overview of that phenomena I will then examine the various notions of 'evil' both within society and that often adhere to the popular historical perception of magic, before moving on to detailed discussion of the historical moral stances of various individuals and groups within the occult world in the following sections.

While the 20th Century did indeed see individual and mass acts that could be described as evil (for example the regimes of Stalin, Hitler, Idi Amin, Pol Pot, Pinochet etc) and individuals who were noted for acts

²¹⁷ Owens, *Place of Enchantment*, 10-11

²¹⁸ Dion Fortune, *The Goat Foot God*, Northampton, Aquarian, 1989, p 231. Original 1936

of barbarism, it is perhaps more likely that such matters have simply become more known, more discussed, and thus more 'in consciousness' than similar events from earlier centuries, which might have been equally horrific, but were merely less publicised in the growing mass media. Had the activities of Caligula or Attila the Hun ever been captured on cine film, matters may have been rather different.

The notion of evil and barbarism has a chequered past, so far as history and philosophy is concerned. Mass populaces, or at least the political authorities that wish to be voted back into office for subsequent terms by mass populaces, have always liked their opponents to have tidy and simplistic black-white, good-evil distinctions hung about them. One of the ultimate questions for humanity has been the problem of defining evil (and, of course, good). In the early-modern period in Europe (and in the minds of people like 'the Reverend' Montague Summers in the 20th century), the issue of good and evil was, so far as the Christian Church (and thus the Law of the time) was concerned, carved in stone, inviolate, dualistic and without need of interpretation or analysis. There were god-fearing Christians and there were those who were evil heathens.

The latter were under the control of, and/or in league with Satan, and/or were witches and as such were liable to prosecution and possible execution.

Magicians such as Lionel Snell see the matter as far more complex

"if a mind tries to contemplate one-ness it always rushes to find the edges, or limits; but give it a boundary, however simple and it can bounce to and fro happily, playing cosmic tennis. Tell yourself that the universe is a battle between Good and Evil, or a tissue of positive and negative charges, and the mind is happy... consciousness just cannot survive on unity; duality is the minimum 'atom' of consciousness"²¹⁹.

²¹⁹ Liz Angerford and Ambrose Lea, *Thundersqueak*, El-Cheapo/The Mouse That Spins, London, 2001, (Dukes, R. Ed), p 157-8

Philosophy of Morality

However, why did the Christian God allow evil to flourish? Jean La Fontaine neatly sums up the philosophical conundrums for Christianity, which, "having developed the idea of an all-powerful and beneficent God" was left with the notions of suffering, natural disaster and evil as unexplained philosophical glitches, whereby

"either God was unable to prevent evil and was therefore not omnipotent, or did not wish to do so, and was thus responsible for the existence of evil. The figure of Satan, as adversary to God and representing the sum of all evil, seemed to offer a solution to this problem"²²⁰.

So, having the figure of Satan was all well and good as an invisible scapegoat, but this concept made humanity less powerful, since they were in thrall on the one hand to a non-corporeal Devil (with whom they could not engage), yet they were attempting to do a non-corporeal God's work on earth too, and thus had no-one physically on hand to blame but themselves for any failure. So it was thus necessary for there to be targets people upon which to wreak some holy revenge for their perceived role in causing disaster and suffering. As identified servants of the powers of darkness they were the ideal 'outsiders' (heretics, blasphemers, infidels etc) on which to blame society's troubles:

"as well as being the source of evil in the world, Satan and his demons were believed to have human allies and servants. In the late 20th century... it is on the human servants of Satan, rather than ... on the figure of Satan himself, that the *myth* of modern Satanism focuses"²²¹.

Enter modern occultists, stage left.

Historically, the occult philosopher Lemuel Johnstone (actually Lionel Snell, a.k.a Ramsey Dukes) believes that the notion of "the Devil was ... very necessary to the feeble human who found the word of the Lord was insufficient to keep him moving on the paths of righteousness, and

²²⁰ La Fontaine, *Satanism, Athlone History of Witchcraft*, p 84

²²¹ *Ibid*, p 85, emphasis added

who needed the hot breath of brimstone over his shoulder to drive him forward"²²². The Satanist LaVey makes the similar point that "stories of unbaptized babies being stolen by Satanists... were not only effective propaganda measures, but also provided a constant source of revenue for the Church, in the form of baptism fees. No Christian mother would, upon hearing of these diabolical kidnappings, refrain from getting her child properly baptized, post haste"²²³.

Equally, God was sometimes seen as an aid in all things, however mundane, trivial and, it seems, remarkably unfair to others of his flock, if so desired. As a young girl the novelist Antonia White was at a Convent school in approximately 1909, preparing for a hockey match against another convent. She wrote: "we are all going to do penances all day so that we may win"²²⁴. It seems unlikely that an omnipotent God would be interested in the winner of a school sporting contest, let alone intervene, and especially so in a contest *within* the Christian religion. The immorality of expecting a God to do so is also something worthy of note.

The notion of Satanic groups who regularly met to celebrate abominable rites was an early-modern period PR tool in the Church's war against heresy in general. As Le Fontaine writes, lurid and cautionary tales abounded of

"secret meetings in which demons and Satan himself participated and at which slaughtered babies were consumed in a feast and ... orgies of sex in which all normal restraints, including those prohibiting incest, were abandoned"²²⁵.

But it seems most unlikely that such events ever happened, or at least happened with the frequency with which the early-modern Church (or more recently Montague Summers, mentioned above) would have wished the populace to believe. As La Fontaine also writes,

"the evidence that these gatherings actually took place was drawn almost entirely from the accused's confessions. Most of these were

²²² Johnstone, *SSOTBME*, p 52

²²³ LaVey, *Satanic Bible*, p 93

²²⁴ Antonia White, *Frost in May*, London, Virago, 1978 (Original 1933), p 142 in John Hodgson, *The Search for the Self: Childhood in Autobiography and Fiction since 1940*, Sheffield, Sheffield Academic Press, 1993, p 69

²²⁵ *Ibid*, p 86

extracted under persistent questioning or torture... details from the confessions... were widely circulated and might form the basis of other allegations and of some of the allegedly 'spontaneous' confessions"²²⁸.

Richard Horsley agrees (in a discussion of early-modern witchcraft in general) that the Theological and Legal institutions of the time failed to "distinguish between the official *theory* and the popular *realities*"²²⁷, so that all executed as 'evil satanic witches' were nothing of the kind. It is not simply long-dead 'witches' who can be demonised. As the modern Satanist Anton LaVey described:

"the Devil and his works have long assumed many forms. Until recently, to Catholics, Protestants were devils. To Protestants, Catholics were devils. To both, Jews were devils. To the Oriental, the Westerner was a devil. To the American settler of the Old West, the Red Man was a devil. Man's ugly habit of elevating himself by defaming others is an unfortunate phenomenon, yet apparently necessary to his emotional well-being"²²⁸.

To this comment written in the 1970s it should be added that today to much of the Muslim world, those still left alive after the bombing that is, America is seen as 'the Great Satan'. To many Americans the Muslims are the embodiment of evil, and the most recent war in Iraq is seen as part of 'the war on terror' and loudly portrayed as a fight between absolute good and absolute evil, and hailed as a 'crusade' (being a very provocative Christian-derived word) for freedom.

The anti-occult novelist Dennis Wheatley (1897-1977), who ironically made a fortune based at least in part on writing salacious black magic novels produced a 'factual' book in the role as an 'expert', *The Devil and All His Works* in 1971²²⁹, which was in part a negative polemic about religions other than Christianity, such as Buddhism, and what he saw as the 'primitive' beliefs of Islam. Such a book would probably create a total furore were it published 'as new' in 2007. Wheatley's own upper class background and ultra-Conservative politics may have intervened in

with non-Christians and Communists in a global conspiracy to take over the world.

Any major political group was subject to this suspicion, of course and there was considerable, if low-key, official interest in occultism as it possibly related to Nazism. A wartime intelligence officer Maxwell Knight (who is rumoured to have been the model for the character 'M' in Ian Fleming's *James Bond* novels, and who was a friend of Dennis Wheatley) was particularly interested in Aleister Crowley's past associations with the military strategist Major John FC Fuller, as Knight's MI5 group were also monitoring British Union of Fascists sympathisers, who included Fuller²³⁰.

As the modern Satanist LaVey also wrote in the 1970s "the Christian evaluation of the word *Satan*... became synonymous with evil simply because it was (a) of Hebrew origin, and anything Jewish was of the Devil, and (b) because it meant adversary or opposite"²³¹. As with Communism mentioned above, there is a long history of the Jews being accused of similar world-controlling conspiracies, of course. It should also be noted that, as Snell writes "more evil has been committed in the name of Christ than ever was in the name of Satan"²³², for example, as Ray Sherwin writes, "show a Christian Crowley's *Liber Oz* and he will gasp in indignant horror at the line 'Man has the right to kill those who would thwart those rights'. Ask him what Christian teaching has to say on the subject and he will say "Thou shalt not kill, despite the church's genocidal past"²³³.

'Satanisation' is a very powerful social and political tool: for example the German Kaiser was depicted as a demon in First World War era cartoons in Britain²³⁴. Even in national politics the demonisation of one candidate over another has been a regular practice, such as in the run-up to the UK National elections of 1997 when Tony Blair, the Labour party's potential new Prime Minister was portrayed as a red-eyed, leering, dangerous Satanic figure on billboards paid for by his opponents. As it transpired Blair's party was successful in the election in any case: ironically going on

The original anti-Blair poster campaign was heavily criticised by Church leaders for "irresponsible use of satanic imagery"²³⁵. Their comment prompts the obvious question as to what would the *responsible* use of Satanic imagery be?

'Responsible use' of Satanic motifs might include their regular use for commercial purposes. As the modern Satanist La Vey remarked, the Devil "could appear in everything from food products to sports team mascots without consternation. As long as one believed in God, it was perfectly all right to entertain Satan for fun"²³⁶. One example of this would be the very successful English football team Manchester United, who have been known as 'The Red Devils' for decades, based on the horned, tailed, trident-bearing red demonic figure which adorns the club's badge.

As is often the case when writing about magic, serendipitous, synchronic and emphatic events can occur. A matter of hours after writing the above paragraph I came across a quite remarkable advertising hoarding very near to where I then lived, a simply huge advertisement for Sky Television's coverage of the imminent new football season, showing three Manchester United players in bright red team shirts, celebrating the scoring of a goal, in front of thousands of their adoring fans. The headline of the poster was "DEVILS WORSHIP" writ large for all to see (the hoarding was placed on a very busy road junction). Returning to the site very shortly afterwards with a camera to take a picture of the billboard for the thesis, I was confronted with an advertisement for a car instead.

It is oft remarked that the Twentieth Century was perhaps the most brutal and evil in history. While there are many pro - and con - arguments on the matter, as mentioned above it is at least possible that it is the increase of historical reporting, and the increase of information via modern mass media, that merely makes it appear so. This was allied to a dramatic increase in both literacy rates and the increasing availability of various vehicles for reading the information (such as newspapers, magazines, books), or viewing via film and television. For example a highpoint of the eco-activism movement coincided with the Vietnam

²³⁵ Guardian Website, 22-7-2002 <http://media.guardian.co.uk/advertising/story/0,7492,758599,00.html>

²³⁶ LaVey, *Satan Speaks!*, p 11

War's demonstration of how destructive technology could be²³⁷, and it was shown on primetime television to boot, which previous wars had not been. Moving images of the events of World War Two had scarcely been portrayed in colour, for example, and it is only in very recent years that any significant quantity of colour footage of that war has surfaced; certainly very little was shown to a large British audience at the time.

It must also be realised that the ubiquity that has become the Internet, known as 'the Information Superhighway' in some circles, during the last 15 years or so, could also explain this sentiment, since news is now truly 'instant' and universal, rather than slow and limited only to those actively wishing to find things out, such as by having a daily newspaper delivered. With the net, a multiplicity of news sources are available to the passive reader, without the need to even leave the house.

The technological advances of the century just finished have of course allowed 'evil' acts such as mass-murder to become far easier to perform, in a practical sense; since one person armed with a machine gun or a bomb can kill far more rapidly and efficiently than the same individual four hundred years before using a mere bow and a bag of arrows ever could.

In a letter to his son (who was in the British armed services) soon after the Allied forces' invasion of Normandy in 1944, the academic and author JRR Tolkien bemoaned the onrush of technology over spirit "our devices not only fail of their desire but turn to new and horrible evil"²³⁸. The cultural historian Meredith Veldman believes that Tolkien's fictional spiritual allegory, the *Ring* tales, read in the context of an accelerating industrial and military world, asked the important moral and practical question: "how can humanity cope with the rings of power it has created?"²³⁹.

These were indeed dangerous and unsettling times, with world war still fresh in the memory, and Europe artificially divided between competing, and newly hostile cultures who had until shortly before been allies, and who were by then all intensively ensconced in demonising the other parties. Following the first use of nuclear weapons against Japan in 1945,

²³⁷ Meredith Veldman, *Fantasy, The Bomb and the Greening of Britain: Romantic Protest 1945-1980*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1994, p 244

²³⁸ JRR Tolkien, letter in Veldman, *Fantasy, The Bomb*, p 89, fn 59

²³⁹ Veldman, *Fantasy, The Bomb*, p 111

in 1954 NATO announced plans to deal with any Soviet aggression towards Europe or America with nuclear weapons, and the US very publicly tested such bombs at Bikini Atoll in the Pacific, and the Cuban Missile crisis of the early 1960s had the Americans and Russians holding the world on the brink of nuclear Armageddon.

The occultist Kenneth Grant (1924-) believes that the unique and literally earth-shaking power of the first nuclear tests in the nineteen-forties opened a 'magical' door to allow ingress to earth for non-human entities from other dimensions ²⁴⁰. Legally, another 'door' was opened in this period, with the repeal of the UK's last remaining law specifically against witchcraft, in 1951.

Atomic bombs were for the first time deliverable by effective long-range missile rather than directly from more vulnerable and slow aircraft; and the Russian deployment of their *Sputnik* spacecraft in 1957 took the arms race into space ²⁴¹, until then only the province of the peaceful astronomer, astrologer and believers in UFOs. The Americans also made it into space, and were ultimately the first to put a man on the moon. Many of the advances in rocket technology that allowed this to happen actually came from the research work of Jack Parsons (1914-1952), a highly respected propulsion engineer as well as being a pupil of Crowley.

There is not space here to cover Parsons in detail, nor real scope under my title, as he was not a British magician. The reader is directed to Carter, *Sex and Rockets*, Los Angeles, and www.babalon.net as a taster. Also, as Kenneth Grant believes, with a series of magical rituals that Parsons performed in the American desert in January 1946, in a similar fashion to the nuclear tests mentioned above, he also opened a magical door, and 'something' flew in; this ritual cycle being correlated closely in both geography and time to the first modern sightings of UFOs ²⁴². In the 1960s flight into space (based in part of Jack Parsons' engineering discoveries) and journeys towards the moon also gave the world the first distant photographic images of a green and seemingly *very alone* Earth taken from a far-off spaceship.

These were, to an audience becoming used, and perhaps almost blasé to

²⁴⁰ Grant, *Mauve Zone*, p 13

²⁴¹ Veldman, *Fantasy, The Bomb*, p 123

²⁴² Grant, *Mauve Zone*, p 13

ever-increasing post-war technological wonder, both beautiful and unsettling ²⁴³, as one magician described them "the first group photos of *Homo sapiens*, and the photographs, or at least their symbolic implication, that we are all stuck on the one rock and have to learn to live together better, had a lot of people in tears" ²⁴⁴.

Such a photogenic boost to the notion of a 'world community' helped spark a spiritual revival of a kind, with 'green' issues coming to the fore. The historian Meredith Veldman contends that the annual lengthy London to Aldermaston CND protest marches (usually taking several days to complete) became a magical, ritualised expression, "a physical penance and a spiritual revival", bringing to mind the *Canterbury Tales*, with marchers quite unself-consciously referring to it as a "pilgrimage" ²⁴⁵. Veldman also highlights this post-war atomised culture in which the English working and middle-class saw, (and, she argues that they re-created) themselves in a similar fashion to Tolkien's mythologising of Middle Earth.

This was to escape from a culture where monolithic social structures, and the emerging New World Order appeared to deny the prospect of individuality, and threaten the very survival of entire nations under the thrall of attack by nuclear weapons, but where individual approaches could, in some special circumstances, and with effort, flourish ²⁴⁶. Indeed, magicians see positive benefit in such fictional works, since removal of the attention from daily tabloid events can be magically useful "the object of the period of abstention is not so much to prove how irrelevant the journalistic phantasies are, as to prove how much they owe their relevance to our permission to allow them to take part in our lives. Reading Tolkien is less escapist than to read novels of the New York slums because Tolkien's ...fantasy microcosm... (is) with the fan whenever he closes his eyes... whereas the New York slums are hundreds of miles away" ²⁴⁷.

Veldman also describes the occasionally carnivalesque inversions that occurred during the protest marches: "direct action became a synonym for civil disobedience, but for many of the middle-class men and women marching... the experience of parading down public streets in the

²⁴³ Veldman, *Fantasy, The Bomb*, p 211

²⁴⁴ Francis Breakspear, personal communication, Spring 1994

²⁴⁵ Veldman, *Fantasy, The Bomb*, p 137-9

²⁴⁶ *Ibid*, p 1-2

²⁴⁷ Angerford & Lea. *Thundersqueak*, p 27, emphasis added

company of individuals they would normally avoid or ignore broke many of the social codes with which they had structured their lives"²⁴⁸.

Occultism is one such area where this was in some respects a possibility, at least in comparison to organised, more hierarchical religions, which had always involved a separate priesthood and laity, with a gulf of a few feet between them in physical space, but a gulf of infinite size so far as authority, training, learning and personal power was concerned. One had to have a certain education to be accepted to train as a Christian priest, and that depended on many major social and fiscal factors, otherwise one just had to sit in the Church and have the Priest intercede with divinity on your behalf. To practice magic, have direct contact with the divine (and personal agency in the matter, without an intermediary), all one needed was a book (or to be taught by someone who knew how), a little free time, perhaps some small amount of cash to buy some candles and other items, and the intent.

Veldman uses the term 'romantic' in her work to describe the general philosophical perspective that 'a scientific world-view cannot encompass all that there is to know about life, and that transcendence is a vital part of modern living'. The romantic approach was the avowed enemy of Utilitarianist philosophy; in which the essences of humanity were often reduced to a series of numerical calculations as to which path of action created the most earthly benefit for the largest number of persons, even if, as an extreme theoretical example, a life of happiness for 51% of the population meant abject misery for the other 49%.

For the romantics of the 19th Century, union with nature, and thus some kind of proto-pagan spirituality, was vital for a complete, holistic life²⁴⁹. It is likely that the late 19th Century occult revival that spawned such groups as the *Theosophical Society* and the *Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn* sprang at least in part from this worldview, but it was certainly not only the province of occultists. Among the 'romantics' was the profoundly Christian academic and novelist CS Lewis, who saw the 20th Century's apparent subjugation of nature coming at the price of reducing

Lewis warned that magic and science had both flourished in the 16th and 17th Centuries for identical reasons, with both being a possible path to power over nature, and the 20th Century was in 'danger' (in his sentiment) of following the same path²⁵¹. Lewis' overarching intent, was, according to Veldman, to reinstate a mistrust of martial, mechanical modern culture, and prepare the minds of his readers to accept the reality of the spiritual realm and to value the natural world²⁵². Veldman writes "ignorance of myth, according to Lewis, not only stultifies the imagination but leaves men and women without the resources needed to interpret and respond to reality correctly"²⁵³. Under 'myth', Lewis included the ability to comprehend the story of Jesus.

In a similar vein, the culmination of Tolkien's epic *Lord of the Rings* saw the magical *Elven* race leaving Middle-Earth, symbolising the poverty of a world newly bereft of wonder and spirit²⁵⁴. One real-world example of this 'leaving Middle Earth' motif was in the increasing industrialisation of Britain as a rural workforce moved to the cities in droves to take jobs in the burgeoning industrial complex. This was a threat to local customs and folklore too, in that as standardised mechanical jobs tempted people away from the regional idiosyncracies of working different tracts of land, then the pre-industrial village system was disrupted forever. Families (and communities) became less extended and more nuclear; thus lines of communication and transmission of knowledge between elders in the community were irrevocably cut as their younger members went off to work in factories and live in towns or cities²⁵⁵.

This allowed for an entire 'nostalgia' movement to emerge, bemoaning the inherent local 'Britishness' that was perceived as being destroyed, if indeed it had ever existed at all, let alone to the extent that the commentators believed it to have²⁵⁶. In correspondence, CS Lewis wrote that Tolkien once remarked that

"feeling about home must have been quite different in the days when a family had fed on the produce of the same few miles of country for six generations" with Lewis adding that "we... are really artificial

beings and have no connection (save in sentiment) with any place on earth" ²⁵⁷.

Veldman also paraphrases the poet, author, journalist and philosopher GK Chesterton's (1874-1936) view that a sense of wonder was vanishing from early 20th Century industrialised life; with total trust being invested in machines, science and the notion of the all-knowing expert ²⁵⁸. This is still a common sentiment among modern magicians, one telling me that "I re-started a ritual cycle after some period of quiet and jaded cynicism about the true value of magick... with the stated intent of wanting to feel awe again, and ... hell did I get it!" ²⁵⁹. Chesterton also called for a return to a more mediaeval attitude, in that he felt the older spiritual values would allow humanity to escape the mechanical philosophy of the 20th century ²⁶⁰.

A response to this kind of rallying call was the 'Arts and Crafts Movement' of the late 19th and early 20th Centuries. This was a loosely socialist-themed cadre of artisans and artists who championed the cause of using local materials and avoiding mass-production of items, and some members formed early communes in the countryside to carry out their work. Later, around 1906, the Guild Socialism movement arose, a movement aimed at restoring the human control of the means of industrial production. The leading light in the movement, George Douglas Cole (1889-1959) was an influential left-wing political theorist, who saw even Marxism as too deterministic ²⁶¹.

It is this kind of environment that the influential occult philosopher and magician Lionel Snell (of whom there will be much more said in later chapters) grew up. Snell was born in 1945, "the 3rd child to parents that had met as members of *Kibbo Kift*... father bought a ruined water mill ...restored it" ²⁶². The *Kibbo Kift* movement (also known as the *Green Shirts*.) was formed in 1920 as an adult offshoot of the Boy Scout Movement, by John Hargreave, a former scout and World War One veteran. Their core principles, given below, appear to have been a blend of some

²⁵⁷ CS Lewis, Letter to Arthur Greeves, 22-6-1930, in Veldman, *Fantasy, The Bomb*, p 57

²⁵⁸ Veldman, *Fantasy, The Bomb*, p 33

²⁵⁹ Francis Breakspear, conversation, December 2003.

²⁶⁰ Veldman, *Fantasy, The Bomb*, p 35

²⁶¹ *Ibid*, p 23, 24, 28

²⁶² Lionel Snell, personal communication, 21-2-2002

of the ideals of scouting, plus early 'Green' activism, chivalry and visionary social utopianism with slight paramilitary overtones, and they fit in neatly with many of the romantic groups mentioned by Veldman, as discussed elsewhere. Visual images of their outdoor camp meetings appear to be very 'tribal' and 'pagan' and the first five of their six tenets would, to modern witches and pagans, not seem remotely out of place:

- Open-air education for children, including camping and nature craft.
- Working for the health of body, mind and spirit.
- Establishing Craft Training Groups and Craft Guilds.
- Running local Folk Moots and encouraging cultural development.
- Aiming for the disarmament of nations and the establishment of a brotherhood of man.
- Aiming for international education based on freedom of trade between Nations, Stabilisation of the purchasing power of money in all countries, open negotiations instead of secret treaties and diplomacy and the establishment of a World Council. ²⁶³

These lofty ideals appear to have taken root in many offspring of Kibboites, as Snell told me:

"I grew up with some rather unconventional 'green' people with totem names like Beaver, Ripple and Crow. I read some woodcraft books before I was 10 and so became steeped in a sort of nature lore (like naming the months as moons) that has influenced me longterm. Read his ... (John Hargreave) novel *Young Winkle* in mid-teens and it increased my desire for a sort of Rosicrucian elite brotherhood to save mankind" ²⁶⁴.

Snell's early interest in the occult was encouraged by family friends - including some late 50s psychedelic pioneers and a former disciple of Aleister Crowley ... (I) ordered Abramelin book from Gloucester library in 1956" ²⁶⁵. The 'Abramelin book', ordered when Snell was only eleven years old, details a 6-month-long piece of continual ritual magic that is

²⁶³ A history of the Kibbo Kift (Online) www.kibbokift.org/kkkhist.htm

²⁶⁴ Lionel Snell, personal communication, 14-9-2004

²⁶⁵ *Ibid*, 21-2-2002

believed to be the ultimate (and most dangerous) achievement of any ritual magician, namely contact with and merging with one's own 'Holy Guardian Angel' or 'personal genius', and confronting and conquering numerous demons in the process.

This interest continued in his later formal education where "Clifton College held a superb collection of alchemy and magical texts... Cambridge University had a good collection of Crowley... I got to know Helios Books (Gareth Knight *et al*) and Gerald Yorke (Crowley archivist)"²⁶⁶. That Snell was reading about the Abramelin Operation at age 11 is a striking example of persistence of vision, since he prepared for and successfully performed it in 1977, over 20 years later ²⁶⁷.

²⁶⁶ *Ibid*

²⁶⁷ I hope to be Editor for Lionel's outstanding personal magical diary for that period. Forthcoming.

Spirit Vs. Machine

The place of anti-American sentiment is important in this aspect of recent British spiritual history, with the post-war romantic morality having a significant element of 'us and them', with Americans seen as "caught up in an endless pursuit of material wealth, to the impoverishment of their individual lives and national culture"²⁶⁸. The British, or at least those British with affinities to the spiritually inclined protest movements of anti-Nuclear and 'Green' ecological causes, tended to a more transcendent, spiritual and holistic view of the world.

In 1957 there were 200 organisations concerned with the preservation of some or other aspect of the British countryside or buildings. 15 years later this had risen to over a thousand; with commensurate increased in media interest ²⁶⁹.

The Soil Association was founded in 1946, comprising a mix of organic farmers and lobbyists for the benefits of chemical-free farming. An organic farming revolution was seen by Lady Eve Balfour, the movements founder and a niece of a former Prime Minister (Arthur Balfour 1848-1930, Conservative PM from 1902-05), as a means to restore the health of British soil, and by derivation, to make healthy, strong food to restore a national vigour; a simultaneous revival of spirit, flesh and nationhood. ²⁷⁰

The Soil Association plans would have entailed a major increase of manual field labourers and changes in production centres, thus having a drastic effect on the political make-up of Britain. When mainstream science failed to agree with the Soil Association's own research in the 1970s it was the wider scientific approach that was criticised within the society ²⁷¹, in much the same way that any group formed around a guru or ideal would rather stray with the ideal than allow any doubt to enter their minds, as is discussed in my Amado Crowley chapters later on.

Old copies of the Soil Association Journal *Mother Earth* do at times read disturbingly like a Nazi Party manifesto; with phrases like "the object of

²⁶⁸ Veldman, *Fantasy, The Bomb*, p 2

²⁶⁹ *Ibid*, p 209

²⁷⁰ *Ibid*, p 259

²⁷¹ *Ibid*, p 260

the Association (is)- to put life into the soil and the sons of the soil" with the writer of that comment having previously served time in jail for promoting fascism during World War Two²⁷². However Veldman contends that apart from one or two such notable members, the Soil Association were not, as such, comprised of Nazi sympathisers or activists, but were a romantic and native (if not naive) group, fighting the perceived evils of industrialised society rather than their being rampaging neo-Nazis. The Soil Association had no formal links with the Anthroposophical movement, however several prominent members of the one were also in the other²⁷³.

The SA also at times put great value on the works of Rudolph Steiner, an Anthroposophist and occultist whose views included a holistic vision of the earth as a living spirit. The German Green movement of the 1970s also sprang from Steiner and Anthroposophy²⁷⁴. The Soil Association latterly moved much towards a pure 'farming' stance from the previous proto-Nazi outlook.

The tail end of the 1960s and the early 1970s saw an immense revival in concern about ecological issues in Western Europe, with frightening but convincing forecasts of "rivers that caught on fire and cancer-causing chemicals (that) laced the food supply"²⁷⁵, from which the early Green movements gained much impetus.

The Green movement faded from prominence somewhat in the early 1980s, but were brought back into the light by the Ethiopian famine of the middle of that decade²⁷⁶, at a time when eighties materialism was at its height in the West.

The French Secret Service bombing of the Greenpeace ship *Rainbow Warrior*, in the mid 1980s while it was in the South Pacific to protest about nuclear bomb testing brought the conflicting needs of governments and Green groups into sharp focus²⁷⁷. On the 25th of April 1986 the Ukrainian nuclear power plant at Chernobyl broke down catastrophically, the subsequent reactor fire making the surrounding

272 Jorian Jenks, in *Mother Earth*, 1/1, 1946, p 6 in Veldman, *Ibid*, p 262

273 Veldman, *Fantasy, The Bomb*, p 262-3

274 *Ibid*

275 *Ibid*, p 208

276 *Ibid*, p 300

277 *Ibid*

area too radioactive to live in and showering the northern hemisphere with contaminants, drastically affecting both farming economies (in the northern UK the contaminated wool and flesh of around 4 million sheep grazing on irradiated land were removed from merchantable agricultural production for decades, for example) and individual perceptions of the nuclear world. The disaster created a long-term and major focus for both Green protests and the anti-Nuclear groups²⁷⁸, and Biblical allusions to end-time horrors linked to Wormwood in the *Book of Revelations* (the Russian for Chernobyl sometimes translated as being Wormwood²⁷⁹) added extra spice to the event, even if it was a not entirely convincing meme when closely examined.

Total faith in materialism was not a new, and certainly not a purely American notion, of course. In the nineteenth century the philosopher Thomas Carlyle, (1795-1881) had warned, "we have profoundly forgotten everywhere that *Cash-payment* is not the sole relation of human beings"²⁸⁰.

The materialism of pure numbers was however used as a symbol of the transatlantic difference, and a target for moral-philosophical attack, with the notion of the dominant hegemony of book-keeping in dollars being countered by Lewis' *Aslan* (a symbolic Christ-like heroic figure) in the *Narnia* tales literally "knocking the numbers out of Eustace... (allowing) the boy to perceive for the first time the beauty and meaning of experience"²⁸¹.

The industrial revolution had instigated a worldview where machinery could provide everything the heart desired, be that luxury goods for the ruling classes or mass-produced items for the workers, and the machinery, and by implication the operatives, would be at work 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, with scant notice taken of formerly holy days. John Ruskin, (1819-1900), the English author and advocate of social reform had warned that mechanical processes inherent in industrialised society threatened to turn humans into machines, and thus eliminate the spiritual aspect of society for good, destroying notions of human society in the

278 *Ibid*, p 300-1

279 see <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chernobyl> and en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chernobyl_in_the_popular_consciousness

280 Thomas Carlyle, *Selected writings*, London, Penguin, 1971, p 277 in Veldman, *Fantasy, The Bomb*, p 15, emphasis original.

281 Veldman, *Fantasy, The Bomb*, p 307

process. He saw society depending on a community of spirit, not a community of financial wealth and material goods; and his writings became immensely influential in the early Labour Party²⁸².

In parallel with these developments in industry, rationalist philosophies took over as a dominant intellectual paradigm instead of theologically-based beliefs; with the intellect supervening God's word and there was the future prospect of a true democracy, albeit one devoid of any spirituality.

Moving into the mid-20th Century, "by the end of World War II, most people regarded the idea of the devil (as a personified being) as a 'silly superstition'",²⁸³ whilst still retaining some more ephemeral concepts of human personification of good and evil. With the approaching Nuremberg Trials for war crimes of the leading 'evil' Nazis after the Second World War this issue was often in the forefront of media attention. The historian Meredith Veldman believes that in 1945, after the cessation of hostilities (and the horrors) of World War Two, Britain became a far less important economic and military power, and the ongoing emasculation of the British Empire from that time perhaps created a cultural space in which a new spirituality could slowly appear.

As the literary theorists Rivkin and Ryan write: the British Empire and English was "cast in a new light (towards the end of Empire)... no longer could it present itself as a repository of good values or of appropriate style if these values were connected... to imperial violence, or if that style could be shown to be the result of a history of the forced displacement... of peoples with smaller (or no) guns"²⁸⁴.

In 1944 the UK's Education Act was passed by Parliament, one clause of which made both a daily act of collective worship and Religious Instruction classes mandatory in schools²⁸⁵. The Act was, at the time, a compromise between the divergent wishes of the Catholic and Protestant Church for education, but in more recent years a considerable proportion of

²⁸² *Ibid*, p 19-20

²⁸³ Jeffrey Russell, *The Historical Satan*, in James Richardson *et al* (Eds.), *The Satanism scare*, New York, Aldine, 1991, p 49, in La Fontaine, *Satanism, Athlone History of Witchcraft*, p 89

²⁸⁴ Rivkin & Ryan, *English without shadows, literature on a grand scale*, in Rivkin & Ryan, *Literary Theory*, p 852

²⁸⁵ British Humanist Association website www.humanism.org.uk/site/cms/content-ViewArticle.asp?article=1266

schools have moved towards a non-denominational and thus fundamentally diluted (from the original Christian) daily worship act, in a gesture of incorporation of all faiths other than Christian in the growing more recent multi-cultural society of Britain, or they have simply failed to adequately provide the daily worship aspect at all.

In a recent report based on the regular national schools inspection (carried out by OFSTED, the Office for Standards in Education) it was concluded that "approaching half of schools are judged poor at fostering spiritual development, and a declining number, around one-third in 1995/6, are judged good"²⁸⁶.

If Britain was no longer a world leader in one or more of industry and all-encompassing territorial possession then perhaps we could lead the world in a moral, spiritual stance?²⁸⁷ As it transpired, the answer was no, the novelist and critic JB Priestley (1894-1984) writing in 1957 said "we ended the war high in the world's regard. We could have taken over its moral leadership, spoken and acted for what remained of its conscience; but we chose to act otherwise"²⁸⁸.

The Suez crisis of 1956 saw Britain invading Egypt in a move that was extremely unpopular both within the country and internationally (echoed more recently in the 2003 Iraq Invasion and ongoing occupation), which led to outrage among those who optimistically still considered Britain to be seeking the moral high ground in world leadership. Almost simultaneously the Soviet Union invaded Hungary, polarising thought about good and evil in international relations, and reducing the membership of the Communist Party in Britain by 20%, many of them later moving towards The Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament (CND) as a vehicle for making protest²⁸⁹.

CND was formed in Britain in 1958, being an umbrella organisation for all manner of political persuasions and religious outlooks, the abiding aim being to protest against nuclear weapons. In the early years it was composed of "respectable and apolitical middle-class mothers joined with

²⁸⁶ HMSO website- OFSTED Review of Secondary Schools in England, Section 4.2 www.archive.official-documents.co.uk/document/ofsted/secced/review.htm

²⁸⁷ Veldman, *Fantasy, The Bomb*, p 3-4

²⁸⁸ John Boynton Priestley, *Britain and the Nuclear Bombs*, in Veldman, *Fantasy, The Bomb*, p 132

²⁸⁹ Veldman, *Fantasy, The Bomb*, p 121-2

perennial protesters, Gandhian pacifists, Labour Leftists and ex-Communists”²⁹⁰, and by 1959 it had 40-50,000 members. During the late 1970s and early 1980s, with the hotly-disputed deployment of a new generation of American nuclear Cruise missiles in the UK the membership (and non-members attending protest marches) rose considerably. I was a CND supporter at the time, and the largest rally I attended (in London in the early 1980s) had approximately 150,000 people present far more than were ever registered CND members at that time. Membership now stands at around 32,000²⁹¹.

Within CND in the 1980s there was a smaller, and explicitly pagan group, *Pagans Against Nukes*, whose acronym PAN neatly reflected the ‘nature god’ angle from which they were protesting. They used to publish a quarterly magazine, *The Pipes of Pan*, but this organisation now seems to have disappeared.

Despite their growing mass-market appeal as fantasy authors, Veldman contends that the elitist outlook of Tolkien and Lewis on the problems of technology over spirituality (and their often detached positions as ‘Ivory-Towered’ tenured academics) conspired to mean that neither man could truly participate in the fabricated and insulting (to their sensitive spiritual souls) modern material world²⁹², so instead they created a literary ‘underground’ where they could live happily, detached from their contemporaries²⁹³. Tolkien regarded fantasy to be “not a lower but a higher form of art... and... the most potent” if one could be made to believe in a coherently constructed fantasy world²⁹⁴. Lewis and Tolkien were (politically) also traditional ‘One-Nation’ Conservatives, aligned to a strict hierarchical class system²⁹⁵, which stance automatically limited their spiritual hopes for mankind to a Christian solution, thus a hierarchy involving God, clergy and laity.

This apparent post-war decline of a recognisable moral imperative was not purely a British phenomenon, and the roots of the matter stretched back in time. The French art historian Jean Pierrrot identifies the cultural

290 *Ibid*, p 125

291 Veldman, *Fantasy, The Bomb*, p 115-7, and CND Press Office, personal communication, 19th August 2004.

292 Veldman, *Fantasy, The Bomb*, p 91

293 *Ibid*, p 94

294 *Ibid*, p 46

295 *Ibid*, p 92

stance of the Frenchman at the turn of the 19th –20th Century as due to “lingering national psychological trauma” following the defeat of France in the 1870-71 war with Prussia, exacerbated by a diminution of the Christian faith. The damage to French morale (and perhaps their faith in God) by the experiences of German occupation during the 1914-18 and 1939-45 wars would only have added to this.

During the latter half of the 19th-, and all of the 20th centuries every one of the European powers were individually and jointly struggling to deal with their rapidly changing international relationships with each other, and in some cases internal moves for independence (peaceful or otherwise) from regions within their borders. Multiple political and trade alliances formed and reformed rapidly, while competition between Empire-building nations led to over-stretched home economies and weakened home defence capabilities. The maintenance of colonies had become too much, since European powers were horribly over-stretched by a fairly horrible statistic: “between 1815 to 1914 European direct colonial dominion expanded from about 35 percent of the earth’s surface to about 85 percent of it”²⁹⁶.

An increase in secular materialism led to a gradually steepening decline in religious faith, or at least ‘conventional’ religious faith, which in turn led to looser imposed social controls, since one arm of the power triumvirate of law-church-state had been severely weakened. Increasing urbanisation, the decline of the extended family and a more mobile population led to increasing numbers of ‘incomers’ exacerbating the erosion of local custom and social cohesion, both as urban areas expanded and existing areas became more crowded. This development was viewed with dismay by most observers, however the ‘Decadent’ artistic and literary movement, championed in Britain towards the end of the 19th Century by the writer and wit Oscar Wilde, welcomed the social changes made possible by the associated:

“...decay of old social restrictions... (and) the novelty, excitement and possibilities for self-exploration offered by the modern city and the new technologies”²⁹⁷. They were “keen to exploit... the relativization of moral values which has accompanied the relativization of aesthetic values. Since consistency was a virtue that was no longer prized, the

296 Edward Said, *Orientalism*, (original 1978) in Rivkin & Ryan, *Literary Theory*, p 881

297 Veldman, *Oscar Wilde*, p 79

various challenges of modern life could be embraced or ignored on a whim"²⁹⁸.

Various wartime evacuations and post-war refugee displacements in huge numbers only added to the fluidity of this situation.

Fall and Rise of the Magicians

The magician, author and utopian magical group leader Aleister Crowley died in 1947. With him it seemed that at least some of the public face of the neo-Masonic, Victorian-decadent hangover of overblown ceremonial magic had died too, probably of old age and being of unfashionable style in a shattered post-war post-Hitlerian world where the idea of *ritual and ornate ceremony associated with hugely charismatic leaders who had grand and all-encompassing plans for the future* would leave a very bad taste in the mouth.

'Dion Fortune', the magician and author had died in 1946, the fraudulent cleric, paedophile and polemic pseudo-historian of magic 'the Reverend' Montague Summers passed in 1948 and the magician and artist Austin Osman Spare followed Fortune, Summers and Crowley to the next world in 1956, as largely unknown in death as he had been for the last thirty years of his life. Many of the German members of Crowley's magical order the OTO had died in the war, some of them in concentration camps. As with much of the former hierarchies of religious, political, royal/dynastic and power/political world after the war, the 'old order' of magic had gone too.

Since both some of the major names in magic had died and paper for non-essential books (such as for magical tomes) was still under ration, the world was preoccupied with secular rebuilding after the war. Thus it was some time before magic became of wider interest again. The modern social scientist Kenneth Rees sees the postwar revival of magical activity as being often a virtual mirror of the hierarchical structures inherent in British politics since World War Two, and he considers the development of neo-paganism and magic in this country since 1945 to have been largely either (a) running in parallel with political changes during the same period, or (b) conversely to be recognisable as attempts to break away from the dominant societal schemas.

Thus the tail end of the period of material scarcity, austerity and re-industrialisation after World War Two was the stage for a rebellious, nature-based and often naturist (i.e. stark naked) emergence of Gardnerian Wicca (named after its founder Gerald Gardner, discussed earlier), albeit with a rigid internal hierarchy, which although controversial and

somewhat daring on the use of nudity and some light flagellation in ritual, otherwise largely mirrored the 'one nation' politics of the mostly Conservative middle-classes who indulged in the practice of Wicca at that time, which was not so far in structure and hierarchy from Anglican Church worship, just with different titles, terms of reference and the element of some nudity, and arguably the whip substituted for pain induced by fear of sin ²⁹⁹.

The 1951 repeal of the outdated Witchcraft Act assisted in the revival of magic not so much by finally making the practice legal, but by drawing public and media attention to its existence at all. The 'permissive' 1960s saw a Socialist Labour government, and in parallel the emergence of a much more rebellious musical and 'low art' culture, an explosion in the circulation of mind-altering drugs (which gave instant access to altered states, and those states being allegedly analogous to magical states of consciousness) and, crucially, the wide availability of the contraceptive pill. Sex became both more in the public eye, and safer to indulge in.

So far as drugs are concerned in magic, this is another area where I could digress for five hundred pages (but cannot as this book becomes weighty enough as it is). It is enough for now to know that drugs are sometimes used in magic. Andrew Letcher writes that entheogenic substances are regarded by some magicians as "tools for bypassing the intellect, the rational mind, the everyday consciousness of paramount reality" ³⁰⁰. An un-named Chaos magician author writes "of all the techniques of neuromancy, recourse to Chemognosis (drugs) is the most widespread... and in the western hemisphere particularly, one that arouses much controversy. Only those who have received medical training, and can hence say from a position of authority that they do not know how the brain works, are allowed to tamper with it- through ECT, surgery and the ...chemical cosh'. While it is fine for these watchdogs to impose their will upon the brains of others, it is quite another matter for non-qualified people to try it on themselves" ³⁰¹.

The use of certain drugs is another area of transgressive behaviour under UK law, and they are a means to a drastic alteration of consciousness

299 Kenneth Rees, *The Politics of Modern Paganism: a social historical perspective*. *The Pentacle*, 9, Summer 2004, p 20-23.

300 Andrew Letcher, *Role of the Bard*, p 198

301 L.O.O.N. *Apikorosus*, (Ebook), 1986, p 16. ECT stands for Electro Convulsive Therapy, emphasis added

that some magicians deliberately employ: "of all the techniques of neuromancy, recourse to Chemognosis (drugs) is the most widespread... and in the western hemisphere particularly, one that arouses much controversy" ³⁰² ... although "historically... many ... techniques ... have been augmented by the use of drugs- from witches' flying ointments to the LSD and sensory deprivation techniques of John Lilly" ³⁰³. The chaos magic pioneer Ray Sherwin's *Theatre of Magic* also mentions using 'a strong sacrament' in rituals ³⁰⁴, which would appear to be a psychedelic drug. This echoes Aleister Crowley's seminal text *The Book of the Law*, where the magical aspirant is urged: "to worship me take wine and strange drugs thereof".

While the notion of flying ointments being actually used at all in early-Modern Europe is still academically debated, the employment of these memes as a culturally normalising and historicising tool for a current activity is what is important here.

In 1967 the 'Men's magazine' *Penthouse*, (a soft-pornography title with some pretension to providing additional editorial content and intelligently-written articles on a broad range of subjects) celebrated the "barriers of obscurantism... coming down on the morality front ... (with) former taboo aspects of sex ... (being) discussed openly" but at the same time castigated the then-emerging 'political correctness' movement, in an article littered with (what are regarded today as) hideous racial insults ³⁰⁵. This edition also contained an early 'popular press' article on Crowley's sex magick written by John Symonds, one of his literary executors. Despite a number of claimed female readers *Penthouse* was aimed at a demographic of the "indoor, upstairs... urban male... brandishing a cigar in one hand and a brandy in the other", in an anonymous editorial on page 5 of the same issue. Whether "the *Penthouse* male and his world are nearly every woman's ideal" (a comment in the same issue) was ever true is doubtful, however, since this was also at the height of the 1960s Womens Rights movement.

Gerald Gardner died in 1964, and into this early sixties arena came Alex Sanders, a post-Gardnerian witch and magician, whose initiates came

302 *Ibid*

303 *Ibid*, p 4

304 Sherwin, *Theatre of Magic*, no page numbering

305 Editorial. *View From the Top*. *Penthouse*. Bob Guccione (Ed.). 2. 7. May 1967. p 11.

from a far wider social class spectrum than Gardner's, and whose groups tended to be far less hierarchical than, and in general far more sexually profligate than Gardnerians³⁰⁶. The introduction of the hormone contraceptive Pill to the UK in the very early 1960s was also vital (for magical use of sex, especially) in that for the first time it allowed female sexuality and sexual exploration to flourish with far less risk of pregnancy.

There is a massive academic literature on this fascinating and fluid period of history, to which I sadly cannot spare any more pages. A small sample of which includes: Jonathan Green, *All Dressed Up, the Sixties and Counterculture*, London, Pimlico, 1999; Christopher Booker, *The Neophiliacs, a Study of Revolution in English Life in the Fifties and Sixties*, London, Fontana, 1970 and Christie Davies, *Permissive Britain, Social Change in the Sixties and Seventies*, London, Pitman, 1975.

Magic started to mount a revival in Britain in the late 1960s onwards. In the early 1970s a young Israeli man called Uri Geller found worldwide fame for his apparent ability to perform feats of telepathy, psychokinesis and affecting the atomic structure of metal with his will; bending various items by apparent magical or paranormal means. Regardless of any subsequent, and still hotly debated, scientific 'proofs' or 'disproofs' of the paranormal nature of his ability, what is important is that in the early 1970s, Geller helped people to believe that *anything was possible*, and to think that the laws of science were to there be challenged; which is a fertile breeding ground for alternative, and in this case magical, belief systems.

Although not himself a ritual magician he is sympathetic to the aims of such practices³⁰⁷, since (from my definition of magic given in the introductory chapter) he is in a broadly similar line of work, that of changing the world and-or consciousness.

Crowley's former secretary and pupil Kenneth Grant (1924-) emerged from the realms of occasional small print-run publications and authored his first full-length book for a major occult publisher, *The Magical Revival* which really marked the start of his influential magical writing career. Mr. Grant is discussed at length in chapters that follow later. In the early 1970s 'Amado Crowley' a claimed son of Aleister emerged and started

306 Kenneth Rees, *The Politics of Modern Paganism, Pentacle*, 9, p 20-23. Sanders himself was a very sexually active bisexual, and did not discourage sexual activities between his numerous coven members. Tony Looker, conversation, Autumn 2002.

307 Uri Geller, telephone conversation, 9-9-2004

to teach magic, and his story is dealt with in a later chapter. 1974 saw the publication of *SSOTBME* by Lionel Snell³⁰⁸, the son of two Kibbo Kift members, as mentioned above, and who under various pseudonyms is vitally important as a philosopher and practitioner of modern magic, and his words are to be found in many places herein. The title is an acronym for 'Sex Secrets Of The Black Magicians Explained', which is completely spurious, the book being instead a recondite and compelling model for a modern magical philosophy in contrast to the philosophical stances of Art, Religion and Science.

A signature extract from the book might be "it is desirable to elect beliefs which offer greater scope for Magical results. The belief that our world is but a shadow play of mighty cosmic forces, which can be ... manipulated by human wisdom- that is a pretty good Magical belief... That the world was made by one God who forbids the use of Magic is less useful... one of the worst possible Magical beliefs is that our world is made of solid matter shaped only by chance, within which human consciousness ... is mere epiphenomena. Magic-wise it's utter useless crap, and yet it is a belief heavily endorsed by our Scientific culture"³⁰⁹.

The book became highly influential in both the development of thought in what was to become chaos magic, and at the 'New Age' end of spirituality too; which metaphorically would be like an author finding fervent fans for the same philosophical book in both the Vatican and Mecca. Following this impetus from Snell, Grant and others, magical publishing started to flower again in Britain. From 1970 to 1972 an intelligently-written partwork magazine partially based on the occult was launched, and became a most influential and best-selling title: *Man, Myth and Magic*, with a talented editorial board³¹⁰, and with occult specialists such as Kenneth Grant supplying several articles.

After the election of the conservative government of Margaret Thatcher in 1979 and the ensuing 18 years of conservative rule, British life was hugely influenced by a political re-modeling of society that revolved

308 Lionel Snell uses a number of pseudonyms, which are disclosed here with permission, including Ramsey Dukes, Hugo L'Estrange, Liz Angerford, Ambrose Lea, Adamai Philotinus, Lemuel Johnstone

309 Johnstone, *SSOTBME*, p 103

310 The *Man, Myth and Magic* editorial board comprised Richard Cavendish, Isabel Sutherland, Mary Breckon and Frank Smyth plus various consultant contributors. *Man, Myth and Magic*, (periodical) London, Purnell, 1970-1972

around the creation and maintenance of a consumerist model, in parallel with advances in technology which was reflected in more and more products being made available to the consumer with the means to buy them, and more and more complex weapons being made available to the military and more powerful machinery and chemicals being made available to various industrial and agricultural concerns.

This created a technocracy in opposition to a theocracy, in which all of life's problems could be solved by science and technology³¹¹, if only enough money were to be thrown at those problems. Resistance to this model was an area that was tailor-made to magico-religious approaches that emphasised (and increased) the power of the individual (such as Chaos magic, as examined in later chapters), and the role of natural spirits and magic, not science. Ironically it might have been precisely that consumerist, expansive, free-trade 'Greed is good' society (and that Prime Minister, in Margaret Thatcher) so hated if not actively cursed by many eco-friendly occultists that actually allowed for the explosion of a revival of interest in magic, since an avalanche of occult books (even if they were critical of the political *status quo* of the time, as many were) and commodities became much more freely available in the marketplace under this consumerist and individualist model.

It also affected individual moralities. The religious studies specialist Andy Letcher describes one (un-named) woman in a magical group of this period who justified an adulterous affair on the grounds that "it was what the universe wanted", but he cites this attitude instead as a reflection of the Thatcherite 'me, me, me' culture³¹². It is perhaps also not coincidence that the individualist and self-empowering school of Chaos magic appeared and blossomed in this period, with figureheads such as Peter Carroll, Charles Brewster and Ray Sherwin, followed later by Phil Hine, Dave Lee and many others, as will be discussed later.

Despite the fall of Thatcher herself in 1990, subsequent nominally 'socialist' governments in the UK since 1997, and several periods of 'boom and bust' economics during the period, this financial paradigm has largely remained, as has the relative ease of occult book publication. A recent development has been the company Lightning Source (and similar companies), whose rationale allows for virtually financial risk-

³¹¹ Veldman, *Fantasy, The Bomb*, p 4-5

³¹² Letcher, *Role of the Bard*, p 42

free 'Do It Yourself' publication and distribution of small print runs at prices that are not prohibitive, allowing for many more 'minority' titles to appear (including this book!). The ease of supply of magical commodities such as incense, ritual tools and candles has also grown hugely in the last 15 years.

The increasing availability of public internet access since the early 1990s under the same consumer-led model has allowed worldwide occult textual material to become available in Britain, increasing the information volume available to the magical revival almost exponentially. During this entire post-war period the gradual increase of both leisure time and disposable income had allowed people of most classes the opportunity, the spare finances and the facilities within which to study and practice magic, something that within the context of a 6- or 7-day working week, lower life expectancy, poorer housing and poor wages simply could not have been part of the life of an average industrial worker of a century before³¹³.

From an accumulation of very similar comments derived from my various informal interviews and conversations with occultists like myself, many of whom were in their forties and fifties at the turn of the 20th-21st Centuries, there seems to be a cohesive thread of replies to my questions of the theme: 'what tempted them into exploring magic?' This was, in many cases, some form of, if not outright rebellion, then a concerted and conscious desire to drastically diverge from the values, beliefs, standards and behaviour of their parent's generation. On first hearing this seems to be an impetus to move completely away from their parents' generation bemoaning the loss of empire, the re-telling of war stories and generally looking backwards in recent history. The urge was to do something else entirely, something that was of an individual level, such as the exploration of personal belief systems and in some cases longing for some kind of golden age which was not located in either recent history, or perhaps even on earth at all, rather than engaging in macro- matters such as cognitively dealing with the just-lost Empire and being in awe of the recent heroic deeds of massive Armies.

This is not to say that they have completely renounced the material world, or have neither interest nor involvement in society, history or politics (or

³¹³ See Paul Johnson, (Ed.), *20th Century Britain, Economic, Social and Cultural Change*, Harlow, Longman, 1994, chapters 3, 5-7, 16-19, 22, 24 & 26 for detailed background to this assertion.

indeed huge admiration for the sacrifices of the World War Two generation, without which today's freedoms simply would not exist³¹⁴), rather that their priorities are intrinsically different from those of the preceding generation. Veldman sees the fantasy works of Tolkien and CS Lewis, two men who survived involvement in the First World War, as important catalysts and templates for this kind of belief which gained popularity after the Second World War; since they both in their own ways emphasised the individual's role, and aspects of the role of nature in spiritual life. Veldman sees the huge volume of sales of titles by both authors among Britain's middle-classes in the post-war period as being a historical indicator of both a need for a life-affirming fantasy, and as a blueprint for how a moral world could be made - the latter being an early philosophical impetus for the 'Green' ecology movement and the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament³¹⁵.

It is too simplistic a conclusion to say that the generation that won the Second World War subsequently had children who capitalised so massively on the intellectual freedoms that followed that they all but turned their backs on the environment in which those freedoms arose, but it is an idea that has some mileage for further study. While this is solely my opinion formed from talking to several dozen occultists, and as such is not to be treated as 'gospel truth', but rather one tendency that has been identified, it should be further researched on a larger scale in future if we are to ever fully understand the underpinning to this historical progression into the later 20th Century popularity of occultism and other 'fringe' spiritualities.

What is more certain is that the illusory spiritual Golden Age, so beloved of the romantic protesters and fantasy authors was, as Veldman decides, "not only ahistorical, but escapist and elitist", since despite any modern wish to a return to such a golden past age, mediaeval peasants were considerably less possessed of individual agency (and had a far lower life expectancy) than even the most oppressed factory hands were in either 1850 or 1950, and a simpler life was actually a harder life³¹⁶. Veldman also convincingly argues that a non-nuclear society, as striven for by CND was as much a fantasy as anything written by Lewis or Tolkien, with their common strand of idealised worlds drawing on past, often

³¹⁴ And one of my other historical projects involves work with D-Day veterans, one of whom has become a dear friend...

³¹⁵ Veldman, *Fantasy, The Bomb*, p 6

³¹⁶ *Ibid*, p 309-10

mediaeval, pastoral templates³¹⁷. Veldman contends that many CND members believed that "banning the bomb marked a beginning in the building of this spiritually better Britain"³¹⁸.

Nuclear disarmament, like the advent of a new Golden Age, never happened, and by a supremely ironic twist I wrote the majority of this section of the book in 2004 from a house situated within 500 yards of the major dock facility for Britain's still nuclear-equipped and active submarine fleet.

³¹⁷ *Ibid*, p 305-6

³¹⁸ *Ibid*, p 116

Approaching End Times?

From the early 1990s onwards media attention on the general broad area of 'the unexplained' gained ground with successful TV programmes such as *The X-Files*³¹⁹. *The X-Files* started on British TV in 1993 and ran until 2002, with regular repeats of the nine completed series, plus a motion picture and numerous spin-off books and merchandise. This process of 'acculturation to the high weird' accelerated during the later 1990s when a series of doom-laden films and books such as *Bless the Child*, *The Matrix* and *End of Days*³²⁰ exacerbated the pre-millennial tension, the imminent '2000th birthday of Christ' perhaps heralding a predicted occult-related apocalypse in an increasingly de-sacralised world, with the Devil returning to take control. In *Bless the Child* there is a scenario where a 'chosen' child has to be sacrificed at a particular point in time that has astrological significance, and depending on whether that happens the world is saved or damned. The evil protagonist in the film runs a pseudo-religious cult with many similarities to L. Ron Hubbard's Cult of Scientology, has a murderous assistant who is the very image of Crowley, has books such as LaVey's *Satanic Bible* on his shelves and whose philosophical motto is 'do what you will, and will what you do, which is painfully similar to Crowley's 'Do What Thou Wilt'.

Or conversely, viewed from the 1990s the year 2000 may have heralded the Second Coming of Christ instead of the Devil; but with either outcome being pretty much a 'no-win bloodbath' for the sinners and non-believers. At the same time, other authors' and film-makers' work encouraged a popular interest in 'consuming' magic if not actually practicing it, including the best-selling *Harry Potter* novels by JK Rowling about a young boy attending a school for wizards, and the hit TV series *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*³²¹, which had a huge supernatural and magical theme. The 'teen witch' series *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* ran on British TV from 1997-2003, with regular repeats since, and the *Harry Potter* series of books and sub-

sequent films about a young boy training to be a wizard are ongoing since 1997, making the author, JK Rowling, a multi-millionaire.

In August 1999 the southern half of Britain fell under the shadow of a total solar eclipse, a greatly-heralded 'once in a lifetime' event (unless one travels huge distances³²²), since the last UK eclipse had been in 1927, and the next will not be until 2090. It had substantial pseudo-magical or superstitious importance applied to it since it was so close to the millennium, and the eclipse occurred at 11.11 am on 11th August, which was very numerically and magically interesting to some. Crowley's magical system had 11 as a very significant number: for example, "my number is 11, as all their numbers who are of us"³²³.

To somewhat dilute any visual magical effect, despite astronomers having been able to predict the exact moment and duration of the eclipse for years in advance by the exact scientific process of complex (but 'clock-work') celestial mechanics, the untrustworthy vagaries of precisely forecasting the weather, using that same kind of science, and then only a day in advance, prevented thousands from seeing the actual event, but many still fell under the spell of the huge and eerie swathe of chill darkness that swept across the country. As did the crows in the deeply cloudy Cornish field where I witnessed the event, the birds dropping suddenly from the sky as, to them, 'night suddenly fell' in the middle of the day. Such a massive demonstration of the magic of nature had a profound effect on British consciousness, even if only 'on the day' for some witnesses.

The onset of the millennium was heralded by fear of a the Millennium Bug, a potential technological meltdown and worldwide disruption and disaster, as many computers were expected to fail at the moment when their internal clocks which read 23.59.59, 31.12.99 changed to 00.00.00, 01.01.00, and the computers 'thinking it was 1900', a time in which they had not been programmed to work, would all freeze, with planes falling from the sky in much the same way the crows had fallen on eclipse day, nuclear reactors going critical and all cities grinding to a halt since the infrastructure relied so much on computers. In general it didn't happen

same way that organised religion became something not to be trusted as the early modern period gave way to the modern. That the predicted global chaos did not occur being in part due to some major repair-prevention works beforehand does not matter a jot to the nay-Sayers, since a prophet's utterance that does not come true (regardless of why not) makes that prophet an easy target for ridicule and mistrust in future.

Another example of science apparently failing to work while the natural cycles continued regardless seemed an apposite point in which to enter the fabled 21st Century. This date was when it had long been forecast that myriad technological wonders would be at our fingertips, but they never quite were, as the magician and occult philosopher Lionel Snel wrote:

"I have seen pictures of tomorrow's cities in pre-war books... no-one travels by car, they all... fly to work... come the 1950s it was clear that the transport industry had let us down...we grew out of that dream and turned to Dan Dare in the Eagle comic strip who could speak to his wrist TV and be in immediate contact with any of his crew... we grew up believing that instant walkie talkie video communications were coming any day... the IT industry has failed to deliver just as the aircraft industry did...Bullshit. The same old promises we heard in 1960"³²⁴.

I am still waiting for the Jet Pack, which I was promised as a child that I would be using to get to work when I was an adult.

Despite the global horror in the face of this potential numerological magical disaster at the turn of the millennium, little actually went wrong in the techno-apocalyptic fashion that had been feared. Magically, and in similar fashion to the passing of Crowley, Fortune and Summers in the immediate postwar years, around the turn of the millennium two important elderly occult figures died, Doreen Valiente late in 1999 and Stuart Farrar early in 2000.

Valiente and Farrar had both gradually become part of the 'sanctified old guard' of post-war modern witchcraft, and their passing in some way marked both the end of one chapter and the beginning of something else, suddenly providing magical practitioners with 'new' dead elders, who

324 Ramsey Dukes, Technology Future Shock, www.occultebooks.com/essays/technology.htm

could be venerated and in some ways idealised, thus providing inspiration and role models from beyond the grave, in much the same way that Crowley, Spare, Fortune etc. had fulfilled that function for the magical contemporaries of Valiente and Farrar.

This provides an object of reverence and to an extent a semi-divine corpus of printed knowledge (both Farrar and Valiente published quite extensively) that cannot now be contradicted by mere living mortals, in the same way that perhaps Mother Teresa has fulfilled that role for the Church since her death in 1997, despite the numerous and dubious underlying scandals (usually financial) that occasionally surface about her.

Now, in the early part of the 21st century, magic appears to be more popular than ever, and in many more diverse forms: various nature-based neo-pagan religions, techno-paganism³²⁵, chaos magic, neo-shamanism, Satanism, Luciferianism, Druidry, Asatru, Voudon, Wicca and others all thrive and compete for attention and bookshelf space among consumers, and they are under some initial proper study by academics, as mentioned above.

At the same time to some extent many organised religions suffer falling and-or ageing congregations and increasingly negative public images for various reasons. For example since the World Trade Center terrorist attack in Autumn 2001 the Muslim faith itself through generalist secular Western eyes, (with media/political hype added in) has been, and probably will forever be, tarred with the slur of being pro-terrorist, regardless of any truth in that matter. Various strands of Christianity have also had numerous hugely damaging sexual and financial scandals to deal with in the last three decades. It's a real mess for just about everybody, it seems.

Having negotiated through early-modern ideas of blasphemy, inversion, good and evil, the interleaving of magic into general morality of later centuries and into the post-war technological nuclear age, it is on this threshold of the 21st century that magic now sits, and it is to the historical development of morality *within* that magic that I now turn.

325 A form of pagan ritual that employs anything from modern culture; such as using mobile telephones to send magical spell words to others, making a computer workstation into an altar etc

Morality within Magick

“classify all non-Christian rites as black (and) one will find oneself in very deep water indeed”³²⁶.

Having covered the wider historical and public moral grounds within which modern British magic continued to evolve in the previous chapters, I will now move on to cover some of the history of moral attitudes *within* modern magic, which derive from the wider moral issues just reviewed. This will include an examination of the common moral imperatives within neo paganism to ‘do only good’, modern psychological approaches to morality, the development of the Left-Hand Path, which is often also known as ‘Black Magic’, and the modern dissolution of such divisive and dualistic concepts within magic. This is getting us ever-closer to the post-Crowleyan world analysis promised much earlier in the book, but this has to be done in stages to gain a full appreciation of the wider world within which this magic developed.

The reader will note that these following magical morality chapters are perhaps the least historicised of the book, since as will be shown, to some extent the moral attitudes within magic are fragmentary, non-linear and at least in some quarters partly frozen in time since the 1950s; hence there is an element of the matter being ahistorical, and this section has been written by drawing upon other disciplines such as philosophy and psychology in order to examine the subject further. This is an area where radical thought (particularly among the chaos magical fraternity, which is of the Left-Hand path - a term explained later) is producing a revolution of philosophical liberation so far as outmoded and purely Biblical concepts of good and evil are concerned.

However also, in concert with this, other areas of magic more towards the Right Hand path are becoming even more firmly entrenched in a staid and crystallised morality. This could perhaps best be described as a magical analogue of the political changes seen in Britain in the late 1980s until the present, where the Labour Party underwent massive philosophical change (and gained winning votes and thus power to govern as a result) against a Conservative Party that remained so resistant to change

that it was eventually seen as out of date and irrelevant, as the Labour Party had appeared to be in the early 1980s.

The analogy fails in the power angle, since there is no vote or elections, and no resources to ‘take over’ within magic (and the New Agers by definition will probably always claim the moral high ground in any case), but the rest of the metaphor serves well.

Cognition and Philosophy of Evil

As has been discussed above, Christianity has historically regarded all magic as black.

End of story.

However an important development of magical thought in the later 19th, 20th, and now the 21st Century has been an examination and continuing philosophical redefinition of good versus evil *within* white and black magic.

This can in part be seen as a reaction to such prescriptive statements usually presented by a state-sanctioned religion, and partly derived from the political philosophical notions of Thomas Hobbes (1588-1679) about his view of life without a social conscience (and thus a life based, at the time, on religious morals) comprising “continual fear, and danger of violent death: and the life of man, solitary, poor, nasty, brutish and short,”³²⁷. This type of reasoning the occult philosopher Lemuel Johnstone aka Lionel Snell saw as ridiculous

“strict Christians... claim that, without respect for God and divine law, the world would descend into anarchy, brutality, murder and mayhem. I find it repugnant that anyone should insist that the *only thing* stopping them from a lifelong killing spree is their faith in a bloke who reputedly got nailed to a couple of planks two thousand years ago”³²⁸.

That there is such a simplistic division between very complex issues was lambasted in 1993 by the modern magicians Hugo McGregor, Katon

³²⁷ Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan*, 1651, Chapter 12

³²⁸ Johnstone. *SSOTBME*. p 126. emphasis added

Sh'ual (a.k.a. the magician and publisher Mogg Morgan) and Akath Ashan as an expression of the "moronic oversimplicity"³²⁹ of Judeo-Christian thought, and they offered an alternative, but far less morally-important possibility that 'black magic' merely referred to the dark soils of a notional ancient Egypt in which some magical techniques were believed (by modern proponents) to have been developed.

The occultist and artist Ithell Colquhoun wrote in the 1950s, perceptively, that many consider that "the motive (for any magical act) ... need only be 'selfish' to be classed as 'black'. If this were so, then much petitionary prayer ... would come into the same category"³³⁰, as would the acts of those visiting orthodox religious shrines such as Lourdes wishing to be healed of their afflictions, since if those afflictions are God-given they are surely to be accepted as such, lest one go against God's will? In the following decade the founder of modern Satanism, Anton LaVey added that "anyone who buys an article of clothing for a purpose other than covering his body and protecting it from the elements is guilty of pride" (one of the seven deadly sins in Christianity)³³¹, and remarked that "Satanists are encouraged to indulge in the seven deadly sins, as they need hurt no one; they were only invented by the Christian Church to insure guilt on the part of its followers"³³²

The definition and identification of evil is highly problematic, having tested philosophers for centuries and the need for brevity here precludes anything approaching a full discussion. However as the modern magician and author Lionel Snell pointed out in the mid 1980s, no-one in magic, apart from "the odd artist or pimply adolescent going through a decadent crisis" dedicates themselves to absolute evil, everyone believes in themselves that they are doing right³³³. However this is not made explicit within modern-day magic in any generally-held credo such as the Biblical *Ten Commandments*. Often all that the wider modern British neo-pagan community seems to be able to produce is an injunction to themselves not to do 'bad things', especially magically.

329 Hugo MacGregor, Katon Shu'al, AK'ath Ashan (Eds.), *Nuit Isis*, 1, Oxford, Mandrake, 1993, p ii,

330 *Ibid*, p 173-4

331 LaVey, *Satanic Bible*, p 39

332 *Ibid*, p 78

333 Hugo L'Estrange, Satanism for Today, in Ramsey Dukes, *What I Did in My Holydays: Essays on black magic, Satanism, devil-worship and other niceties*, Mandrake/TMTS, 1998, p 21. Essay originally published in *Chaos International* magazine, 1986.

One such is *The Law of Threefold Return*, a very common modern neo-pagan ideal, which was probably first stated in the 1950s by Gerald Gardner and-or some of his associates in the revival of modern witchcraft, and often recapitulated since. A modern rephrasing and expansion of the law states:

'the Three-Fold Law is the belief and principle on which magick is used. This law relates to the use of power and energy, for when used, power is returned to the sender, three times the level it was sent out. Used in relation with the ethos, 'Do what thy wilt, though it harm none' ... witches take great care when preparing and casting spells that no harm should come to others because of it"³³⁴.

However in subsequent decades there has been increasing mockery of the relevance and practicality of this supposed 'Law', by some modern magicians:

"they insist that any harm you do comes back at you three times as much as what you did... and this warning is usually spoken in some hoary olde English with lots of 'thees' and 'thous' to make it sound authentic, authentick being spelt with a K because it's *that* damn old!... and it's pretty hopeless as any kind of rationale to live by... real life is not like that- the age of chivalry being long dead... and it makes no sense if you've studied any physics, either, one unit of force given out just does not equal three coming back!"³³⁵.

The dubious authority of the 'Law' is also challenged, for example as the magician and author Phil Hine explained in the early nineteen-nineties:

'cursing is generally held up as being against 'natural laws of magick' - *whatever they are*, as being rendered ineffective due to the 'law of three-fold return' - *whatever that is*, or against the moral injunction that a 'good' magician shouldn't need to curse"³³⁶.

Elsewhere Hine makes the pragmatic point that magic is often the far less easy and effective option to solve any problem: "why bother cursing

334 Controversial.com website www.controversial.com/The%20Three%20Fold%20Law.htm

335 Francis Breakspear, conversation, September 2003

336 Phil Hine, *On Cursing*, Originally a presentation at UKAOS Conference, 1992, emphasis added. www.philhine.org.uk/writings/ess_cursing.html

people when you can have their arms broken instead?"³³⁷

It has also been pointed out that the 'harm none' principle is also largely unworkable in practice since it includes harming oneself, and many Wiccans smoke tobacco, drink alcohol and some take drugs; all of which are 'harmful' substances³³⁸ and the practice of body-piercing and tattooing, popular in some magical sub-cultures, also involves pain, which may fall under a definition of (self) 'harm', if you wish to extend the philosophy to that level. There are of course human exceptions a-plenty to this lofty ideal in any case, with coven heads not stopping short on occasion of the decidedly un-magical action of having their rivals followed by private detectives³³⁹.

However, idealistic and often hopelessly inaccurate assessments and manipulations of what are right and wrong magically speaking requires pragmatic groundings in the material world, if the magician is to remain materially free. As the magician Phil Hine wrote in 1997, quoting an alleged remark from an 11th Century revolutionary leader that is often used as a Chaos magical maxim:

"while we might echo the words of Hassan I Sabbah that '*Nothing is True, Everything is Permitted*', acting totally from this premise is likely to bring you into conflict with those individuals and authorities who have pretty fixed views on what *isn't* permitted"³⁴⁰. Hassan I Sabbah was a 'revolutionary' and-or 'mystic' and-or 'bandit leader' in the Middle East around 900 years ago. Nowadays he might be referred to as a terrorist, which only shows how fluid memes can be. Many modern magicians have used the magical writings of the American author and magician Robert Anton Wilson (1932-) or the novelist, philosopher, memeticist and entheogenic experimenter William S Burroughs (1914-1997) as very accessible secondary sources for Sabbah-isms: for example they appear throughout Robert Anton Wilson & Robert Shea's *Illuminatus!* trilogy of cult-appeal books from the 1970s.

Whether Has(s)an I(bn) Sa(b)bah(h) (various spellings are in use, and

337 Phil Hine, *Touched by Fire*, (Electronic Book) 1989, p 41

338 Anonymous, personal correspondent, 28-9-2004

339 Bill Love, *Every witch way, Prediction*, vol 68, 2, February 2002, p 60

340 Phil Hine, *Oven Ready Chaos*, 1997 (electronic book), p 45, emphasis added.

his life-dates *may* be 1043-1124) ever did or said any of the various things ascribed to him is, for the chaos magician, almost irrelevant, it is the usefulness of the maxims and the meme in the present day that counts. Sabbah's alleged use of the drug Hashish as a religious sacrament also goes down pretty well with some magicians who are also sympathetic to such practices.

The literal interpretation of Sabbah's remark is however seen as a mistake, in much the same way as such misinterpretation of the Bible or Crowley's 'Do What Thou Wilt...' has been over the years: Lionel Snell wrote "those who accept this axiom of chaos magic most fully are those who make the most careful choices. Because they know that- without moral or spiritual absolutes- the self can only be built upon the decisions we make"³⁴¹, and Phil Hine concurs: "despite the glamour, Chaos magicians are rarely completely amoral. One of the basic axioms of magical philosophy is that morality grows from within, once you have begun to know the difference between what you have learned to believe, and what you will to believe"³⁴².

In parallel with the development of a more complex acceptance of good and evil as two necessary ends of the same stick with a graduation in-between rather than a strict black-white dichotomy, in 'New Age' philosophies there is a recent move (from the 1990s) towards what has been called, critically, by such magicians as Lionel Snell (and many others) the 'fluffy' or 'white light' approach. This is a magical attitude where only 'good' is ever intended. Wiccans, among others, have a basic moral rule that their actions should cause no harm to others (as remarked on above), with the Pagan Federation, an umbrella public relations and educational group (rather than being a magical order as such) representing the interests of Wiccans and other occultists, espousing "the Pagan Ethic: 'If it harms none, do what thou wilt'. This is a positive morality expressing the belief in individual responsibility for discovering one's own true nature and developing it fully, in harmony with the outer world and community"

³⁴³

Acceptance (by signature) of the 'harm none' doctrine was until recently a serious vetting condition for membership of the Pagan Federation

341 Johnstone, *SSOTBME*, p 133

342 Hine, *Oven Ready Chaos*, p 45

343 Pagan Federation Website www.paganfed.demon.co.uk

in the UK. However, away from the ideals of such a statement, many occultists modify this principle both to their own requirements and to a more pragmatic outlook; one 21st Century magician telling me openly that: "I'm fine with the 'harm none' idealistic thing as an idealistic maxim until real-life scenarios happen- at which point it becomes harm none UNLESS it's in self defence... then it's a case of anything goes and the last one standing wins, motherfuckers!"³⁴⁴.

The 'fluffy' mindset has recently been criticised by Lionel Snell for:

"accentuating the positive and eliminating the negative so all is discussed in terms of 'light' with little reference to the role of darkness except as an error waiting for the light... such religious devotion to the Good, or Light, or Purity... without some balancing attention to the negative could lead us down the path to perfection beaten by the Nazis if we are not careful"³⁴⁵.

This attitude is perhaps encapsulated by 'Motna', a pagan correspondent to *Pentacle* in 2004 who complained that the 'Mind, Body, Spirit' section of a major mainstream bookshop chain store openly displayed *The Satanic Bible* (by Anton LaVey, founder of the Church of Satan) and similar titles, which the letter writer regarded as being akin to hardcore pornography, i.e. in his or her view being harmful literature which simply should not be on public display³⁴⁶. Subsequent correspondence to the magazine proved to be polarised, with no letters that were printed supporting the notion, but many others, including 'Raven' from Hertfordshire, calling out for freedom of speech³⁴⁷, the London-based sociological researcher Kenneth Rees emphasising the vital need for an element of freedom of choice³⁴⁸, and another correspondent criticizing the "dumbing down" of paganism that would result from such limitations on what was available, were overtly Satanist (and similar) books banned or of more limited circulation³⁴⁹.

³⁴⁴ Francis Breakspear, personal communication, June 2001

³⁴⁵ Johnstone, *SSOTBME*, p 147

³⁴⁶ 'Motna', letter to *Pentacle*, Spring 2004, p 35-6. My own copies of *The Satanic Bible*, *Satan Speaks!* and *The Satanic Rituals* were purchased from various branches of Waterstones, a national chain of general bookshops in the UK.

³⁴⁷ 'Raven', letter to *Pentacle Magazine*, *Pentacle*, 9, Summer 2004, p 39

³⁴⁸ Kenneth Rees, *Ibid*, p 40

³⁴⁹ 'G. St M', *Ibid*

A further letter highlighted that the attitude of 'Motna' demonstrated precisely the heavy-handed and dogmatic censorial attitude that many Pagans decry the Christian Church for holding about Paganism in general³⁵⁰.

Laughing in the Face of God

Various forms of transgressive humour comprise an important part of magic, since by inversion, as mentioned in the previous chapter, they have a powerful cognitive effect. One example would be the chaos magical technique of banishing with laughter, as was also mentioned.

As the magician Peter Carroll writes “consider laughter: it is the highest emotion, for it can contain any of the others from ecstasy to grief. It has no opposite. Crying is merely an underdeveloped form of it which cleanses the eyes and summons attention to infants. Laughter is the only tenable attitude in a universe which is a joke played upon itself”³⁵¹.

Contrasting the wild, humorous and trickster-god elements of contemporary and traditional shamanism (and much of modern chaos magic) with the norms in historical Western esotericism, the magician Jan Fries says that “the mages of the last centuries have established the curious idea that a real mage ought to be fully in control, ought to bow before god while bossing spirits in triangles. This mask ... comes from organized religion... the role of the serene high priest... the sacred authority, aloof... of course such a priest, who has to represent an organized religion is in no position to crack jokes and make errors.”³⁵².

As the magician Phil Hine writes “it’s difficult to imagine Christians joking about Jehovah in the same way that Nordic peoples told amusing stories about Loki getting one over on Thor”³⁵³. Chaos magick is not so stern, Lionel Snell writing: “this book (*Thundersqueak*) ... is a defence of humanity’s inalienable right to be not only wrong but also patently absurd”³⁵⁴.

From the 1980s onwards the spoof and pseudonymous Satanist, The Honorable Hugo St John L’Estrange’ (actually Lionel Snell, mentioned above, using yet another pen name) had regular articles published mostly in *Aquarian Arrow* magazine. These provided a useful platform for the exposure of outwardly noxious ideas of magical and social behaviour.

351 Peter J Carroll. *Liber Null & Psychonaut*. York Beach, Maine. Weiser. 1987, p 17

352 Jan Fries, *Visual Magick*, Oxford, Mandrake, 1992, p 101

353 Phil Hine, *PerMutations*, (E-Book), 1997, p 19

354 Ramsey Dukes, preface to Angerford & Lea, *Thundersqueak*, p iv

expressed in a humorous form in order to defuse the likely outcry which there would have been had his views been perhaps offered as a ‘serious’ magazine column, or even as practical suggestions for magical working.

For example ‘L’Estrange’ talks of reciting *The Lord’s Prayer* backwards on the radio (blasphemy, for sure) as a means to evoke Satan, in the context of providing a vital “religious broadcasting” service³⁵⁵. I asked Lionel whether the nature of the original magazine columns (since republished in online article and electronic book form³⁵⁶) had upset anyone in the occult fraternity:

“(We had) very little mail response ... in (*Aquarian*) *Arrow* - I made some up myself... (but).. it really suited the readership. Many people said they only bought *Arrow* for the column! I did get one person who took it seriously and asked to be introduced to a Satanic order. I prepared a spoof response which was a recommendation to contact his local Pentecostal Church - pointing out that they were very paranoid about their cover being blown so he would have to go along with their public façade for at least a year before they introduced him to the ‘inner satanic elite’ - but I never sent it off because I’d decided it would have to go out on notepaper from The Bell Inn at Aston Clinton³⁵⁷, and I never got there in time. The *Hermetic Journal*³⁵⁸ ... was a different matter, far more precious. It (*the Satanist’s Diary*) only ran to one edition there ... it met a lot of shock reactions”³⁵⁹.

A correspondent complained, apparently in all sincerity, that having such a *Diary* in the *Hermetic Journal* was “like pissing in a church”³⁶⁰. This may have been an isolated view, as it seems the diary had other occultists guessing as to how much levity was involved, with ‘Hugo’ writing to me that:

355 Hugo L’Estrange, I’m walking backwards to Xmas (Online) www.occultrebooks.com/hugo/xmas.htm

356 _____, *The Hellgate Chronicles*, (E-book), London, El-Cheapo, 2000, compiled from originals printed in various magazine columns in the 1980s.

357 A former lodging of Aleister Crowley, *The Bell Inn* is still a public house.

358 The first *Satanist’s Diary* column appeared in this magazine, and was not repeated there.

359 ‘Hugo L’Estrange’, personal communication, 26-6-2002

360 L’Estrange, *Hellgate Chronicles*, p 5

"years later (under my 'real' name) I met someone at some astrology event and we discovered an interest in alchemy and *The Hermetic Journal* came up and the guy said 'you know there was always one thing that puzzled me about that mag, one issue contained a piece by a Satanist and it never happened again - did you hear about that? I've always wondered what was behind it and whether it was for real'" ³⁶¹.

Hurling Curses: combat morality

Aside from spoofing on 'pure evil' characters, occultists are, like their alleged forebears the early-modern witches, not above general day-to-day *maleficium*, against others, and other magicians, with instances being fairly common.

In 1994 the magician Kenneth Grant described HP Lovecraft's fictional (†) monsters the *Shoggoths* ³⁶² as real enough creatures to use in magic. Grant sees them as being collections of an interstitial (that is 'between this physical world and the magical realm') bubbly jelly-like material in which the unwary magician can be trapped ³⁶³, and he partially describes a ritual magical method for making this happen to rival magicians where desired ³⁶⁴. This perhaps indicates that he has practical knowledge of the performance of such a rite.

Grant also claimed in the mid-1970s that he was on the receiving end of a piece of malefic magic from Gerald Gardner twenty years before (the founder of modern witchcraft was by this time long dead, so could not confirm nor contradict the tale, once it was published). Grant alleges that Gardner took exception to his 'poaching' of a young witch, called 'Clanda' away from Gardner's witch coven to Grant's own magical group, and that Gardner employed the magician and artist Austin Osman Spare to make a magical talisman for 'recovery of stolen property', that 'property' being 'Clanda', with Spare being unaware (at that time) that the magic was to be worked against his very good friend Grant.

The talisman had the claimed effect of sending an unearthly bird of prey-like entity to attack 'Clanda', whilst in the middle of a ritual, and caused great distress and disturbance including, Grant alleges, the entity being real enough to leave large claw marks on the outside of a frosty window pane. However it did not have the desired effect of returning 'Clanda' to Gardner, since Grant writes that she was killed in a shipwreck not long

³⁶² Shoggoths were around 15-feet in diameter, comprised of amorphous bubbling jelly, see Howard Phillips Lovecraft, *At the Mountains of Madness and other tales of terror*, New York, Ballantine, 1991. Original 1936

³⁶³ Grant, *Nightside*, p 159

³⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, p 255

afterwards³⁶⁵. Since her earthly name is not certain, verifying whether she died then, and if so the exact manner of her death, cannot be verified by checking any maritime casualty lists from the 1950s, so that tale must remain as picturesque and academically unsupported.

The modern witch and ritual magician Alex Sanders (1926-1988) publicly stabbed a 'poppet' (an effigy, or doll used for magical purposes as a symbol of the intended human target of the spell) of the artist and magician Charles Pace (a one-time associate of Aleister Crowley and Austin Spare) on television, on the *Simon Dee Show* in 1970³⁶⁶. The rather lurid motion picture documentary *Legend of the Witches* also shows Sanders and his coven preparing a poppet and using it to send a death curse. This may however have been a piece of *performance* rather than anything routinely carried out as real magical work by his coven, as some of the actions of Sanders in the film appear to be purely for theatrical rather than for magical reasons. As mentioned earlier, the film *Legend of the Witches*, released in 1970, achieved a minimal cinema release and had not been seen by a large audience in many years until a DVD of the film was released in summer 2005. Sanders had numerous pupils including Kevin Carlyon (now a prominent 'public' witch who regularly appears in the UK media), but they fell out at one point in the early 1980s and in a newspaper interview of the time Carlyon threatened to curse Sanders³⁶⁷. During 2002, while researching for this thesis-to-book I was threatened with magical attack by 'Amado Crowley' who wrote "I am game if anyone else is. I don't mind a modern trial by combat on the astral"³⁶⁸, after I asked some valid questions which were deemed impertinent by him (and the findings of which are discussed in a later chapter), this despite Amado having written in the previous year that "curses mainly happen in books and films"³⁶⁹.

³⁶⁵ Kenneth Grant, *Images and Oracles of Austin Osman Spare*, London, Muller, 1975, p 30-33

³⁶⁶ From Hecate's Cauldron website. www.hecatescauldron.org/Valiente%20on%20Gardner.htm *The Simon Dee Show* on London Weekend Television ran for only a few months in 1970, see Television Heaven website www.televisionheaven.co.uk/deetime.htm

³⁶⁷ Museum of Witchcraft, The Alex Sanders Archive. The Museum's cuttings collection includes an ongoing news story from the *Hastings Gazette* during Spring 1983 where Carlyon threatened Sanders.

³⁶⁸ Amado Crowley, posting to weborama discussion forum (On-Line) 3-7-2002. This forum is currently not accessible online.

³⁶⁹ _____, *Excalibur*, (Electronic Book), 2001. p 77

Attacks of this nature are not confined to within magical communities. The proprietor of the excellent Museum of Witchcraft in Cornwall, Mr. Graham King, runs the establishment as an educational resource, and has numerous displays of artefacts, plus an extensive and breathtaking library for the use of researchers. In the early period of his ownership of the museum, in the late 1990s, he received regular threats from fundamentalist Christians who objected to the very existence of the museum. One of these threats (which were always in the form of anonymous letters) contained a perceived death threat (see figure 1, below, which says at the bottom "think about it- tomorrow may never come", and a picture of him, taken from a newspaper article about the museum). As Graham pointed out, such techniques are virtually identical to the 'poppets' (otherwise known as 'voodoo dolls' *sic*), a means of 'image magic' that can, as discussed above, be used in some forms of cursing (and of which the Museum has a display cabinet of several splendid historical examples). This would be precisely the *malefic* use of magic that the fundamentalists would abhor, and yet they were employing exactly the same techniques to further their own cause, despite seemingly doubly-damning themselves in the process, by using magic of any kind, let alone 'evil' magic³⁷⁰.

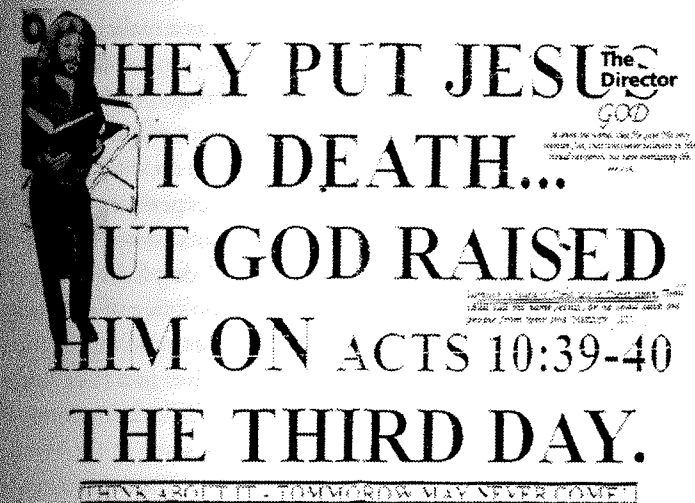


Figure 1. A Malefic Piece of Image Magic sent anonymously to the Museum of Witchcraft's owner. The item is now on display in the museum as an example of the continued bigotry and Intolerance regarding the occult. Image copyright Museum of Witchcraft, © 2004

³⁷⁰ Graham King, conversation, July 2004.

Sometimes apparent negative actions by magicians against other magicians, or by or against other persons are far from easy to interpret and assign to any given moral duality of simply 'good' or 'bad'. I offer some examples that in some ways defy easy categorisation:

One Wiccan High Priest to whom I spoke ³⁷¹ told me of a large Chaos magic ritual that his coven was formally invited to participate in during the mid 1990s, as a part of an attempt 'to create a spirit of fraternity' among various disparate occultists in that area of the country. Outwardly it was a very ceremonial and elaborate working, with much of the content and most of the ritual trappings being in common with their own Wiccan beliefs and practices. This familiarity of setting and content put them considerably at their ease, but the equally familiar shared 'Cakes and Ale' segment of proceedings ³⁷² was very different, in that (a) it was held right at the start of the ritual, which is unusual for Wicca, where it usually comes at the end, and (b) unbeknownst to the Wiccans the ale contained substantial quantities of the powerful hallucinogenic drug LSD, which started to take effect on all present within about 20 minutes of the ritual starting.

It is not clear from his description whether this was a malicious piece of deliberate 'mental terrorism' against the Wiccans, a practical joke, or a sincere attempt to share a deep 'entheogenic' experience. Perhaps to illustrate the dogmatic black-white thinking which Chaos magic rails against, this Wiccan and his group will now have nothing to do with anything or anyone else in the chaos field at all, based on one experience with a very limited number (less than five) of chaos magicians in one area of the UK. This is akin to always avoiding all breeds of dog forever after just one dog had bitten you; which although a common piece of behavioural conditioning, is poor reasoning here, given the eclectic and syncretic methods of chaos magic, which are discussed further in a later chapter, which imply that most Chaos magicians have very little in common with one another in any case. This stance is also *despite* some of the Wiccans involved having experienced a truly memorable, positive and personally

meaningful psychedelic-entheogenic experience during the ritual, and afterwards.

The second example is of pagan road protesters. Ecological protesters who were also pagans have often used the public belief in *all* magic as being evil to aid their cause. The protestors aim to hinder and-or prevent new road-building through ecologically-important sites, especially forests, which they were moved to physically occupy (and use their own bodies as a barrier to construction machinery) for long periods of time in the hope of preventing the destruction of the forests (with varying success, but always with immense publicity for their ecological cause).

They used the common perception of magical symbols to assist in their protests: 'pentagrams, symbols associated with both Witchcraft and Satanism *in the popular imagination*, were daubed on machinery ... so as to frighten workers and stop them working" ³⁷³. Similarly, some witches in Devon buried a ritual magic wand somewhere on an intended new road site, making their act known to the road-builders, but not the exact location of the wand. The intent was that whoever unearthed it; most likely a road-building worker would be 'cursed'. This caused some ethical unease among some protesters, it seeming to be an act of black magic, but there was regular "placing of skulls and pentagrams" intended to "invoke psychological fear, rather than to cause actual harm" in the construction crews ³⁷⁴.

A final short example is using the way that "exchange of money is a form of energy-transfer which has very powerful associations... an old wart-charmer's trick is to 'buy' warts off a sufferer and transfer them somewhere else. The Poll Tax curse is a blank cheque where the user signs using a magickal persona, writes in appropriate sigils instead of money, and 'pays' the targeted authority a 'problem' which will disrupt the implementation (of the Tax)" ³⁷⁵.

The content of any 'evil' or 'wrong' in the motivations for the actions of the road protesters, the chaos magic group, the magical cheque-writer

supposedly simple and dualistic 'black and white' labeling of any action. The chaos magicians many have wanted to give the Wiccans a beautiful entheogenic experience, it could have been a practical joke, or it may have been 'psychic terrorism'. The road protesters may have been trying to protect the environment at the expense of scaring a few people, or it may have been magical terrorism. The cheque-writers were using their own perceived magical abilities to influence a political system they saw as inherently unfair, or they may have just been trying to greedily save their own money. The fundamentalist Christians may have been trying to convert him or otherwise persuade Mr. King to close his museum, or they may really have been threatening violence by an unconscious or unwitting magical act.

What I hope has been made clear here is that human acts and motivations are considerably more complex than can ever be accounted for by such a simplistic and dualistic choice as merely 'good' or 'evil', at the best of times.

Modern psychology has taken a different tack on the problem of cognition of 'right and wrong', with the respected social psychologist Eliot Aronson concluding that most people have internal incentives to vindicate their behaviour, opinions and character; hence they continually indulge in an internal dialogue of self-justification of their behaviour, as being sensible and coherent *in the circumstances*. If the behaviour is seen internally as incoherent this leads to 'cognitive dissonance'. This is a central factor of self-justification, and was proposed by another respected psychologist Leon Festinger³⁷⁶, in which "two cognitions are dissonant if, considering these two cognitions alone, the opposite of one follows from the other... because the occurrence of cognitive dissonance is unpleasant, people are motivated to reduce it"³⁷⁷. In other words, it is extremely uncomfortable, psychologically, to attempt to balance two opposite beliefs and give both equal credence; *something has to give*. This is accomplished by changing one or both of the *psychologically*, not purely logically, inconsistent cognitions to harmonise them.

This change may create a state that is still completely illogical to the objective observer, but is psychologically comfortable for the individual making the cognitive change. In more plain (and oversimplified)

³⁷⁶ Leon Festinger, *A Theory of Cognitive Dissonance*, Stanford, Stanford University Press, 1957

³⁷⁷ Festinger, *Cognitive Dissonance*. p 175

language, it involves lying to oneself.

Aronson covers dissonance related to morality in some depth. As a starting point for morality, we always wish to *believe* that we are good and right (*even if we are not!*). As an example of the problem of dissonance, Aronson cites the fixed two-response choice of cheating in an exam, *viz*, either we cheat or we do not. Social conditioning expects us *both* to not cheat, but *also* to do well in our exams. Thus dissonance potentially arises from *whichever* choice we make, and how we self-justify it. If we cheat we have done wrong. If we do not cheat, and fare poorly on the exam we have done wrong; probably for not revising hard enough, which will be an additional mental cosh with which to beat ourselves, once the results of the exam are published.

A magical example of this is given by Phil Hine: "in popular Occultism, Cursing is pretty definitely seen as 'Black Magick', except of course when you can justify your reasons for doing it - like the Wiccans who once attempted to Magically attack me because I was plugging 'the Left-Hand Way' in *Pagan News*"³⁷⁸. Another magical example comes from Hine again. After giving details of an un-named 'white magician' who had enlisted his magical help to return an errant romantic partner who had taken up with a third party (which aid Hine refused to provide) he remarks that "what is also interesting here is that the 'white magician' approached me with a view to help him win back his girlfriend through magical means - something which one might consider to be ethically questionable. But in this case, he felt justified because of course, he was the 'good guy' in this scenario"³⁷⁹.

At this point a cognitive **consonance** would be 'don't throw a malefic spell'. Why people do not do this is the point of this example: instead of not cursing, the following cognitive process and internal dialogue (or similar) may be engaged:

- Cursing isn't proven absolutely to be bad or dangerous.
- A spell to remove person X from the clutches of person Y and bring them back to me is a 'good' act, since I am a 'good' person.

³⁷⁸ Phil Hine, *On Cursing*, (Online) www.philhine.org.uk/writings/ess_cursing.html Originally a presentation at UKAOS Conference, 1992

³⁷⁹ Phil Hine, *Black magic and the left-hand path*, (Online) www.philhine.org.uk/writings/ess_bmlho.html

- People I admire have used such spells in the past (allowing oneself to be swayed by peer pressure and conformity).
- I still love person X, thus my actions are justified.
- Blame is laid onto others (especially gossipmongers) for driving person X away, rather than one's own behaviour.

This mental process allows for minimising the importance of the curse itself, and accentuating the positive aspects of the self, being 'on the moral high ground,' fighting against lying gossips.

The cognitive pleasure anticipated in the intended result, being a rose-tinted return to a romantic state that might have once existed (but probably did not), helps to conspire to reduce the dissonance. In time, and with repetition of the above kind of thought processes "beliefs become internalised when they appear to be correct",³⁸⁰ and the holder of those beliefs often cannot be persuaded otherwise even by concerted attempts by others who might be more objective.

The above might seem nonsensical at first, but Festinger distinguishes between actual rationality and the process of *rationalising* in humans; "we...are motivated not so much to *be* right, rather...to *believe* we are right"³⁸¹. As the American chaos magician Jerome Plotkin elegantly and succinctly puts it: "Man is the only creature on Earth capable of lying to himself (and believing it)"³⁸².

These motivations may be concordant, but often they seem positively maladaptive, such as in the above example drawing back a partner who obviously does not wish to be in your life, since they left in the first instance, probably opening one up to heartbreak and misery for a second time with the same person. However dissonance reduction strategies have an ego-protective function: *they make us feel happier* that we are right; or good, since: "dissonance is most powerful in situations in which the self-concept is threatened"³⁸³. Hine, who has some considerable

380 Elliot Aronson, *The Social Animal*, New York, Freeman, 1992, p177

381 Leon Festinger, in Aronson, *Social Animal*, p 177

382 Jerome Elliot Plotkin, *Anti-Illuminati*, Old Mountain Press, Fayetteville NC, 1999, p 16

383 Aronson. *Social Animal*. p 202

training in psychology³⁸⁴, seems to be aware of this cognitive model, since he writes: "magicians do curse, and occasionally, it even works. The only real distinction appears to be a moral one - if thine enemy curses, it's because he's a 'black' magician. If you curse, it's because of necessary circumstances."³⁸⁵

Dissonance can have a snowball, or exponential effect; once a commitment to a particular idea or ideal is made; an escalation of self-justification results; even if this commitment results in further, bigger commitments. In the above example it could turn into an escalating magical war. Aronson cites an actual war: the continued bombing of Vietnam by the US Government in the 1970s, despite considerable contrary evidence of its usefulness. This continued because the self-justification among the politicians and generals was that the process had been started and any deviation or retreat would cause international loss of face: since "inevitability makes the heart grow fonder",³⁸⁶ i.e. once a situation is (or *seems* to be, cognitively) permanent, the psyche takes steps to adjust perceptions and behaviour to maximise the mental-emotional comfort of that situation. It is likely that the political rationalising of the current conflict in Iraq and Afghanistan has fallen into the same kind of deep psychological-semantic hole.

An example might also be a healing ritual that fails in the intent, i.e. to make the patient recover, after which those who attempted the healing may well enter a mindset where the patient's increasing illness is seen as 'karmic', pre-ordained, the will of the Gods, or otherwise in the control of higher powers, and not to be intervened in further by mortals, who have 'done all they can', and thus feel more comfortable with the 'failed' outcome (unlike the patient, probably).

Dissonance effects are maximised when accountability for one's own actions is high, and those actions may have negative outcomes. It seems that attitudes can be softened towards a behaviour by temptation to actually act immorally; however temperament is stiffened by temptation up to the point *just before* the act is committed (especially if the

384 Phil Hine, personal communication, 12th August 2004, told me that "I have a B.Sc (Hons) in Behavioural Sciences and completed a three-year Diploma in Occupational Therapy (its now a degree)...I worked for a while as a trainee Psychiatric Nurse and did several stints in both mental health & general medicine as a student O.T."

385 Phil Hine, *On Cursing*, (Online)

386 Aronson. *Social Animal*. p 202

potential short-term rewards are high); as Aronson says: "people who *almost* decide to live in glass houses are frequently the ones who are most prone to throw stones"³⁸⁷. Much of our behaviour in this respect seems linked to self-justification, and much of that is, objectively, insufficient, for example, the phenomenon of the 'little white lie'. Hine writes: 'the idea of the existence of 'black magicians' supports the reality of those who would call themselves 'white magicians'.

Underlying this belief is the dualism of 'goodies' and 'baddies' familiar from cowboy films... - that some people only do good in their lives, whilst some people dedicate themselves entirely to evil. This is a rather narrow view of looking at the world. The idea of 'black magic' also implies that there are some magical methods which are inherently bad, and if one employs them, one is therefore, a 'black magician.'³⁸⁸ It is quite a powerful label to throw at someone....

The modern anthropologist Sabina Magliocco describes from her anthropological researches of neo pagan groups that: "the expression is a slur, in that it indicates a magician who disregards the basic ethics of the magical community: "harm none," and the law of threefold return"³⁸⁹.

Amado Crowley states, "There are two faces to magic. They are called Black and White, and they both work, but in different ways. So as not to tempt you into making foolish experiments, none of the magical recipes in this book are either accurate or complete"³⁹⁰. Rather disingenuously, there is nothing in that book, his *Lewd Ghosts* that could be construed as a magical ritual and even more disingenuously, elsewhere Amado says there are no rituals in any of his books "there are no rituals in the published books, apart from a description of things my father did when I was in tow. The three books about Aleister are autobiographical cum reminiscences. They are not meant to be treatises on Occultism or anything like that."³⁹¹. Amado is discussed in a later chapter, where many more of his inconsistencies are examined.

The American magician and author Michael Bertiaux, using the terms universe A and universe B for the occult worlds on either side of a

387 *Ibid*, p 194, emphasis added

388 Phil Hine, *Black magic and the left-hand path*, (Online)

389 Sabina Magliocco, personal communication, 17-8-2004.

390 Amado Crowley, *Lewd Ghosts*, Diamond, Guildford, 1994, p x

391 Amado Crowley. posting to weborama discussion forum (On-Line) 7-7-2002

conceptual magical abyss (we are in Universe A) comments on evil: "Evil does not exist in Universe 'A', and in Universe 'B' it does not exist. However when there is a relationship between the two universes, there is a possibility of evil coming into the world, into Universe 'A'. That is why magicians who work along the lines of seeking contact with Universe 'B' are sometimes in a situation where they convey the impression of being 'Black Magicians' or else of being 'dangerously evil' or 'perverse and unnatural'"³⁹².

Perhaps more succinctly, The chaos magician Peter Carroll wrote: "out of Chaos arise the two prime forces of existence... the light power and the dark... these twin forces lie at the root of all mystic quests and all forms of magical and mundane action... They are the basic spiritual principles of the universe... *adherents of one will always call the other black*"³⁹³.

Phil Hine argues that this is largely not the case, and instead such labeling is often used for purely pagan-political or social purposes:

"those who accuse others of being 'black magicians' are actually expressing their disapproval of something that person has done, or has been rumoured to have done. Accusing someone of being a 'black magician' is, in some sections of the occult subculture, similar to accusing someone of being a 'Communist' in 1950's America"³⁹⁴, and "someone will always brand you a 'Black Magician', specially if you start asking too many awkward questions"³⁹⁵

Hine adds the important point that 'black magic' is a powerful negative stereotype, and can be employed merely to denigrate, rather than accurately describe:

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

392 Kenneth Grant, *Nightside of Eden*, Skoob, London, 1994, p 251

393 Peter J Carroll, *Liber Null & Psychonaut*, York Beach, Maine. Weiser. 1987, p 96, emphasis added

394 Hine, *Black magic and the left-hand path*,

395 Hine. *Touched by Fire*. n.d.

A Practical Guide to Qabalistic Symbolism (1976) states unequivocally that: 'Homosexuality, like the use of drugs, is one of the techniques of black magic'³⁹⁶.

This is precisely the kind of catch-all reasoning employed by fundamentalist Christians in their polemics against occultism which drag in all of rock music, the practice of yoga etc as evidence of the influence of Satan, as given in example in a previous chapter. It is also highly unlikely that very many occult authors would make such a generalised and homophobic statement in the early 21st Century, compared to the mid-1970s, when homophobia was more socially prevalent and perhaps more acceptable when expressed in the mainstream.

Othering and Continuum of Evil

There is also a perceived 'continuum of supposed evil' within those interested in occultism. This was elaborated on at a public lecture in 2002 by Lionel Snell:

"some would say we live in a secular age and that interest in things spiritual is a minority fringe thing...but when you consider establishment figures into religion you realise that is not so".

This would be a given, when one regularly witnesses media coverage of Heads of State and politicians publicly attending Church services, for example, however Snell continued:

"but such people would agree that there is a loony fringe - those interested in the occult... but when you consider the broad sweep of Anthroposophists, Theosophists, Alice Baileyites, New Agers etc you realise it is hardly just a loony fringe, it includes many respected establishment figures."

This too is a given, with some members of the Royal Family in the UK such as Prince Charles advocating New Age elements, including alternative medicine and various Ecological causes³⁹⁷. Snell continued:

"...but such people would agree that there is a loony fringe - namely those who claim to be into magic... now get a group of magicians together - including the Inner Light people, the WE Butler and Gareth Knight lot etc - and they too seem fairly normal. But they would agree that there really is a loony fringe - i.e. those that follow the dangerous Aleister Crowley... get a group of Thelemites (Crowleyans) together and you do have some odd people, but not much more than any other minority clique - but they do admit that there are dangers, particularly in the sort of uncontrolled sorcery practiced by Austin Spare... get a group of Spare admirers together and it includes lovers of his art as well as his magic, and they might well

³⁹⁷ For just one example HRH Prince Charles initiated the Foundation for Integrated Medicine in 1996, and lobbied the government to allocate £10 million to fund a five-year research program into the effects of alternative medicine in 2000. Reuters News Item reported on CNN www.cnn.com/2000/HEALTH/alternative/11/29/health.britain.charles.reur/

warn you off Chaos Magicians, who have done so much to discredit the man... get a group of Chaos magicians together and they will say 'please don't confuse us with Satanists'" 398.

Quite whom the Satanists would warn against is unclear, but it is probably Christians. 'Othering' is a powerful tool, however one that is misunderstood, as the historian Michael Foldy wrote in 1997:

"otherness only signifies difference without quantifying it, and, in many cases, without explaining why difference, in and of itself, is necessarily bad... stigmatising someone as 'other' implies that we know practically nothing about them... the real threat of the 'other' is the threat of our own ignorance, which is projected outwards" 399.

Along with this continuum of 'otherness', there is an important matter of decreasing numbers as one moves along the continuum outlined by Snell above. My introductory chapters gave some idea of the numbers involved in magic in Britain, and within that small and finite number, the much smaller probable proportion of those individuals involved in such areas as Satanism and 'black magic', as compared to 'white magic' and broader neopaganisms.

As has been indicated above, rather than using such value-laden terms as black or white magic some occultists have in the last 120 years or so subscribed to the somewhat more liberating terminology of Right-Hand, and Left-Hand Path magics (often referred to as RHP and LHP respectively). Much like the political divisions of Right-Wing and Left-Wing being originally simply a locator of precisely where certain political groups during the French Revolution used to sit in their assembly building, RHP and LHP magics were originally intended as a similar, and less value-laden label than Black and White, merely indicating two differing but morally-equivalent approaches to the subject, which I examine now.

398 All quotes in this section are from Lionel Snell, personal communication 30-3-2004, which he very kindly transcribed for me from his own notes used for a talk at Watkins Bookshop, London, April 2002

399 Foldy, *Oscar Wilde*. p 144. emphasis original

Which hand? Which path?

However useful it would be to have maintained this moral equivalence, history intervenes here, with the left-hand side having long been ascribed to the negative, with dextrous being a right-handed term and sinister, hence *literally* sinister, being left-handed. A minority of people are left-handed, perhaps less than 10% 400, although the right-handed hegemony is something that was 'taught', often forcibly, in British schools in the earlier 20th Century.

My late father, a 'lefty', told me of having his left hand tied down to his chair in school in the 1920s to force him to write right-handed, for example. In adult life he reverted to being left-handed and continued to work, write, eat and play several sports left-sided with considerable success.

The design of many such everyday things as computer keyboards, scissors and can-openers continue to favour right-handers. 'Left-handed' can also be a derogatory slang term for a homosexual, 'left-footer' for a Catholic in a Protestant society, and in folklore if one spills salt then some is thrown over the left shoulder to counter the Devil 401. A quote from Classical Greek period regarding the hero (and later God of medicine and healing) *Asclepius* indicates an early left-right distinction, with the left being the 'darker', more baleful side, but (importantly) this being balanced within the one person:

"and after he (Asclepius) had become a surgeon, bringing that art to great perfection, he not only saved men from death, but even raised them up from the dead. He received from Athena blood from the veins of the Gorgon. He used blood from the left side for plagues of mankind, and he used that from the right side for healing and to raise up men from the dead" 402.

400 Stanley Coren, et al, *Lateral preferences and human behavior*, New York, Springer-Verlag, 1981, cited here jackie.freeshell.org/woh/test_stats.htm indicates 5% strong left-handedness with 22% ambidextrous to some extent and 72% strongly right-handed.

401 A fascinating resource for left-handed matters is the Anything Left Handed website www.anythingleft-handed.co.uk/lefty_myths.html

402 Apollodorus, *Bibl.iii.* 10, 3, 8-9. I am very grateful to Andrew Chumbley for finding this reference and having the kindness to share it with me. Andrew died very shortly after sending me the quote, at the tragically young age of 27.

Although the Greek notion of the left side as 'negative' predates it, and the inversion, especially with regards to food seems to be an echo of the Carnavalesque behaviour in early-modern Europe discussed in the previous chapter, the specific use of *Left-Hand Path* as a descriptive term within occultism derives from the practice of *Vama marga*, literally 'the left-hand way' in *Sanskrit*. This is a pre-modern Tantric occult system derived from Hinduism that involves the practitioner in the systematic breaking of various Hindu societal taboos involving diet (such as the consumption of flesh, wine and grain) and ritual sexual intercourse, which on occasion occurs in graveyards and similar settings, to remind the participants of the continuing cycle of life and death.

The name of the left hand path seems to derive from this practice being linked to the left hand side of the face of *Shiva*, the Hindu god of destruction⁴⁰³, in this case the destruction being of the societal controls of the individual. Conversely the right hand way in Tantra is of a form that is much more familiar in theme to wider secular Western audiences, being comprised of quiescent, devotional and 'surrender' methods such as yoga, meditation, asceticism and 'monkish' withdrawal from the sensory and aesthetic pleasures of the mundane world.

The *Vama marga* breaking of food taboos is of much less relevance to modern Westerners than to the original Hindus whose religious and social upbringing would have very strongly reinforced strict dietary constraints. The Left Hand path is more often a term of convenience in the West rather than of literal adherence to the original *Vama marga*, which would not seem remotely transgressive to the majority of Westerners who were used to eating meat and drinking alcohol as a normal part of life. Considering the diet within magic is relevant, however. The modern magician Lionel Snell wrote that "the current fusion of Paganism and Magic means that most Magicians feel very close to the animal world and actively oppose animal sacrifice to the point of being strictly vegetarian"⁴⁰⁴. However he is

"not a vegetarian and I try to accept some conscious responsibility for creatures *and vegetables* killed to feed me. The death is consecrated by my intention to cook well rather than create junk food... I could always skip a meal, and so am not eating to live but for pleasure... joy

403 Katon Shual (Mogg Morgan), *Sexual Magick*, Oxford, Mandrake, 1994, p vii fn 3

404 Johnstone. *SSOTBME*. p 50

is precious. Therefore I endeavour wherever possible to cook like an artist, leave my plate clean and generally conduct my life as the sort of elevated being that I might myself choose to be eaten by"⁴⁰⁵.

His generalisation of 'most Magicians' is not supported by any figures, but from consulting the *Sorcerer's Apprentice Occult Census*⁴⁰⁶ (discussed earlier) a figure of 33% vegetarian and 4% Vegan was found among their occultist respondents, which is far higher than the average for the country, where vegetarianism is apparently practiced by only around 10% of the wider population⁴⁰⁷. Even allowing for the regional skewings in that Census, one is much more tempted to believe this figure.

This also brings up the matter of animal sacrifice, another popular allegation often brought against occultists by the gutter press and rabid fundamentalist groups. This is a digression that could easily turn into another book on its own, however a few quotes should give a taste of a few magician's musings on the subject. Ithell Colquhoun wrote: "another school of thought maintains that any rite involving bloodshed is 'black'...yet every religion has demanded blood sacrifice in one form or another, and some still do. Does the magician, if he uses such rites, act more inhumanely than the sportsman, the butcher or the vivisector?"⁴⁰⁸. LaVey wrote that regarding either human and animal sacrifice "Satanists could not perform such sacrifices (because) Man, the animal, is the godhead... therefore, the Satanist holds these beings in a sacred regard"⁴⁰⁹. On a slightly different tack, Johnstone (Snell) wrote "blood sacrifice plays a very minor role in modern Magic- there is nothing even remotely approaching the massive global slaughter of turkeys for the Christmas ritual, or other world religious sacrifices"⁴¹⁰. Some practitioners are open in their admission of internal 'checks and balances', without them being moralistic codes *per se*, within their practice: the magician Peter Carroll writing that

"sacrifice has been used in the past to create fear or terror... blood sacrifice is most effective and most easily controlled by the use of one's own blood... however, the power to control blood sacrifice usually

405 Ibid, p 61. Emphasis added. Having had the great pleasure of eating at Mr. Snell's table I can concur with the artistry comment.

406 Sorcerers Apprentice, *Occult Census*, p 24

407 The UK's Vegetarian and Vegan Foundation website www.vegetarian.org.uk/

408 Colquhoun, *Living Stones*, p 174-5

409 LaVey, *Satanic Bible*, p 82

410 Johnstone. *SSOTBME*. p 50

brings with it the wisdom to avoid it in favour of other methods"⁴¹¹.

There is also a left-right, good-evil split that is apparent in some views of the arcane Hebrew mystical system, the Cabbala. The spelling varies, i.e. Cabala, Cabbala, Cabbala, Caballa, Kaballa, Qabalah, Quabalah etc... it is not assumed that my choice of spelling is the definitive and correct version, and this arcane knowledge has been known since before the singer Madonna first bestrode the planet and then discovered the Cabbala. This system is visually displayed as a threefold 'tree' structure, with a middle pillar and branches on the left and right, all of which hold spheres, or *sephira* to which are ascribed particular properties or qualities.

The left hand side of the tree, particularly the *sephira Geburah* as the principle of severity, is perceived to be a source of evil whereas the right hand side, such as the *sephira Chesed* represents goodness. However the post-war magician Kenneth Grant (1924-), discussed at length in chapters to come, has experimented extensively with the 'averse' tree, in which the mirror image, or the 'other side of the tree entirely' is what is perceived by many magical observers as dark and evil⁴¹².

As the modern archaeologist Robert Wallis points out, some Celtic mythology, especially within *The Mabinogion*, (which is a source of magical inspiration for many Celtic magical groups) has elements of challenging taboos, particularly dietary ones over the consumption of the flesh of taboo animals⁴¹³, which is akin to the dietary transgressions that are used in Tantra.

There is not space here to posit some means by which any commonality could be historically supported between Celtic myth and Tantric practice, which I suspect would be a task involving great speculation and hindered by many factual and geographical gaps. In any case, on the developments of these concepts the Hindus seem to have been there first, since Tantra predates both Cabbala and *The Mabinogion* by some centuries, even if the presence of a 'taboo challenging' element in the magical ritual of any given society may have derived from much later sources.

It is important to note that *within the early Hindu culture there was no*

⁴¹¹ Carroll, *Liber Null & Psychonaut*, p 40

⁴¹² Grant, *Nightside*, p 1-2 writes: "the negative, or averse side of the Tree has been kept out of sight and sedulously ignored... it is futile and false to imagine a coin with one side only"

⁴¹³ Wallis, *Sociopolitics of Ecstasy*. Taliesin's trin. Wvrd Woden. p 4

moral distinction between the two paths; they were simply seen as two means to attain the same transcendent goal, that being religious union with the Divine. It is only latterly, in the last 130 years or so that any value judgments have been added to the practices, since Hinduism and more latterly the Buddhism derived from it split into two factions, one largely following the RHP methods, and one the LHP.

The use of, and the value judgement attached to, the terminology of LHP in the West appears to derive from the Ukrainian explorer and mystic Madame Helena Petrovna Blavatsky (1831-1891). She was the founder of Theosophy, a movement intended to distil and employ the essential principles of divine contact from the worlds' religions. Blavatsky, or HPB as she is often referred to in magical conversation, was widely travelled and is perhaps the most influential figure in late 19th Century occultism.

Many of the members of the *Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn* (founded in 1887) were also involved in the *Theosophical Society*, which Blavatsky founded in London in 1875, just a few months before a Mr and Mrs Crowley of Leamington, Warwickshire were delivered of a baby boy, Edward Alexander, who would later re-name himself Aleister and take the occult world by storm.

Blavatsky spent many years both consulting extensive occult libraries and travelling in the East⁴¹⁴, and much of her magical knowledge was allegedly picked up from 'Masters', namely superhuman beings, or earthly Hindus and Buddhists of high magical ability who were staunch devotees of methods analogous to the RHP, and who, in predictable fashion, gave her baleful warnings about associating with their fellow countrymen and women in other districts, who were equally staunch LHP devotees.

Thus Blavatsky acquired, seemingly with little talent for discrimination or discernment, the second-hand prejudices of one puritanical religious group over another group, who were perhaps more liberal. This she wove, as established 'fact', into the narrative of her several voluminous books on occultism (for example her *Isis Unveiled*, published in 1877 ran to over a thousand pages, even after having been severely edited). For example occultism is a dangerous, double-edged weapon... (and) is composed of

⁴¹⁴ Some of the material in this section is a précis of the excellent introductory chapter by Nicholas Goodrich-Clarke (Ed.), *Western Esoteric Masters Series: Helena Blavatsky*, Berkeley, California, North Atlantic Books, 2004.

White and Black magic"⁴¹⁵. HPB's condemnation spread wider on occasions, including labelling the use of medical hypnotism as "black magic"⁴¹⁶.

Blavatsky helped to create a fabricated historical precedent for extant general definitions of black and white magic, calling these the Left- and Right Hand Paths. It is likely that a similar situation might have occurred if a somewhat gullible Hindu explorer had travelled in early-modern Europe during the Reformation, and had first met with communities of Protestants, who would surely have warned them from consorting with 'those evil Catholics', or *vice versa*. The subsequent books written by this explorer may have delineated between the nice, down-to-earth Protestants and the alleged 'baby-eating Catholics' of European Christianity, in a similar way to Blavatsky's demonisation of the adherents of the LHP.

Her distinction was poured into an indiscriminate *fin-de-siecle* Western mind hungry for any kind of exotic magical lore, and other writers (largely unquestioningly) reproduced Blavatsky's notions of the LHP, where such a specific duality had not been known before. Despite some of HPB's claims having been eroded by academic investigation as to their veracity, for example her tales of travel in Tibet in a mid-19th century era, when Westerners in general, let alone Western women were excluded from the country until 1904⁴¹⁷, her teachings still have considerable stock as reference material in some sectors of the occult world.

One such early example of the propagation of a Blavatskyesque LHP was by the mystic Arthur Edward Waite (1857-1942). The American-born Waite relocated to England as a child and as an adult he joined numerous mystical and magical groups, including the *Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn* in 1891, and he subsequently formed several magical groups of his own. One of his many books on occultism was *The Book of Black Magic and Pacts* (1898), in which he talks of "the sovereign horror of the

⁴¹⁵ HPB, A few questions to 'Hiraf', author of the article 'Rosicrucianism', *Spiritual Scientist*, 15th and 22nd July 1875, p 217-18, 224, 236-7, (Boston), in Goodrich-Clarke, Helena Blavatsky, p 35, 47, original 1875, emphasis original

⁴¹⁶ HPB, Magic in Science, in Dennis Wheatley (Ed.) *HP Blavatsky, Studies in Occultism*, *The Dennis Wheatley Library of the Occult*, London, White Lion, 1975, p 61. Original 1974, Original papers by Blavatsky from 1887-1891.

⁴¹⁷ Peter Hopkirk, *Trespassers on the roof of the World: the race for Lhasa*, Oxford, OUP, 1982, p 3. In the sole mention of HPB in a very detailed history of Tibetan exploration Hopkirk calls her teachings related to Tiber "questionable", on p 225, and Goodrich-Clarke, *Blavatsky*, admits that some of her travel claims are "largely uncorroborated... and occasionally conflicting in their chronology". n 2.

Brothers of the Left-Hand Path", and writes as if the distinction is new to him⁴¹⁸. This notion is supported in his *Ceremonial Magic* (which was in part a 1911 reprint and expansion of his earlier *Black Magic and Pacts*) where he said that it was only in modern occultism of his time that the distinction had been made, and he sounds a slight note of caution as to the labelling:

"occult life has been entered by two classes of adepts, who have sometimes been fantastically distinguished as the Brothers of the Right and the Brothers of the Left, transcendental good and transcendental evil being specified as their respective ends, and in each case they are something altogether different from what is understood conventionally by either White or Black Magic"⁴¹⁹

An important character of the first half of the 20th century in this respect is 'Dion Fortune', (Violet Firth, 1890-1946) mentioned in the previous chapter, who led the RHP Order the *Servants of the Light* (SOL, who were at one point loosely aligned with the Golden Dawn, they are now called Society of the Inner Light). Fortune's books were identified in 1991 by the modern magician Phil Hine as being an influential source of scurrilous commentary on the nature of what 'black magicians' did, which Fortune presented both in her magical novels and her practical magic texts:

"throughout the 'twenties & 'thirties ... (she) alleged that there was a conspiracy of male occultists who used 'homosexual techniques' to build up what she called 'dark astral power'. She also blamed the decline of the Greek and Roman empires on those cultures' relaxed attitude to homosexuality. Although she never named any of these 'black adepts', it is clear that she was probably referring to C.W. Leadbeater, and perhaps, also Aleister Crowley"⁴²⁰.

Although she is still influential in some magical quarters, Fortune's books now seem rather 'stuck in their era' (the 1920s or so) in places, for example they include references to ensuring that the householder in Britain ensure their Indian servants do not gain access to their bodily waste products, as

⁴¹⁸ Arthur E Waite, *The Book of Black Magic and Pacts*, 1898, reproduced within his *The Book of Ceremonial Magic*, London, Rider, Undated facsimile reprint of 1911 Original, p 17

⁴¹⁹ *Ibid*, p 16

⁴²⁰ Phil Hine *Breeding Devils in China: Homosexuality & the Occult*

they may then be used in LHP rites devoted to the dark goddess Kali⁴²¹. Bodily waste here included nail and hair clippings, but specifically faeces and urine. This was written in the days when 'chamber pots' (kept under the bed at night, to be dealt with after use by one's servants) rather than flushing toilets were in almost universal use in upper-class houses.

Fortune wrote in 1929 that merely reading about the LHP is "calculated to make the flesh creep", and that involvement in it is akin to drug addiction⁴²². She was also very harsh and dogmatic on the employment of 'eastern' methods of occultism by Westerners, criticising Blavatsky, for her "Tartar blood" which so obviously influenced her "affinities ...with the light of Asia"⁴²³ and thus fuelled her desire for the introduction of these methods to the West. Fortune also criticised the transference of occult methods in any international direction, since Western magical initiation often includes elements of surprise and threat within the ritual re-enactment of various mythic scenarios, and this would be equally inappropriate for other races, since "the Hindu dies readily from shock" (with Fortune giving no justification for this incredibly racist statement), and, more generally, due to racial differences the Eastern guru can give the Westerner "little practical help in matters of ethics"⁴²⁴.

So far as Fortune's allegations of a homosexual conspiracy go, Crowley certainly was an active and often promiscuous bisexual for most of his life. Charles W Leadbeater (1847 or 1854-1934; the birth date is uncertain and open to debate) was a leading light in the Theosophy Movement of the early 20th Century⁴²⁵ until his career was damaged by several (seemingly accurate) scandals about his sexual predilection for very young boys⁴²⁶. Crowley, never one to shy away from attacking any perceived defect or weakness in those he disliked (even if the attacked 'sins' of his victim were in some cases those he also practiced, and in the case of Leadbeater, it being an attack on someone who had reviewed his books favourably),

421 Dion Fortune, *Psychic Self-Defence*, Northampton, Thorsons, 1970, p 67. Original 1930

422 _____, *Sane Occultism*, Northampton, Thorsons, 1968, p 117, 119. Original 1929

423 *Ibid*, p 161

424 *Ibid*, p 164, 167

425 Blavatsky Study Centre website blavatskyarchives.com/leadbeaterbib.htm#Life

426 Peter Washington, *Madame Blavatsky's Baboon: Theosophy and the emergence of the Western Guru*, London, Secker & Warburg, 1993, p 117-8

wrote a scurrilous sexual limerick about him⁴²⁷.

The seed of such ideas may have originated in the publicity storm following the arrest of Oscar Wilde. Following Wilde's trials for immorality and indecency with young men in 1895, the moral panic of predatory homosexuals metaphorically 'feeding' on 'innocent young boys' spread from wider society into occultism in the early part of the 20th century, where to some extent the notion remains. As the modern magician and author Phil Hine perceptively wrote:

"by the end of the Nineteenth Century there were two 'identities' based on Gender preference - two categories of person: Heterosexual (normal) and Homosexual (Deviant). These became mutually exclusive absolutes - one was either normal, or not, in these terms... as a great deal of what passes for modern occult literature emerged at the end of the Nineteenth Century, it's really of no surprise that occult writers took on board the prevailing social mores of their age, especially when it came to regarding attitudes to sexuality"⁴²⁸.

This appears to be based upon the Leadbeater incidents, and:

"the resulting furore not only damaged the Theosophical movement as a whole, but also gave rise to the rumours that there existed groups of 'Black Magicians' who obtained occult power by psychically vampirizing young boys"⁴²⁹.

Writing about the notion of sexual vampirism with youngsters in a magical setting means that I must again refer the reader to matters of abuse. As mentioned in the previous chapter there is not scope within this book to delve deeply into the 'Satanic Ritual Abuse' scare in Britain in the latter part of the 20th Century, however the reader is directed to the recent works of La Fontaine and Medway for further information, and it can all be seen as a probably paranoid re-phrasing of this huge misdirection deriving in part from the Wilde trials⁴³⁰.

427 "The holy Theosophist, Leadbeater, at a battue, who said to the head beater: 'your prick I am crazy- to suck, but I'm lazy- just fuck your five fingers instead, beater'" Crowley, *Selected Poems*, p 200

428 Hine, *Breeding Devils*

429 *Ibid*

430 La Fontaine, *Satanism, Athlone History of Witchcraft, and Medway, Lure of the Sinister*

The historian Michael Foldy believes that more tolerant attitudes to same-sex relationships largely prevailed from the early-modern period onwards in Britain, and that it was the Oscar Wilde trials in 1895, and their aftermath, which allowed (or encouraged, with newspaper media assistance) a public outrage that rapidly created a societal system of intolerance towards such acts. The biographer and literary historian Brian Reade believes that there was “a discernible wave of homosexual subculture, beginning around 1850 and *closing shortly after the Wilde trials of 1895*”⁴³¹, and perhaps actually being destroyed by the consequences of the trial, and that before then there were many instances of an *archetypal* Englishman “passing through *homosexual and religious* crises” from 1850-1900⁴³².

The proceedings of the various Wilde trials were deliberately not published in the Court Session papers (publication was usual with all other trials, unless State secrets were involved) on the grounds that the details were “unfit for publication”, thus leaving room for outrageous public speculation and overblown hyperbole about what was actually being offered as evidence in court⁴³³. Nowadays the cut and thrust of pretty much every sexual act would of course be reported in the press, due (apart from salaciousness being a major selling point) to perhaps a decrease in desire to hold back such details, or because many people can imagine worse in any case. Lord Alfred Douglas, Wilde’s lover, wrote after Wilde’s conviction that his prosecution was motivated by hypocritical moral fundamentalists among Members of Parliament, who he called “maniacs of virtue”, who were motivated to punish one prominent homosexual in order to save many others, who were allegedly in positions of power.⁴³⁴

The press of the time, as often today, operated on the principle of “the more lurid and disgusting the story, the more newspapers were sold... their primary function... was not to stimulate thought, but to amuse and entertain their readership” (regardless of any fabrications used in the tale) and “public scandals meant increased circulation... this in turn represented increased revenues and increased power to represent public opinion”⁴³⁵.

Foldy writes that “heterosexism’ is ‘institutionalised’ in popular and professional discourses and codified in civil and ecclesiastical laws. In effect, ‘heterosexism’ legitimises and authorizes the use of various means to restrain and suppress a minority group”⁴³⁶.

Foldy also sees heterosexism as an evolving entity over time, culture and geography, with the state of heterosexism in Britain prior to Wilde’s trials as being one of confusion and sympathy for ‘those poor queer folk’, which rapidly mutated into anger, intolerance and persecution after the reportage of Wilde’s trials⁴³⁷. Foldy describes the change of perspective on homosexuality during the nineteenth century, from it being seen as a sin, a lack of willpower and a debauched crime, to becoming a third sex, “the sexual invert, whose inclinations and behaviour were biologically determined and manifestly ‘other’”, and whose behaviour was increasingly being pathologised, by being given medical terms (such as a form of mental illness) and psychological labels (such as perversion).

The fear of ‘otherness’ was translated into fear of a dangerous unknown entity, and it was in the “spectacle of the Wilde trials (where)... one can see the public face of homophobia and the structures of a revitalized, more aggressive, and more intolerant heterosexism emerge for the first time within a thoroughly ‘modern’ context”⁴³⁸. The prevailing medical-scientific theories of human development posited a battle between progress and degeneration, and it was to degeneration that decadence was linked. This could be seen as “the ...process of the physical and mental deterioration of the human species... presented ...often... in the racial language of the imperial nation-state (i.e. the degeneration of the “English Race”)”⁴³⁹.

“The ‘homophobic’ moral panic which followed the Wilde trials can be seen to have represented a host of fears which incorporated the various threats ostensibly posed by a ‘new’, dangerous and suddenly very visible category of persons... to an ‘organic’ social body that perceived itself as struggling for its own survival in an increasingly hostile and unpredictable world”⁴⁴⁰. and “all of the forces generally perceived as criminal or

acts of subversion such as Wilde's, which contested the hegemony of the dominant moral values... were viewed by many as socially regressive and labelled 'degenerate'⁴⁴¹. This was particularly true of "the sacralized performance of the sodomitical act was intended simultaneously to 'negate' the constraints symbolized by God, religion and civilization, and to glorify man's 'natural' impulses for brutality, lust and physical satisfaction"⁴⁴², which is relevant when one considers the pseudonymous correspondent to the *Star* newspaper (and quite probably a friend of Wilde's) who made the point that if Wilde had sexually ruined the lives of several young girls, instead of penetrating young men, he would never have appeared in court.

There is also a political history element. At the time of the Wilde trials the ruling Liberal Government had become moribund and ineffective, and Foldy contends that this and the assorted other social problems such as economic depression, industrial unrest, military tensions overseas following General Gordon's disastrous defeat at Khartoum, the clamour for Home Rule for Ireland, the campaign for Female voting (and thus a greatly increased and frightening, largely *unpredictable* electorate if it came about) etc., led those in power to pick one problem and attempt to address it vigorously, in the hope of gaining some kind of control.

Immorality, and in particular same-sex immorality was the problem chosen, since "the 'normal' was predictable, and hence, from the State's point of view, easier to manipulate and control"⁴⁴³. An establishment figure who wrote to a large extent about othering, social pathology and state control, and hugely influenced the social perception of the Left-Hand Path via the pages of his novels is Dennis Wheatley, who I turn to next.

441 *Ibid.*, p 74

442 *Ibid.*, p 124

443 *Ibid.*, p 120-30, fn 2, and 142

Dennis Wheatley and the LHP

The anti-occult, racist and highly salacious fictional works of the best-selling author Dennis Wheatley (1897-1977) and the later horror-thriller films based upon his writings have considerably helped to reinforce this negative view of the LHP and its adherents, in a similar way to the work of Dion Fortune.

For example in Wheatley's fifth novel *The Devil Rides Out* (first published 1935) the members of a black magical, Left-Hand Path group headed by a character called *Mocata*, (based in many respects on Aleister Crowley, whom Wheatley had met several times) include a Negro who is "a 'bad Black if ever I saw one'" (as described by one of the book's heroes), an Albino, a Mandarin Chinese "whose slit eyes betrayed a cold, merciless nature", a one-armed Eurasian, a "fat, oily-looking Babu" (a hugely derogatory term of the time for an Indian) and a hare-lipped German⁴⁴⁴. In his *Strange Conflict* (1941)

"the Order of the Left-Hand Path... has its adepts... the Way of Darkness is perpetuated in the horrible Voodoo cult which had its origins in Madagascar and has held Africa, the Dark Continent, in its grip for centuries and spread with the slave trade to the West Indies... most of the black man's Magic is crude stuff but... among whites, though it is generally the wealthy and intellectual... to whom it appeals."

A link is also made to Nazism's alleged involvement with the Left-Hand Path⁴⁴⁵. In *The Satanist*, (1960), a Satanic group have as their henchman a sinister Indian⁴⁴⁶, and the racism and anti-communism continues: "Blacks, browns, yellows take our money with one hand and aircraft, tanks, guns from the Kremlin with the other"⁴⁴⁷. A group of Satanists arrested in Britain comprised:

444 Dennis Wheatley, *The Devil Rides Out*, London, Heron, 1972, p 5, 10, 11, 25. Original 1935

445 _____, *Strange Conflict*, London, Hutchinson, 1966, p 12-13, Original 1941

446 _____, *The Satanist*, London, Century, 1988, p 78, Original 1960

447 *Ibid.*, p 211

"a strangler... a bank-note forger... a Czech secret agent... a publisher (of) ... more poisonous literature than Communist H.Q itself... the rest of them are ... mostly rich people and well-known... who have been paying fat cheques... to one of the biggest sources of the funds used to sabotage British industry" ⁴⁴⁸,

thus being a collection of both 'low-lives', other nationalities and unpatriotic higher-class people. In Wheatley's novel *They Used Dark Forces*, (1964) the villain was a Satanist who had "chosen to follow the Left-Hand Path, because in no other way could I achieve my desires" ⁴⁴⁹. This kind of blanket-labelling condemnation seems eerily reminiscent of the generalised xenophobic media storm generated after the indecency trials of Oscar Wilde in 1895, when the newspapers of the time called Wilde's aesthetic, decadent artistic philosophy a "**French** and **pagan** plague which has infested the healthy fields of British life" ⁴⁵⁰ and as the historian Michael Foldy writes

"since England and France had been 'natural' enemies for centuries, and since it was well known that France had always been a hotbed of vice, permissiveness and radical ideas, Wilde's 'cult' was viewed as unpatriotic if not treacherous" ⁴⁵¹.

The French were also Catholic, of course, thus under suspicion from a Protestant England to begin with, and in a useful twist of fate (or deliberate manipulation of court process) for the media, Wilde was found guilty on May 25th, the Queen's birthday, at that time still a day for expressions of patriotic fervour.

In the latter half of the nineteenth century much pioneering medical and psychiatric work was carried out, across Europe, in an attempt to medicalise and categorise deviancy and degeneracy in its many forms. As Foldy writes, these included the

"chronically sick, the mentally ill, the criminals, the sexually deviant, the politically malcontent, and even the chronically poor" ⁴⁵². "The 'degenerate' label was used so often in popular discourse ... that an

448 *Ibid*, p 392-3

449 _____, *They used Dark Forces*, Hutchinson, 1964, p 158

450 Foldy, *Oscar Wilde*, p 142-3, emphasis added, *fn* 69

451 *Ibid*, p 53

452 *Ibid*, p 73-4

inevitable cross-linkage of negative associations occurred. **If a person managed to fall into any one of the ... categories, he was often, by association, suspected of fitting them all**" ⁴⁵³,

which is much the technique used by Wheatley in his novels, that of attaching every possible 'sin', deformity, defect of character or disease of mind to any scapegoat, thus the adherent of the Left-Hand Path, under Wheatley, commits an encyclopaedic range of religious, moral, political and criminal offences, is physically unpleasant to the eye, has a disease or morality that is possibly contagious in some manner and is usually 'not British', or at least not a patriot. This view is of course not solely Wheatley's. After the second World War the feeling in Britain against both the Germans and the Communists was strong, for example the military strategist and war historian Major-General John FC Fuller (who had once been a disciple of Crowley's) wrote, in the depths of the Cold War in 1954 that

"Russia has never belonged to Europe; her civilisation owes nothing to Latin culture... (they are) the spearhead of the Asiatic threat to Europe" ⁴⁵⁴.

As well as warning against communism, Wheatley wrote (and paraphrased the same sentiment many times in introducing his books) that

"I... have never assisted at, or participated in, any ceremony connected with Magic - Black or White... I feel that it is only right to urge... (the reader) most strongly, to refrain from being drawn into the practice... to do so would bring them into dangers of a very real and concrete nature" ⁴⁵⁵.

Personally I believe that Wheatley is not telling the entire truth here as regards his occult involvement, and he is ripe for a really good biography writer-researcher to discover more. I do not believe that he was an active or long-term magician, but there are things 'between the lines' in his rambling 3-volume autobiography that gently hint at his having had some

453 *Ibid* p 74, emphasis added.

454 John FC Fuller, *Decisive battles of the Western World*, V. 2, London, Paladin, 1970, p 588. Original 1954.

455 Dennis Wheatley, author's note to a collection of four magical novels (*The Devil Rides Out*, *The Haunting of Toby Jugg*, *Gateway to Hell* and *To the Devil a Daughter*), London, Heinemann/Octopus, 1977 (originals 1935, 1948, 1952, 1970).

fairly catastrophic magical accident while 'dabbling' or experimenting at some point in his youth. This may have completely turned him against the subject, and could explain his anti-occult vehemence in later years.

It should be remembered that as a hugely best-selling popular author the writings of Wheatley had magnitudes more readers in wider culture (and in the case of his films, viewers of the ideas therein) than those of Blavatsky, Waite, Fortune, Crowley or any other occultists combined. In 1972, after nearly 40 years of publishing (including this period having been interrupted by a world war) Wheatley wrote of having sold the quite astonishing figure of **30 million books**.⁴⁵⁶ It is perhaps ironic, given his anti-occult stance, that from the privileged standpoint of a rich and famous author that Wheatley was editor of a series of books, *The Dennis Wheatley Library of the Occult*, a project intended to republish older, less famous and considerably more factually-accurate occult materials than his own, by trading on his name and reputation. In 1974 this included a collection of Blavatsky's journal articles, and in Wheatley's introduction to that volume he praises her for the tireless work in "garnering ... the immemorial wisdom of the East"⁴⁵⁷.

This positive comment jars somewhat with the explicit racism in his novels. However it is possible in his old age that with the wider political machinations such as avoidance of making Race (and especially immigration) an electoral issue in the 1970s prior to the final entry into British law of the much-strengthened third *Race Relations Act* in 1976⁴⁵⁸, which afforded considerably improved legal protection against discrimination for non-native-born Britons, Wheatley was making a conscious if belated effort to conform to a more moderate stance. This view is supported by some reasonably benign praise of Native American spirituality in his *The Irish Witch*, first published in 1973. However the Native Americans in the book were historical, from the 19th Century, rather than contemporary, and the main positive Native character is one who has converted to Christianity as well as maintaining some elements of his faith of birth. Wheatley remains highly critical of all other non-English and Satanic protagonists in this book, of course⁴⁵⁹.

456 Wheatley, *Devil Rides Out*, p xii

457 Wheatley, Introduction to Blavatsky, *Studies in Occultism*, p 9

458 Tony Kushner, Immigration and race relations in postwar British society, in *20th Century Britain, Economic, Social and Cultural Change*, p 418

459 Dennis Wheatley, *The Irish Witch*, London, Arrow, 1975, p 94-5, 108-9, 146-7 and 152-3. Original 1973

In 1975 the magician Kenneth Grant (1924-), a former pupil of Crowley and Austin Spare (see subsequent chapters for a discussion on Mr Grant) published *Cults of the Shadow*, an attempt to restore a coherent and less judgmental view of the LHP. Based on decades of research and practical work by his magical group, the Typhonian OTO, it represented an important step away from the stereotypes promulgated by Blavatsky, Fortune, Wheatley, *et al*. While rooting Western LHP practice firmly in the philosophical principles of taboo-challenge from the *vama marga* of antiquity, Grant is quite frank in his books, that the LHP in his psycho-sexual version of the practice is both a progression from the original version, and that it can be dangerous for the dabbler: "one reaches heaven by the very things which may lead to hell"⁴⁶⁰ but he rates the methods as vital (along with mastery of the RHP) to create a balanced magician.

460 Kenneth Grant. *Cults of the Shadow*. London. Muller. 1975. p 2

Head East: Orientalism/ Colonialism

Xenophobia in the published excesses of Fortune, Wheatley and others give impetus to the notion that the *Vama margā* has been selectively culturally appropriated to give the LHP in the West some kind of dangerously exotic glamour, in much the same way that Eastern spiritualities in general were so widely popular in the nineteen-sixties, in some respects simply because they were an exotic import from the former colonies.

From such notions the language and discourse theorist Edward Said (1935-2003) developed a theory of 'Orientalism' (which term is largely interchangeable with the broader 'Colonialism'), namely that the hegemony of the English language, and by extension the British Empire has been an over-riding factor in the world's own interpretation of the world.

The notional 'Orient' is anywhere east or south of Europe (and under the more generalised 'Colonialism' label it includes the Americas too). English models of Orientalism, and the implicit intellectual authority of a Western power, not any reality of the East, drive the perception of 'the Orient' *per se*.

English has supervened the previous dominant language and cultural paradigm, namely 'the Classics' of Rome and Greece. English (and English morality) has become a global institution, despite the rather minuscule island from which the British Empire radiated. As Said wrote in 1978, this created

"a highly artificial enactment of what a non-Oriental has made into a symbol for the whole Orient... the Oriental is depicted as someone one judges (as in a court of law), something one studies and depicts... something one disciplines (as in a school or prison), something one illustrates (as in a zoological manual)... the Oriental is contained and represented by dominating frameworks"⁴⁶¹.

⁴⁶¹ Edward Said, Orientalism, in Rivkin & Ryan, *Literary Theory*, p 875, 881. Original 1078.

The perceptions of this dominating (Western) framework are a dichotomy between fascination (in the culture and 'exotic-ness' of the area) and horror (of the unknown, a generalised xenophobia, as evidenced for example by the attitudes inherent in Wheatley especially, see above) which conspire to hold the Orient just out of reach of the general populace of Europe, but allow the ingress of certain unrepresentative and often stereotypical factors, under strict control and limitation.

In the 1980s the hit adventure film *Indiana Jones and the Temple of Doom* propagated this stereotype further, of an Indian cult worshipping the Goddess *Kali* and giving human sacrifice in her name, plus eating unspeakable foods such as monkey brains and live beetles, and employing a *smorgasbord* of evil magical practices against both the 'whites' and their fellow Indians who were not on the LHP⁴⁶². Again as with Wheatley versus Fortune or Blavatsky in the exposure stakes, and bearing in mind the low numbers of magical practitioners in any case as discussed much earlier, the viewers of this very well-known and popular film would almost exponentially outnumber the readers of Kenneth Grant, or any other occultist with a more coherent and balanced view of the LHP.

This is to be expected, as no mainstream and accurate magic book is ever likely to be a best-seller, simply because of the relatively low numbers of potential magicians there are to buy it, as discussed in an earlier chapter. A magical textbook is unlikely to be of interest to the lay reader, whereas magic which has been fictionalised and diluted, and made into entertainment by compelling creative writing, such as the *Harry Potter* books by JK Rowling have sold millions. The modern magician Phil Hine supported some of this view in 2004:

"the concept of Tantrism...originated with 19th century orientalists who believed that the practices they were identifying via Hindu and Buddhist texts called 'Tantras' was something very distinct from the general - respectable - field of Indian philosophy and religion. 'Tantrism' became, if you like, a 'box' into which could be circumscribed the most horrifying and degenerate aspects of the Indian mind' - everything that smacked of black magic, licentiousness, and paganism"⁴⁶³.

⁴⁶² *Indiana Jones and the Temple of Doom*, motion picture, 1984, Script by George Lucas. Information online at Internet Movie Database www.imdb.com/title/tt0087469/

⁴⁶³ Phil Hine, Reflections on Tantra, based on a talk at Treadwells Bookshop, London 2004 (Online) www.philhine.org.uk/writings/tr_reflect.html

In addition, the reification of 'the Orient' made, Said writes, for a perception of "an unchanging Orient, absolutely different from" and thus *fundamentally threatening* to "the West" ⁴⁶⁴, which echoes Major Fuller's comments (above) about the threat to the West from an Asiatic Russia. Thus in this instance, a nominally 'Indian' and ancient notion of the *Vama marga* can be tacked onto some of the more modern and local angles of Western Magic, giving it both an exoticity and apparent 'ancient authority' without the practitioner necessarily having any contact, additional knowledge or engagement whatsoever with the wider Oriental society from which the *Vama marga* came, and as a side-effect making it all seem exotically dangerous to the RHP observer. There are of course exceptions to this, Crowley for instance travelled extensively in the East and experienced first hand many of the 'Orientalisms' that he later added to his magical practice, but such direct knowledge is often limited. Blavatsky claimed to have visited many Oriental countries from which she derived her various magical theories, but as mentioned above at least some of those claims, such as her living in Tibet, have recently been demonstrated to be most unlikely.

It should also be noted that the 'othering' process of Orientalism and a linked factor of class prejudice has perhaps extended into the way that academia looks at magic, as the modern academic and magician Justin Woodman remarked:

"...it is important that academics do recognise ... how (their work) can impact on the ways in which the claims of various social/cultural groups may or may not be recognised and validated... social scientists up until now have largely ignored satanism, chaos magic, etc, or have marginalised practitioners... magicians are represented as white, well educated middle class professionals; chaos magicians are on the other hand are shown as scruffy, working class layabouts - thus... (they are not)... 'proper', 'authentic' or 'serious' magicians!" ⁴⁶⁵

So they are often not studied because academia judges them to be not worthy of study...

Since the British Isles arguably has no surviving 'indigenous religion', and Christianity itself is a Mediterranean import, this practice of outright

⁴⁶⁴ Said, *Orientalism*, in Rivkin & Ryan, *Literary Theory*, p 884

⁴⁶⁵ Justin Woodman, posting to ISM e-list, 30-7-2004

theft or cultural appropriation can be seen to have a long and successful history. As an aside, although Ronald Hutton makes the excellent point that in the last 50 or so years Britain gave Wicca to the world, I would add we also gave it Chaos magick and Thelema.

However much or little the specifically *vama marga* notions and methods of transgression may have any pertinence or relevance to Western magic, the practice of transgression of *something* is still most important as a magical technique on the LHP. As the modern magician Phil Hine writes: "there is a certain glamour for some occultists around declaring oneself to be a 'black magician' or 'Satanic adept'. If a label has a significant taboo or shock value attached to it, then some individuals are going to be attracted to trying it on themselves" ⁴⁶⁶. As an example, the pop singer Marc Almond formally joined the Church of Satan (CoS; discussed in a chapter later) in the nineteen-eighties not strictly as a magician but to ritually align himself with his own, and what he saw as the CoS philosophy, of man being "dark and melancholic, inherently romantic". As he freely admits in his autobiography of 1999, the act was also "a juvenile attempt to shock and be outrageous" ⁴⁶⁷.

Following the Left-Hand Path seems to be all about challenging the *status quo*. As Phil Hine wrote in 1997:

"we live in a world subject to extensive ... all-embracing systems of social and personal control that continually feed us the lie that we are each alone, helpless and powerless to effect change. Magick is about change... we are not helpless cogs in a clockwork universe... through magick we may come to explore the possibilities of freedom" ⁴⁶⁸.

If magic is performed for these purposes of personal spiritual liberation then it must, by the common LHP definitions, involve transgression of 'common' morality, law and custom. Thus due to the presence of a consensus morality to the contrary, things like "homosexual techniques have an anti-social element and therefore (magical) power" ⁴⁶⁹.

Sex of any form within magic is powerful, it seems; even just talking

⁴⁶⁶ Hine, *Black magic and the left-hand path*

⁴⁶⁷ Marc Almond, *Tainted life: the autobiography*, London, Pan, 1999, p 59-60

⁴⁶⁸ Phil Hine, *Oven Ready Chaos*, p 5

⁴⁶⁹ Shual (Moos Morvan), *Sexual Magick*, p 11

about it. The author and magician Phil Hine picks up on the crucial point that

“sexual magick is dangerous, as it subverts the conditioned value that sex = procreation = nuclear family (where man owns woman, owns children). It subverts the conditioned value that good sex = x amount of orgasms wrung from the partner. Orgasm has become one more marketplace commodity to be bought, sold, and advertised. Sexual magick might offer the chance to find out that there is something beyond the walls. The magick is in our bodies and minds.”⁴⁷⁰

A magical religion that involves sexual activity (and sexual activity which may be one or more of other than heterosexual, missionary position, within a Christian marriage) as an intrinsic part of the worship and not for the procreation of children is anathema to a ‘traditional’ Christian society, where for centuries such deviance was seen as sinful and wicked, which view was supported by utilising some or other Biblical quote. As the magician and occult philosopher Lionel Snell remarks:

“crackpot fundamentalists who want excuses... will invariably find supporting quotations in the Old Testament and in the words of St Paul - they do not quote Christ... (allowing) people to keep all their old prejudices and bad habits was much easier to sell. So Paul’s version of Christianity triumphed”⁴⁷¹.

Modern LHP magic encourages exploration and questioning of the world, as the modern Satanist Anton LaVey explained in 1977:

“no creed must be accepted on authority of a ‘divine’ nature. Religions must be put to question. No moral dogma must be taken for granted...there is nothing inherently sacred about moral codes”⁴⁷².

Such testing is not always plain sailing, the cathartic and (as Snell describes), the apparently often emotionally painful ordeal of indulging in LHP practices is an intrinsic part of their effect:

“cleaving to one’s opposite is like a test of friendship. Those who

470 Hine, *Breeding Devils*

471 Ramsey Dukes, preface to Angerford & Lea, *Thundersqueak*, p x-xi

472 LaVey, *Satanic Bible*, n 26

rebel against authority are often promoted to positions of authority for the simple reason that it ‘makes them see sense’. But this ‘seeing sense’ simply means that their old best friend who was Destruction of Authority has turned out to be not such a good friend after all. They should be grateful for the revelation”⁴⁷³.

This consensus is still very present in the modern mass media. In 2002 Lionel Snell identified a stereotypical formula for various claimed factual Television programmes on occultism, where a series of ‘talking heads’, usually academics and churchmen, discuss their (often negative) *a priori* opinions on what magicians do. There follows a series of short images of unspeaking, and thus, literally ‘*unspeakable*’, magicians at work, usually robed, armed with dramatic-looking ritual swords or knives and present in some visually provocative or sensational setting, such as a looming Gothic-style building, ‘spooky’ old graveyard or ancient ‘pagan’ stone circle.

I was at the time involved in a very basic pre-production academic advisory capacity with a Television company making a serious documentary about magic, called *Do You Believe in Magic?* and I was assured that this was a serious programme and it would not begin with the style that Snell bemoaned. On eventually viewing the finished programme the opening sequences comprised precisely this kind of skewed depiction of magic, with some provocative nudity as well⁴⁷⁴, although in fairness this was apparently done at a re-editing stage on the orders of more senior TV executives after the programme-makers had handed over the finished article ready for broadcast. Happily, the rest of the series was much better!

Snell decried this method as being deliberate contextual abuse - and that the converse, a series of talking head appearances by magicians indulging in morbid speculation about what vicars do had never been produced. Such a film would involve provocative dark tales of cannibalistic ritual re-enactments, involving children as participants⁴⁷⁵, and then a voiceless film of churchmen going about their business at Mass, from which the

473 Angerford & Lea, *Thundersqueak*, p 85

474 *Do you believe in Magic?* 3-part TV series, London, Mentorn Ltd. Shown on Channel 4 in Spring 2003.

475 Much as the Roman Catholic Mass would appear to a truly objective and naïve observer, perhaps an ‘extraterrestrial sociologist’, who was entirely ignorant of the purpose and history of this practice.

viewer can make their (influenced) judgments⁴⁷⁶.

In psychology this presentation method is referred to as 'priming' and can be used to dramatically skew viewer perceptions of an often-ambiguous image by deliberately fabricating a loaded context beforehand. As was discussed earlier, it has long been known in psychological research that if you 'prime' subjects with medical words, for example, they are then much faster to identify other medical terms as compared to non-medical ones in a word-association task. Similarly, if you prime people with overt demonic referents they will much more rapidly move to associate the most vaguely demonic imagery with what they have just been primed with, even if the imagery is, objectively, pretty neutral. I personally suspect (with no evidence found yet to support the view) that Montague Summers had some huge negative priming experience with 'the Devil' in his youth.....

It is a technique much used in advertising and political broadcasting, for example the Tony Blair 'Satanic' political poster example given above.

Similarly, the modern magician and author Stephen Sennitt recently wrote about the magical artist Austin Osman Spare that he:

"showed that the way forward meant totally abandoning the stifling morality and religious accretions which had attached themselves to occultism. His sinister reputation rested on the fact that he was true to himself and would accept no restrictions conferred by society's transient values; nor was he willing to accept the occult fraternity's sense of Masonic decorum"⁴⁷⁷.

So far as decorum goes, beyond magic in general being seen as counter to orthodox (and usually Christian) religion, the syncretic, 'pick and mix' attitude of chaos magic (which is examined further in later chapters) that in part derives from the legacy of Austin Spare is literally 'sacrilegious' *within magic* in that it removes the absolute reality of any gods from the equation.

This would have doubtless doubly horrified a Christian proponent such as CS Lewis, as discussed above. Thus any deity invoked is seen not as

⁴⁷⁶ Ramsey Dukes, public lecture at Watkins Bookshop, London, 19-04-2002

⁴⁷⁷ Stephen Sennitt. *Liber Koth*. Loos Press. Mexborough, Yorkshire. 1007. n.o

an objectively 'real' entity but as a metaphorical construct with which to work, only for the duration of the rite, rather like an ingredient in a recipe that is used, eaten and then forgotten about. Much as, for example, flour is a vital ingredient to make bread, but the flour is not 'worshipped' but simply employed to achieve a result, so any 'deities' employed are used as tools to an end (whatever that intended end might actually be).

My own magical practice once (well quite often actually, but this one instance is for the anecdote) came up for censure from others in the neo pagan community, since I wished to run a group ritual for my own magical wedding employing the symbolism of a horned deity analogous to one of the central deities of modern Wicca, but in a slightly different form. I was told in no uncertain terms that what I was doing was pure evil. Ironically the speaker of that comment, apparently a very knowledgeable and experienced witch for whose practice I had previously a very good deal of respect, habitually sported a badge declaring, "Celebrate Diversity". Apparently this celebration only goes up to a point (the point being at which that rather obnoxious person ceases to be diverse themselves, presumably...)

With that same de-sacralising 'move to metaphor' the associated consensus-reality concepts of good and evil are also completely removed from, substantially diluted, or blended together in chaos magic, since there are no inherent codes of moral checks and balances that might appear in any other religious belief, such as previously known Commandments or Tenets allegedly derived from a Deity. The stage is wide open, with no rules. As the modern occult philosopher Lionel Snell wrote: "what religious people fear about Magic is that it embraces Evil as well as Good ... it (magic) is not advocating Evil but simply more prepared to recognise its place within creation"⁴⁷⁸. It would appear that magic was never so clear-cut anyway: the eminent modern chaos magician Peter Carroll providing one useful perspective:

"White Magic leans more toward the acquisition of wisdom and a general feeling of faith in the universe. The Black form is concerned more with the acquisition of power and is reflective of a basic faith in oneself. **The end results are likely to be not dissimilar, for the paths meet in a way impossible to describe**"⁴⁷⁹.

⁴⁷⁸ Johnstone, SSOTBME., p 146

⁴⁷⁹ Carroll *Liber Null* n.o. emphasis added

There is also perhaps some small level of one or more of personal aggrandizement, useful PR notoriety or fiscal advantage (perhaps from book sales) to be gained in trading on a reputation for evil among the broader world. The modern magician and author Phil Hine describes how, in the nineteen-eighties

“chaos magic began to acquire a ‘sinister’ reputation...many people associated chaos with ‘anarchy’ and other negative associations, and ... some Chaos magic publications were hyped as being ‘blasphemous, sinister and dangerous’ in a way that they were not, which proved all the same to be an attractive glamour for those who required such a boost to the ego”⁴⁸⁰,

to which the totally pragmatic Lionel Snell adds: “when has moderation ever sold books?”⁴⁸¹. Indeed, and that was part of the rationale for including the word Satan in this book title. I wonder if it worked?

This matter brings us back to the ‘continuum of evil’ highlighted by Snell, above. In the late 1960s Anton LaVey pointed out that “human beings are not all benign or loving. Just because the Satanist admits he is capable of both love *and* hate, he is considered hateful”⁴⁸². He castigated occultists who make any division between white and black: “there is no difference between ‘White’ and ‘Black’ magic, except in the smug hypocrisy, guilt-ridden righteousness and self-deceit of the White magician himself” who LaVey sees as posing as an altruist: “no one on Earth ever pursued occult studies... without ego gratifications and personal power as a goal”⁴⁸³.

Occultists themselves are quick to offer alternatives to this, with Snell writing that: “the direction of Magic is not towards Good, nor towards Truth, but rather towards Wholeness. A Wholeness in which Bad and Untruth also have their part”⁴⁸⁴. The American magician and follower of Crowley, Jack Parsons (1914-1952), expressed a similar view in 1950: “we must have it all out, the fear and the disgust, the hatred and cowardice, and the beauty, tenderness and courage as well, and balance all.

480 Hine, *Oven Ready Chaos*, p 10

481 Angerford & Lea, *Thundersqueak*, p 6

482 LaVey, *Satanic Bible*, p 58, emphasis original

483 *Ibid*, p 101

484 Johnstone. *SSOTBME..* n 124

Then we can get the truth”⁴⁸⁵. The need for balance is a quality often remarked upon in practical magic texts. One of the modern founders of chaos magic, Peter Carroll wrote: “a natural inclination toward the darker side of magic is as good a point as any from which to begin the ultimate quest, and half this book (*Liber Null*) is devoted to the black arts”⁴⁸⁶.

So, by derivation, half of his book must also be devoted to white magic... and he continues: “high magic recognizes the dualistic condition” (e.g. a world where happiness cannot exist without sorrow, and the same is true for all opposite subjective states- such as hot-cold; dry-wet, up-down which can only be defined by reference to their polar opposites) “but does not care whether life is bittersweet or sweet and sour; rather it seeks to achieve any arbitrary perceptual perspective at will”⁴⁸⁷.

The modern magician, artist and author Jan Fries added to this in 1992 in a discussion of creating art for magical purposes:

“automatic’ drawing gives your inner self a chance to get rid of repressed materials... some of your drawings will seem terrible, sick, evil or disgusting... Art gives you the chance to come to terms with...the demons that you’ve raised. Can you learn to look at them without fear or loathing? **People who seek only beauty and harmony restrict themselves more than they can know. If you give body to your horrors you may heal yourself**”⁴⁸⁸.

As an extension to this, the magician and author Phil Hine identifies ‘cognitive-emotional-behavioural constructs as discrete entities - Personal Demons if you will’⁴⁸⁹, which both reifies demons and consigns them to the realm of psychology; thus interaction with these demons becomes neither ‘black magic’ nor psychotherapy.

485 Correspondence between Jack Parsons and his ‘elemental’ Marjorie Cameron. (On-Line) Cameron, M & Hymenaus Beta, (Eds). 1989, letter of 27-1-1950, emphasis added. See www.bablon.net

486 Carroll, *Liber Null*, p 7

487 *Ibid*, p 17

488 Fries, *Visual Magick*, p 40; Emphasis added. ‘Demons’ here meaning aspects of personality.

489 Phil Hine *Aspects of Education 1988-95* (Electronic book) p 5

“I’ve no absolute morals, but some pragmatic standards”⁴⁹⁰

Left-Hand Path magic is not a Nihilistic, amoral morass, however, as Lionel Snell highlights: “there *are* moral codes in magic... a typical one is Crowley’s ‘do what thou wilt shall be the whole of the law.’ Though it sounds to a Religious person like a license to do what the hell you like, it is actually an injunction to act according to the wholeness of one’s being... a variation on this used by some Pagans - along the lines of ‘do what thou wilt and harm none’ ...is a little more cynical (and therefore more Magical?) because it admits the possibility that the wholeness of being might actually intend harm, whereas Crowley’s system is limited by a premise that existence is pure joy and so will ultimately work out for the best”⁴⁹¹.

Left-Hand Path magicians have tended to pick up some of the negative, highly judgmental associations of the ‘Black Magician’ label, since they are largely working for themselves to a given intent, rather than for some (often more nebulous and seemingly ‘altruistic’) group ideal. As the modern magician and author Phil Hine describes:

“basically, the RHP syndrome seems to attract those who have an extreme devotional bias to their world-view, are into “service” in a big way, also ideas such as cosmic sin or karma; divide mind, body and spirit and who reject sexuality at some level. On the other hand, the LHP-ers are definitely not into bending the knee, (are) suspicious of service, and (are) into getting bonked!”⁴⁹².

For those unfamiliar with the slang, the last word means having some form of sexual encounter. Elsewhere Hine is far harder on RHP adherents of an extreme kind:

“you may have met one, you may even have been one. The Spiritual people. The ‘I-have-conquered-my-ego’ people. Who don’t drink, smoke, fight, fuck or talk dirty. Psychic fascism is on the move within

⁴⁹⁰ Quote from an occultist who wishes to remain anonymous, conversation, June 2001.

⁴⁹¹ Johnstone, *SSOTBME.*, p 125-6, emphasis added

⁴⁹² Hine *Breeding Devils*

this not-so green and pleasant land of Albion”⁴⁹³.

Often a modern Left-Hand Path school of thought will take inspiration directly from the ‘Thou shalt nots’ of various ‘holy books’ of other religions, for example “alcohol is a substance prohibited by many of the world’s religions; what better reason for drinking it?”⁴⁹⁴, and the modern reconstruction of the rites of the ‘Northern Tradition’ of paganism is at least in part being performed by researching early anti-pagan Christian edicts, (for example against the wearing of animal costumes in public and dancing whilst wearing them), and re-instating these proscribed practices⁴⁹⁵. As well as drinking intoxicating liquids, laughter is also an important factor in misrule, and it is probably not coincidental that ‘banishing with laughter’ has become an accepted chaos magical technique in rituals of the *Illuminates of Thanateros* magical group, and others.

The use of sex, and any permutation of it, is certainly a central factor in LHP magic, LaVey writing that: “Satanism condones any type of sexual activity which properly satisfies your individual desires... so long as it involves no one who does not wish to be involved”⁴⁹⁶, and “Satanism is pro - any kind of sexual expression among mature, informed adults, even if that takes a form which is considered to be a taboo in the society in which it occurs”⁴⁹⁷. Phil Hine adds that “St. Paul’s views on sex were that celibacy is best, and if not that, then heterosexual marriage. All other forms of sex are illicit. Sex, according to Christian teaching, was given to man solely for the purposes of reproduction, and therefore any kind of non-reproductive sexual behaviour was a sin against nature. Sex for pleasure and fun? Forget it!”⁴⁹⁸.

By contrast, and in fact a very threatening *inversion* of all the ascetic Christian notions of moderation and self-denial is LaVey’s comment that “the most simplified description of the Satanic belief is **INDULGENCE INSTEAD OF ABSTINENCE**”⁴⁹⁹. As Hine (again) writes, “we live in a world subject to extensive ... all-embracing systems of social and personal

⁴⁹³ Phil Hine, *Touched by Fire*, (Electronic Book) 1989, p 41

⁴⁹⁴ Shual (Mogg Morgan), *Sexual Magick*, p 4

⁴⁹⁵ Pete Jennings, lecture on “The Northern Tradition” given at the Devon and Cornwall Pagan Federation Conference, Tintagel, Cornwall, March 2002

⁴⁹⁶ LaVey, *Satanic Bible*, p 60

⁴⁹⁷ *Ibid*, p 63

⁴⁹⁸ Hine, *Breeding Devils in Chaos: Homosexuality & the Occult*

⁴⁹⁹ LaVey, *Satanic Bible*, p 72, emphasis original

control that continually feed us the lie that we are each alone, helpless and powerless to effect change. Magick is about change... we are not helpless cogs in a clockwork universe... through magick we may come to explore the possibilities of freedom"⁵⁰⁰. If magic is performed for these purposes of personal spiritual liberation then it must, by the common LHP definitions, involve transgression of 'common' morality, law and custom. Mogg Morgan (again) writes: "breaking of taboos makes magick more potent and can lead to reintegration and liberation",⁵⁰¹ for example "the eating of meat in a vegetarian community can have the same liberating effect as anal intercourse in a sexually inhibited straight society"⁵⁰², such as Britain, where homosexuality was illegal until 1967 and is still regarded with varying degrees of distaste, if not loathing in some quarters of society. Thus due to the presence of a consensus morality to the contrary, "homosexual techniques have an anti-social element and therefore (magical) power"⁵⁰³.

LHP has latterly become a generic term (and often a term of abuse) for a wide range of magical practices, but within that there are many individuals who fall into more than one category, since the boundaries can be indistinct. Despite the width (or narrowness) of any differences of terminology and attitude, what LHP magical techniques all have in common is the notion of transgression; much like the notions of Carnival and Misrule as discussed in the previous chapter. By performing various acts the individual challenges and transcends conventional morality, and conventional society, and often causes a stir *within* any conventionalising magical group as well. As the modern magician and author Phil Hine writes of his presence in the audience at one event in the 1990s, his "impious question of whether 'Othinn (the Norse God Odin) ever took it up the arse' at a talk on the Northern Tradition... was met with great horror from some members of the audience"⁵⁰⁴.

This method of continual challenge can include personal, social, magical, sexual and political acts all aimed towards de-conditioning the individual from the prevailing social schemas, as described by the modern chaos magician Peter Carroll: "the wizard cannot be human-hearted when he seeks to tap the force of the universe. *He performs monstrous and arbitrary*

500 Hine, *Oven Ready Chaos*, p 5

501 Shual (Mogg Morgan), *Sexual Magick*, p 31

502 *Ibid*, p 11

503 *Ibid*

504 Hine, *PerMutations*, p 21

*acts to loosen the hold of human limitations upon himself"*⁵⁰⁵.

Given the apparent huge divergences of opinion and definition found in printed sources (and on the Internet) in the matter of the Left Hand-Path, in August 2004 I conducted a short *ad-hoc* online opportunity survey of some thirty named occultists of my acquaintance (either people I knew personally, or through online conversations) and the members of seven discussion e-groups or websites⁵⁰⁶, in an attempt to discover the definitions in use 'on the ground' by a sample of active magicians of the present day. It is to this up-to-date view that I turn in the next chapter.

505 Carroll, *Liber Null*, p 66, emphasis added

506 The groups concerned were (with their membership figures at the time in brackets): Cornish Pagans (60), South West Pagans (52), The Witches Sabbath (114), Lashtal (387), Lovecraft Scholars (34), Aosgallery (245), Magical Plymouth (18). All but Lashtal.com are e-groups on Yahoo.com. My thanks go to the respective group moderators for kindly allowing the questions to be posted. To highlight Sutcliffe's point, in the footnote below, at least one of those groups is no longer in existence and another has become all but dormant.

What today's Magi say about the LHP

As the anthropologist Richard Sutcliffe remarks, most dissemination of information and debate within the magical subculture occurs "largely on a one-to-one basis or through a variety of magazines which frequently have a life span of between one and two years"⁵⁰⁷ rather than through any large hierarchical structure or (within magic) a 'mass media' campaign.

Thus it is likely that it will only be through surveys of this nature (and then a quickly-following meta-survey of that data) that a more accurate wider modern picture could be assembled.

While this is perhaps on the borders between a social study and researching 'immediate history' I felt it important to examine how, or indeed IF, those historical views of the LHP previously discussed were still in use in the present. These e-groups had (at that time) memberships totaling 910, which added to my 30 known correspondents gave a theoretical maximum possible audience for the survey of 940 persons. Although the groups surveyed had that many members 'on the books' it cannot be assumed that all group members read my emailed questionnaire, and there is likely to be an overlap of memberships between groups, with many people belonging to more than one group (while not making more than one response to the questions).

In addition some groups are open to browsing by non-members, so the actual response rate of a few dozen, although seeming to be poor, was possibly one percent of those who might have read the mail, which for a limited opportunity sample from 'a stranger' that asked rather contentious questions is a pretty reasonable and encouraging response rate; small fractions of a percent being not uncommon tallies among other surveys that I have seen run on other subjects.

Not all of the membership will have been in the UK, since even the 'regional'-based e-groups have members who are expatriates, who use the

507 Richard Sutcliffe, *Left-Hand Path Ritual Magick*, in Graham Harvey & Charlotte Hardman (Eds.) *Pagan Pathways*, London, Thorsons, 1996, p 109. Original 1995. I would add now that the Internet has had a hugely important role in allowing more communication in the magical world.

groups to keep in touch with occult friends in that locale, for example. The numbers or proportions of those who are not resident in Britain is not known, and since this book is about Britain it might give some slight blurring of matters, assuming that perhaps 'foreign' magicians might view the LHP hugely differently from 'home grown' British ones, but this could not be avoided, and in any case the responses from known 'foreigners' were actually of use to illustrate some points.

It should also be remarked that at least one of the respondents was an American magician who has been resident in Britain for some years, so that further blurs the matter of exclusively studying 'British magic', as discussed in the introduction, since to exclude foreign-born nationals who live in this country and practice magic here would smack of racism.

The full text of the survey appears in figure 2, below, and was deliberately designed as having a few open questions, allowing as brief or verbose answers as the respondents wished.

In my PhD chapters on the historical development of modern (1945 onwards) magic I'm confronted with the slight problem that no-one agrees on exactly what the 'Left-Hand Path' actually MEANS anymore, either philosophically or practically.... some of you are authors have written about this in published works and-or on the net, which I have hopefully already quoted in proper context, but I wonder if you have the time to answer the following, in as much length or brevity as you wish. I am attempting to identify some core characteristics of the terminology, so far as current magicians are concerned, to contrast to some of the older 'book' definitions, which may or may not have been written by practicing occultists (there is a pretty laughable series of comments on the LHP by the novelist Dennis Wheatley, for example).... or which may have been modified over time as the practice of magic evolves. You can be quoted in my thesis as under your real name, a pseudonym, a magical name, initials (either your own or made up initials) or as "an anonymous magician" as you wish; if you don't indicate otherwise I will cite you as the forename and surname that I have for you, or the name with which you sign your email. I'm also copying this request to several e-groups, which some of you may be members of as well as being individually emailed this by me, so please only respond once! If you don't know me either in real life or from any previous e-contact I would appreciate it if you make clear your gender if you are remaining anonymous (or if your email name does not necessarily make this clear), as I would expect there is some mileage to

be had from comparisons of male and female answers to the matter. You may also state your age in years if you wish, as I suspect that will provide another factor for analysing the results, but stating both age and gender are entirely optional. Since I am interested in *individual* beliefs and definitions, no conferring please! There is no "right" answer, in this instance, other than your own truths. thanks in advance for any help you can give.

For those who read this on an e-group, please respond to me OFFLIST, to avoid cluttering up the e-group, thankyou

Qu 1: In your own words, how would you define the Left-Hand Path?

Qu 2: Conversely, what does the term Right Hand Path mean to you?

Qu 2a: You may answer that there is little distinction between the two, in which case, why (in your opinion) is that?

Qu 3: Do you consider yourself a Left-Hand Path magician - under your own definition?

Qu 4: If you do not think yourself to be on the LHP, have you ever been called a LHP magician (or some similar distinction) by others? In which case, (if you know) what kind of definition were they using? And why did they give you that label?

Qu 5: Does the LHP have any stigma in the magical group(s) or environment(s) you inhabit? If so, why? If not, why not?

Qu 6: Have you ever received any unwanted attention from legal or official bodies for participation in, or promotion of what you believe was perceived by them to be LHP Magic(k)? Since this is obviously a difficult and highly sensitive area I will treat all replies to this query with utmost confidentiality as required, if you wish to give me any details. Equally, same question for what was perceived to be RHP magic?

Any anecdotes pertaining directly to LHP experiences which might be of use to me are also most welcome.

Figure 2, Ad-Hoc Left-Hand Path questionnaire sent out to Internet recipients in August 2004.

From previous experience of asking occultists larger numbers of closed or fixed-response questions I had found that they tend to bore easily, which often skews results, and I wished to avoid this in order to gain some useful, if short, comments. In my BSc. thesis, published in e-book as *Healing Language*, I performed a mind numbing 'multiple repeat-measures' testing questionnaire exercise with spiritual healers, many of whom were occultists too, and things became very tedious, thus the change here to allow a more fluid approach.

This fluidity worked well, with several respondents ignoring the formal question-answer format response entirely and instead using the questions as prompts to provide me with some beautifully succinct summaries of their own experiences and philosophies on the matter. The discussion (of the general matter, not the responses I received, which were not broadcast) spread, with considerable value gained, to the *Journal for the Academic Study of Magic* discussion e-list, comprising at that time around a hundred academics and magical practitioners (including some people who were both) and where appropriate some relevant responses taken from there are included below. The responses of occultists to the survey were, as expected, varied but informative, with many mentioning the *Vama marg*a origin, but often taking their own interpretation considerably further, and in several different philosophical directions.

For example, 'Joel Biroco' a male (former) occultist who is over 40 years old said the LHP is "the *Varma Marg* of Tantra... many who use the term LHP may not think this way though, and probably use it as a synonym for Satanism... it is a way that goes against convention and consensus"⁵⁰⁸. It should be remarked here that although Satanism is probably by definition on the LHP, not all LHP is Satanism in precisely the same way that all Feta is cheese, but not all cheese is Feta.

Dave Lee, an over-40 male magician told me:

"RHP believes literally in the myths of salvation by conformity to the conventional view. The LHP practitioner sees that the myths are metaphors for illumination. The LHP is always to some degree in opposition to the conventional received wisdom about the world... RHP BELIEVES IN a myth; LHP knows the POWER of belief itself"⁵⁰⁹.

An anonymous female magician aged 46 told me that in her direct experience the LHP is "a strenuous, engaging path that requires commitment to one's goals" and it is "anything that does not rely upon Llewellyn books"⁵¹⁰. Llewellyn are a large American publishers largely known for their occult output which comprises titles on astrology, Wicca, contact with angels, new age... and similar subjects which are for the most part in no

⁵⁰⁸ Joel Biroco', personal communication, 17-8-2004

⁵⁰⁹ Dave Lee, personal communication, 5-10-2004

⁵¹⁰ Anonymous female magician, 46, personal communication, 20-7-2004

way within the LHP⁵¹¹. This response is especially interesting in that it identifies the perception of a publishing bias to particular named areas of magic. Llewellyn do in fact handle some 'sex magic' titles and other books that may be more LHP-orientated, but these seem to be very much in the minority of their output.

The magician 'PB', male, age unknown, wrote, in common with Joel Biroco, above that "at the most charitable, they (LHP methods) can be understood as reinterpretations or 'recontextualisations' of the Hindu Tantric concepts; more soberly, they are to be understood as misinterpretations of them"⁵¹². 'Corax', a 36-year old male magician told me that the Left-Hand Path is "the search for a very personal form of transcendence... allied to...tantra in that it is deliberately taboo breaking...it carries a generally negative connotation..."⁵¹³. Corax continued, with a very useful piece of personal, experiential insight that

"due to my own training in theology... (and) my studies of eastern religions I...understand the possible spiritual benefits of taboo-breaking behaviour; which is often harder to deal with intellectually, when you encounter it within your own world view; seeing and understanding it elsewhere enables you to see that the principle is sound."⁵¹⁴

The late academic, author and modern magical practitioner of the 'Sabbatic Craft' Andrew Chumbley (1967-2004), then aged 36, told me:

"In scholarly terms... (LHP and RHP) are theoretical constructs... which - via a metaphor of cheirality (hands) - are ... used... to distinguish between differing forms and interpretative levels of magical practice... they have become 'loaded terms' which may be considered collations of assorted polarised associations: good/bad, black/white... symbolic/literal, diurnal/nocturnal ...all of which are adaptable in the personal worldview of an occultist and thus without definitive objectivity",

which again is an important point, the term LHP is never a universal

⁵¹¹ Llewellyn Publishers website www.llewellyn.com/

⁵¹² 'PB', posting to JSM e-list, 19-8-2004

⁵¹³ 'Corax', personal communication, 23-08-2004

⁵¹⁴ *Ibid*

referent, but contingent upon personal beliefs and memes. Andrew continued: "as 'constructs' one can only cite differing instances of their use. The use of the terms waxes and wanes in popular use, ultimately presenting a dualistic mode of thinking that implicitly begs for resolution"⁵¹⁵.

Dave Lee's comments were in some way aligned to this view:

"this... (LHP-RHP) distinction is only of limited use these days, and the territory is very confusing. Take, for instance, the philosophy of 'do your will and fuck the world' ... exemplified by mainstream views typical of...scientific materialist individualism. TV dramas feature protagonists who are amoral ultra-consumerists, a *deeply conventional position*"⁵¹⁶.

As well as an academic perspective, Andrew Chumbley provided me with a pragmatic magical interpretation that was echoed in some respects by other respondents, that the two methods are best used in tandem, not opposition or mutual exclusion:

"LHP/RHP describe the magical forms ... under the auspices of one's opposing but mutually complementary hands, literally... both are deemed differing means to potentially identical ends, though *symbolically* the right hand governs benefic method and the left malefic... we are each a body with two hands, and though one hand may not know well the deeds of the other, both serve one master"⁵¹⁷.

The 'sabbatic craft' mentioned is Andrew's version of a synthesis of witchcraft and the methods of Austin Osman Spare, who is discussed elsewhere in this book. Andrew also provided a quote from one of his very limited print-run privately published practical magical books from 1997 on the personal challenges of the LHP method:

"it is deemed needful for the Seeker to cast himself into the battleground of attainment - to wilfully enter situations of adversity and therein confront all and aught which will necessitate the honing of

⁵¹⁵ Andrew Chumbley, personal communication, 19-8-2004,

⁵¹⁶ Dave Lee, personal communication, 5-10-2004, emphasis added

⁵¹⁷ Chumbley, *Ibid*

intent... the practitioner consciously draws himself into that which conflicts with the direction and nature of his intent. Embracing greater and greater circumstances of adversity the practitioner is forced to exert himself to greater and greater degrees in discipline"⁵¹⁸.

This concurs in some respects with the 'arbitrary acts performed to loosen the hold of human limitations' remark of Peter Carroll above, which may perhaps link in with Chumbley having been a former member of the Illuminates of Thanateros, a magical group founded by Carroll⁵¹⁹.

An eminent elder Wiccan, John Belham-Payne gave a similarly balanced view of the matter, writing: "the left hand path is but another magical direction... to most people the Left hand path means to follow an evil, black arts route. For me magic is magic. It is both positive and negative and it all depends upon the aim of the work needed"⁵²⁰.

'Jaq Hawkins', a female chaos magician and author, who is over 40 years of age, sent me an extract from the first drafts of a forthcoming book, which to an extent continue the themes given by Andrew Chumbley and others:

"in modern context the opposition of this duality (LHP-RHP) is outmoded and obsolete. The universe is not constrained by black and white definitions, and the world of magic has long since awakened to the integration of various aspects of reality"⁵²¹.

Jaq also wrote some warnings on the risks of rebellion and transgression purely for the sake of it rather than for conscious magical reasons: "those who completely rebel against their conditioning can become re-conditioned into behaviours which are diametrically opposite to their training and become just as constraining as the original programming"⁵²², indicating that taboos to be challenged must be selected with wisdom, not simply because they are taboos, since:

⁵¹⁸ *Ibid*, with quote provided by Andrew Chumbley from his own (and rare) *Draconian Grimoire* (Private Edition, Xoanon, 1997), no page number given.

⁵¹⁹ Andrew Chumbley, conversation, December 2003.

⁵²⁰ John Belham-Payne, personal communication, 24-8-2004

⁵²¹ Jaq Hawkins, personal communication, 27-8-2004

⁵²² *Ibid*

"those who try to impress with blacker-than-black versions of the LHP are just as enslaved by their self-made prisons as the extreme RHP"⁵²³.

Robert Taylor, a 44-year old magician who was a member of the Magical order run by Kenneth Grant, the Typhonian OTO (see chapters 5 and 6) gave an eloquent and very useful analysis: "LHP or RHP... derive from ancient practices and have little relevance to the way I practice magick today...the magick that I do certainly derives from, and follows the tradition of, the LHP, but in my understanding of it the terms are no longer applicable"⁵²⁴.

Robert further explained his position with a historical reference:

"the tradition we follow was developed from rites of the *Kaula* tradition in medieval India"⁵²⁵, and this relates to Grant's own definitions for the LHP in his *Cults of the Shadow*, discussed earlier in this chapter.

'Claire' a female occultist, age not given, wrote:

"the left hand path ... is the more difficult path as the liberation that can come with it can be allied with a perceived destruction which results from breaking conditionings and taboos."⁵²⁶.

She also made the crucial pragmatic magical point that her definitions and beliefs in this area are "not academic, but it works for me!... (it is) my personal take on it from a gut level ... despite perhaps academic accuracy"⁵²⁷, in other words a definition and subsequent philosophy need have little or no regard for academic credence, so long as it 'works' for the individual practitioner.

The magician and author Mogg Morgan wrote:

"LHP for me tends to signify a more freeform libertarian approach. RHP for me means the post war...occult establishment in denial

⁵²³ *Ibid*. My thanks to Jaq for permission to use her pre-publication comments.

⁵²⁴ Robert Taylor, personal communication, 17-8-2004

⁵²⁵ *Ibid*

⁵²⁶ 'Claire', personal communication, 17-8-2004

⁵²⁷ *Ibid*

about magic". He added: "perhaps paradoxically my self image is as a follower of the middle way - which you can only find ...if you know both sides of the path"⁵²⁸,

which is in considerable accord with Robert Taylor, above, possibly influenced to some extent since Mogg was also a member of Kenneth Grant's Typhonian OTO in the late 1970s and early 1980s⁵²⁹. 'Grandfather Paradox', a 23-year old male magician and academic wrote that:

"LHP is a concept used to describe practices which deal directly with the taboos, fears, strictures... within any given society... while the original concept comes from the Hindu tradition, I find myself turning to that definition rather than Western Esoteric definitions which involve value judgements of negativity or 'selfish' acts"⁵³⁰,

with the latter point being important that magicians would rather choose a definition that had some spiritual value than one that was entirely negative. 'Grandfather Paradox' also made the point covered by others in the responses that paths are not exclusive:

"the LHP/RHP distinction is an arbitrary...dualistic tool used to isolate and teach certain /techniques/ for working with the Other. Magick is not inherently Path-based... to state that one is a LHP or RHP magician...inherently precludes one from using the other path... the (LHP-RHP distinction) ...is...a tool for those not directly using techniques, to highlight practical differences"⁵³¹.

Again, similarly to the late Andrew Chumbley's response, the point is made that LHP-RHP is at least as much an academic construct or a piece of analytic shorthand as something actually used by magicians themselves in their practices. The magician 'PB', male, age unknown, made the pragmatic point that:

"LHP (is) ... a useful term for non-religious, chthonic and egoistic... magick (as opposed to RHP which is basically religious, 'heaven' and 'light' orientated ... generally moralistic and socially collectivist in the most obnoxious ways)"⁵³².

⁵²⁸ Mogg Morgan, personal communication, 20-8-2004

⁵²⁹ _____, personal communication, 23-9-2004

⁵³⁰ 'Grandfather Paradox', personal communication, 20-8-2004

⁵³¹ *Ibid*

⁵³² 'PB' posting to ISM discussion list, 12-7-2004

He also said that it is not

"sinister or scary... just that it is about working with the deeper levels of the unconscious, primal instincts and sometimes repressed material, and so is basically orientated towards the self rather than any worthy causes... of course the true RHP, with its social and ethical elements is very important too, but rarely exists outside of the sanctimonious, self righteous, fascists that make up RHP traditions these days"⁵³³.

Matt Lee, a 36-year old magician and academic expressed his reluctance at making *any* definition, before writing that the LHP is about: "an emphasis on (a) personal responsibility, rather than reliance on external codes (such as the Rede) (b) a female or feminine source of majik (c) the importance of sexual gnosis and ecstatic-shamanic procedures (d) improvisation and experiment"⁵³⁴. 'The Rede' that Matt mentions is a Wiccan variation on the 'harm none' principle, as discussed above. Matt gave several *caveats* similarly to several correspondents above

"distinctions are external... generally ill-founded and is the result of a modern development ... in majik....derivation from the Vama marga is probably historically accurate but of little relevance to those with an interest in the 'indigenous' (Celtic, Shamanic, Witchcraft traditions) rather than Indian/Indo... the LHP/RHP split is one side of a wider split between the more organised and text based majiks as against the more shamanic and intuitive majiks"⁵³⁵.

Again the role of texts and books is raised here, as by the anonymous correspondent above who cited Llewellyn as a specifically not LHP publisher, as is the notion of a functional system coming above historical accuracy in importance to the magicians actually using the systems, as was given above by 'Claire'.

On the question of the stigma of, and any encountered interference in LHP activities several interesting factors emerged, and many wide variations of experience were highlighted. 'Vlad Kiosk' a 35-year old male magician wrote:

⁵³³ *Ibid*

⁵³⁴ Matt Lee, personal communication, 18-8-2004

⁵³⁵ *Ibid*

"I don't believe it (the LHP) does have any stigma...the magical groups and environments that I inhabit (are) ... broadly postmodern and open-minded. This seems to mean that either other individuals haven't read much Blavatsky, Fortune, Wheatley et al. or that such views are taken with a pinch of salt"⁵³⁶.

The notion that Blavatsky's definitions might be 'dying of old age' after only around a century of existence is important in this book, as it highlights the fluid evolution of magic when compared to older, more established religious practices, where lengthy continuity of theoretical underpinnings, definitions and seminal texts is a much more common factor. 'Kiosk' continued:

"many members and officers of the Pagan Federation...find it very difficult to conceive of magical approaches other than their own... they were very confused by chaos magic..."⁵³⁷.

Matt Lee wrote: "on the wider pagan community that is 'unorganised' ...there may occasionally be some antagonism"⁵³⁸. The 'stigma' of the LHP as seen by 'Corax' is that "in moots & casual conversation, it has a negative connotation; seen as evil or selfish, or immoral... (but) In coven work it does not have any negative connotation, as we would see our practice as ... fundamentally LHP"⁵³⁹.

Although those respondents indicate that any historical damage done by the skewed perspective given to the LHP by Blavatsky is gradually fading, one anonymous female correspondent told me "LHP is reviled by the local pagan scene. I believe that it is because of ignorance and fear". By way of illustration she told a most disturbing tale:

"I showed around (a named LHP magical book, related to Luciferian elements of Witchcraft) at a local moot...it was well received... things were different at the next moot... several men apparently thought that the sexually suggestive illustrations therein were indicative of loose morals on my part... I was followed around and physically assaulted ... a man had brought soft porn especially to show

536 'Vlad Kiosk', Personal communication, 24-8-2004

537 *Ibid*

538 Matt Lee, personal communication, 18-8-2004

539 'Corax', personal communication, 23-08-2004

me and my gracious comments trying to deflect it... weren't strong enough... I was called a demonologist... I returned the following month... (almost) everyone simply avoided me with a vengeance... I never returned"⁵⁴⁰.

On a similar tack, and in line with the remarks by 'Joel Biroco' above, Robert Taylor wrote:

"the term LHP has been... "hijacked" ... as a term denoting 'satanism'. This principally seems to derive from American sources... Christianity is so desperately and obsessively forced upon the American people that it is only natural for an 'equal and opposite reaction' to take place. Hence, many alternative practices seem to have been thrown together into a melting-pot and poured out under the single name of 'satanism'".

Robert's magical mentor Kenneth Grant was caught up in an attempted press 'sting' regarding 'black magic scandals' in the London of the early 1950s (see later chapter) so the matter is obviously 'close to home'. Robert continued:

"I have no interest in 'satanism'... the term seems to be a cheap ... popularisation... used for shock value more than any real mystical or magical purpose... The equation of the term LHP to 'satanism' and 'black' magick (and its converse RHP being therefore equated with 'good'... magick) has therefore led me to avoid using them (as terms)"⁵⁴¹.

These responses highlight the hugely judgmental attitude that some researchers find prevalent in society, (as described by the modern sociologist Dave Green), which prejudice is involved in "actively labelling those as deviant or denying the same rights to those that do not conform to certain moral imperatives - be they 'underclass' teen mums or, in this case, LHP magickians"⁵⁴². There is also an element whereby modern magic of the LHP is seen as being performed by social groups who are 'less historically-involved in magic', and are thus less valid, and not 'authentic magicians' as discussed by Justin Woodman, above.

540 Anonymous female magician, 46, personal communication, September 2004. The specialist, rare book title is not named here as to do so could compromise the identity of my correspondent.

541 Robert Taylor, personal communication, 17-8-2004

542 Dave Green, personal communication, 18-8-2004

Dave Lee, then the UK Section Head of the Illuminates of Thanateros, merely remarked that “sometimes” he considers himself a LHP magician, indicating that the distinction is fluid, moveable, and perhaps not so important within some areas of magic anymore, and that there was no stigma for him because “in the magical environments I inhabit people are proud of not conforming to conventional religion”⁵⁴³. The use of LHP as a deliberately provocative or antagonistic negative label is also something that my correspondents employed to their own ends on occasion, for example Matt Lee wrote that he “would only define myself (as LHP) ... if I wanted to provoke a reaction”⁵⁴⁴.

Apart from one person, the responses of the majority of those for whom an age is known were from the over-30s age group. The *Occult Census* in 1989 showed 72% of respondents being between 20-49 years of age and 51% being over thirty, but 67% becoming interested in occultism before the age of seventeen⁵⁴⁵. Future research with younger LHP magicians might give even more varied responses, and those that were even more at-odds with the Blavatsky-inspired definitions, as the *Occult Census* of 1989 states, the low poll at that time, less than 17% interest, with only 6% expressing a “committed belief” in Blavatsky’s Theosophy might indicate that although the philosophy underpins much of modern occultism the practice of Theosophy has “not caught the imagination of the modern occult revival”⁵⁴⁶.

It has always had detractors, the magician and poet William Butler Yeats (1865-1939), in a letter to a friend described the Theosophy Movement as “turning a good philosophy into a bad religion”⁵⁴⁷, and more recently the late Gerald Suster, writing in 1989 said “although the Theosophical Society is still in being, these days it is the preserve of those who prefer tepid tea to tough thought.”⁵⁴⁸

From my recent correspondents’ replies it seems that in the intervening 15 or so years since the *Occult Census* the practice of Theosophy has become even less popular among magicians. When one is confronted

543 Dave Lee, personal communication, 5-10-2004

544 Matt Lee, personal communication, 18-8-2004

545 Sorcerers Apprentice, *Occult Census*, p 11

546 *Ibid*, p 17-18

547 The Letters of WB Yeats (Wade, A., Ed.), London, Hart-Davis, 1954, In Marie Roberts, *British poets and secret societies*, London, Groom Helm, 1986, p 130

548 Gerald Suster. *Crowley’s Apprentice*. London. Rider. 1980. p 2

with a slab of over 2,000 pages of Blavatsky’s writings that view is perhaps understandable when any modern magical book of (for example) 2-300 pages will be much more exciting, lead one into practical experiments quite soon, and, importantly, be considerably cheaper and easier to engage with than HPB’s collected and weighty works.

Methods of presentation have tended to confuse attitudes among occultists. Simplistic and convenient notions of good and evil, based on more orthodox religious schemas, have to some extent been swept away by modern magicians. This process has been aided by advances in psychology and sociology, which allow for other explanations of human behaviour than that someone is simply (and irrevocably) ‘evil’ to the bone. Or ‘good’ for that matter. Aleister Crowley was an important figure in questioning such attitudes within magic, attacking the ‘Victorian values’ in the world, and within occultism: “Queen Victoria was sheer suffocation, a vast thick fog that enveloped us all. We could not breathe, we could not see, the spirit of her age had killed everything we cared for”⁵⁴⁹, and Crowley’s hatcher-job/adaptation of *The Lord’s Prayer* to suit his own creed included the line “deliver us from evil, *and from good*”

So it would appear that modern magicians are still developing and refining their own personal, fluid, and more useful, functional systems than those rigid codes imposed by organised religion, as Lionel Snell writes: “morality that depends upon individual judgment is a vigorous living thing; but when morality becomes equated with a rigid code of law and dogma then it is no longer part of us, we are ‘distinct’ from it and can grow free. The church did mankind the favour of thus enslaving morality long, long ago”⁵⁵⁰.

An individual outlook is also seen as far more preferable by Snell: “principles are tyrants. They are the worst tyrants of all because they dwell in your own mind. So don’t stick up for principles- fuck them. You then discover that the principles that you have been sticking up for were not ‘your’ principles, but those most convenient to other systems (of society)”⁵⁵¹.

549 Snoo Wilson, Aleister Crowley – Good Idea of the 20th Century. In *Thelemic Magick XC. Being the Proceedings of the Ninth International Symposium of Thelemic Magick* (Morgan, M. Ed), Oxford, Golden Dawn Publications, 1995, p 11-17, p12

550 Angerford & Lea, *Thundersqueak*, p 169

551 *Ibid* Ramsey Dukes, preface to, p iii

Further Down the Left-Hand Path

Within the moral and historical framework discussed above, it can be seen that magic can, albeit problematically, be divided into black and white, 'fluffy' or not, right-hand or left-hand paths, with each practitioner able to negatively or pejoratively label others not on the same path as them by a variety of means, usually involving making them seem 'blacker' than him (and it is much more usually a male involved in making such pejorative comments than a female). The emergence of the terms Left- and Right Hand Paths in modern magic *via* Blavatsky, and popularised by Waite, Fortune and Wheatley (among others) when artificially associated with *fin de siècle* wider (and Wilde-esque) moral panics about homosexuality in society, to a large extent polarised magical thought, and created an artificial division of a nature, and of a breadth that should not have existed.

Sadly, this gap remains to a considerable extent today, despite much more recent notions (as expressed for example in the questionnaire responses from a very limited sample) to unify magical thought and practice.

Many modern magicians have moved towards a model in which they blend this dualism, perceiving both strands of magic to be necessary within the person, in order for balance and harmony, and so they tend to avoid using the terms LHP or RHP, white or black magic for this reason. For now the term is a useful, if flawed analytic shorthand metaphorical construct for the use of the academic more than the magician, for example by the researchers such as Justin Woodman, Matt Lee, Dave Green and Richard Sutcliffe, all mentioned above.

If LHP magic is performed for personal liberation from the mundane world then it must by that definition involve transgression of 'common' morality, law and custom; the embodiment in some form of the carnivalesque and misrule, which might involve some or all of taking drugs, engaging in unusual sexual acts, blaspheming, exhibiting odd public behaviour or dress and generally flouting societal norms, as the occult philosopher Lionel Snell writes:

"we all recognise the power of absolute belief - fanaticism can move mountains - but we see that it is a power which tends to rule the

believer. Magic is more concerned with ruling over power than being ruled by it. The struggle is perhaps to "beef up" our carefully chosen beliefs by making the unconscious accept them as absolute, but without handing over our control in the first place"⁵⁵².

Thus magic which seems to be on the LHP will probably always appear to be dark and evil to the subjective observer who is still living entirely within the belief systems that are built around more RHP notions of consensus morality and 'doing the done thing' in society, whether these systems are couched in explicit language (such as the Christian Ten Commandments, other Biblical examples or the 'Harm None' doctrine of neo paganism) or merely assumed.

On a human level these exercises appear to be far-reaching and immense methods of personal change and a challenge to (often almost completely blinkered) 'cultural realities', as Phil Hine explains:

"belief-shifts are rarely effective unless they are enacted fully within the consensus reality of social space. Shifting from Hippie to Yuppie necessitates a change of clothes, speech, self-affirmations...and the most difficult part of the process may be coping with the reactions of friends and peers"⁵⁵³.

However high the personal cost it is seen by those magicians taking part in it as infinitely preferable to everyday limitation by cultural realities, as Snell wrote: "the furious anti-Semite cannot see the kindness of his Jewish neighbours, the rabid Tory cannot see Labour's successful economic measures, and so on. If we live on restricted maps we live a restricted life"⁵⁵⁴.

The magician and occult writer Stephen Sennitt wrote, perceptively, in 1997,

"that the question of prosaic morality and the gimcrack considerations of 'white' and 'black' magick should still seriously enter into the field of modern occultism is absurd. Only those people who are incapable of facing reality need to hold it back with blinkered

⁵⁵² Lionel Snell, *Paroxysms of Magick*, www.philhine.org.uk/writings/ess_paroxysms.html

⁵⁵³ Hine, *Prime Chaos*, p 48

⁵⁵⁴ Angerford & Lea, *Thundersaeak*, p 128-9

beliefs about the immorality of 'black' magick. Such warnings smack of repressed desire, and reveal a twisted psychology which mistrusts itself so completely that it automatically condemns others who claim to use such power with impunity, unable to accept there can be such purity of intention."⁵⁵⁵

It might be also surmised from the preceding discussion that adherence to the RHP is perhaps more approved of by the more conventional end of the spectrum of 'polite occult society', those mentioned at the beginning, and subjectively milder end of Snell's continuum of who is involved in magic, above, since due to the more 'devotional' or 'monkish' nature of RHP practices it will practically be more easy to run and control a magical group that is based around RHP methods, since the pupils will tend to be more quiescent and open to taking orders. That is not to say there have been no LHP groups, or LHP 'gurus' of course, but merely to suggest that the RHP process is much more stable with a group of 'followers' than a group of those already happily ensconced in a 'taboo-breaking' and individualist mindset, who have the will to experiment.

It would seem that a fair assessment of the matter would conclude that Magic is neutral, neither good nor evil, black nor white, and it is the intent of the individual practitioner *at the time* that matters, much as the same sharp blade can be used by a murderer to kill, by a chef to prepare food in order to nourish people, or by a surgeon to perform *ad hoc* life-saving surgery, or all three acts by the same person at some *or other time in their lives*.

Absolutist moral judgments must then, by definition, be based in some *a priori* moral environment, and as such, any 'conventional' moral assessment of a fluid and slippery art such as magic is likely to be pejorative at best, and to completely miss the point at worst, in much the same way that critics of modern art and fashion always seem to be at odds with each other from year to year. Magic is a process, not a thing, thus a verb not a noun, and as such is in continual flux. As seen from the above questionnaire responses especially, the modern historical definition of what the Left-Hand Path comprises is also highly problematical, and this should be recognised. The term is seen to be used to some extent as an 'outsider' referent, not a definitive 'insider' attribution, and used in an attempt to gain greater understanding rather than to simply pigeonhole

⁵⁵⁵ Sennitt, *Liber Koth*, p 9-10

and forget about it. LHP (and indeed the RHP, since practices under that vary hugely considerably too) must always be seen as an umbrella term, a generic, not a specific.

The watchwords of modern magic are in this area, transformation and evolution, with constant recreation of technique and belief, thus making it a difficult area in which to practice a completely historical methodology and stance. It is often remarked within magic that (words to the effect of) 'ask any two magicians a question and you'll get three different answers', and the various questionnaire responses support the view of considerable personal interpretation in answer to what seemed some simple definitional questions.

As the modern academic anthropologist and magician Justin Woodman writes, academically-speaking: "it is more than possible to arrive at an approximate definition...(of LHP)...with the proviso (that such a definition will)...never be entirely inclusive, or never attain an exact 1:1 indexicality with the social reality it seeks to represent"⁵⁵⁶.

As mentioned above, these chapters on magical morality have perhaps been the least historicised of the book, since moral attitudes within magic are fragmentary, non-linear, in many cases objectively paradoxical and in some cases at least partly frozen in time since the 1950s, and the reflexivity of the writing population and the reading audience can have a greatly distorting effect on any discussion of morality and magic. There is an element of 'the more things change, the more they stay the same', in that while magic is a progressive, evolving beast into the 21st Century, many 19th Century (and earlier) elements remain, stubbornly, and as is discussed later, such areas as traditional gender roles remain fixed, with a masculinist majority, despite the claimed freedom, equality and liberationist stance within much of modern magic.

One of my standard questions to magicians whom I have talked to is to ask them to name 5 important female magicians (as opposed to witches, where female participation and power is more equal with, if not superior to the male) in the modern time, and no-one (of over 50 such conversations) has been able to name more than three, and usually the same three names (Dion Fortune, Jaq Hawkins, Leah Hirsig). However the same question for naming male magicians can lead to an exhaustive list

⁵⁵⁶ Justin Woodman, posting to SASM discussion list, 20-7-2004

of names. Fortune died in 1946 and Hirsig left the public magical scene after splitting with Crowley, and opinions vary on her lifespan, but she seemed to have 'dropped off the radar' in the mid 1920s. That only leaves one modern magician, Jaq Hawkins (a pseudonym), a charming and helpful current writer and practitioner of chaos magic, and who is ironically for a book on British magic, an American ex-patriate.

Although a democracy of any form did not arguably arrive in Britain until the success of the Women's suffrage movement in 1928, it was a constant lure and goad for this process of what was touted as a potential freedom from the enslavement of feudalism, religion and class⁵⁵⁷. As the novelist Antonia White wrote of the early years of the 20th Century, so far as Christianity (in this case her Catholic Nuns in her Convent Schools) was concerned "women's votes are unnecessary, Our Lady (the Virgin Mary) had no vote and did not want one"⁵⁵⁸. Sexism was (and arguably in some areas still is) rife not just in spirituality. The halls of academia from which Tolkien and Lewis' tenures sprang while they wrote their material, were completely male-dominated⁵⁵⁹, and by 1960 only 13% of Oxbridge undergraduates, the British academic elite, were women⁵⁶⁰.

Magically the process is one of slow change. As Claire Fennel and Ray Sherwin wrote "the extent to which many occult writers objectify women and the strength of their stereotypes reveal them to be only slightly removed from even the most classically Virgin/whore complexed Catholic...it is not for us to say what the role of women in magick should be... we ... leave individual women to define their own roles. (the Thelmic) 'Every man and woman is a star'⁵⁶¹, rather than (the Biblical) 'let a woman learn in silence with all submissiveness, I permit no woman to teach or have authority over men; she is to keep silent'^{562"}⁵⁶³

Class-wise, magic was in the 19th Century very much for the learned

557 Veldman, *Fantasy, The Bomb*, p 10-11

558 Antonia White, *Frost in May*, London, Virago, 1978 (Original 1933), p 132 in John Hodgson, *The Search for the Self: Childhood in Autobiography and Fiction since 1940*, Sheffield, Sheffield Academic Press, 1993, p 68

559 Veldman, *Fantasy, The Bomb*, p 45

560 *Ibid*, p 44

561 Aleister Crowley, *Liber Al*

562 I Tim.2: II-12

563 Claire Fennel & Ray Sherwin, *Woman's role in Magick? Chaos International*, 1, p 41, 39

elite, and it is only in the last thirty or forty years that it has entered the mainstream with practice across classes, perhaps due to the cheapening and wider availability of books and increased leisure time for all. That larger analysis however is a sociological question as much as an historical one, and a cross-disciplinary study of class and gender roles within modern magic is long overdue. I look forward to reading it as and when it appears.

Despite these problems, even where historical study in a subject is difficult it is better to attempt to research than to ignore the subject entirely, and it is my hope that history can learn from the approaches of the other disciplines employed here in order to be able to examine the subject further.

Also, for the historian of modern magic this particular area, being plastic and peopled by those whom many in the outside world would consider as dark, dangerous, socially deviant - if not outright criminal, and, in whatever way, 'perverse' types, provides a rich area for research, if often beset with challenging difficulties of definition, interpretation and an ongoing evolution and re-invention of the methods used for study.

As an individual I have on a few occasions been shocked by some of what has occurred in rituals that I have witnessed, which is precisely the point of the LHP; transgression is ongoing and evolving, and if rituals become 'samey' and 'tame' then much of their magical effect is lost. The (late) magician and musician 'Jhonn Balance' (*sic*) of the magically-inspired rock band *Coil* gave an instance of this in an interview "I personally may have transgressed even the transgressive mindset, for instance when talking about eating human afterbirth"⁵⁶⁴.

As Phil Hine writes, "the word 'never' of itself invokes too many possibilities"⁵⁶⁵, which invokes a closing and succinct word on the flexible morality inherent in the Left-Hand Path from Lionel Snell who wrote what has become a transcendent maxim for LHP magicians, that "what some people call hypocrisy, I call freedom of spirit"⁵⁶⁶, implying that even the 'rules' of the Left Hand Path are themselves there to be transgressed, thus the academic historicising of the process will always be a challenge,

564 Malakhi Thorn, An Interview with COIL, Heathen Harvest Website (Online) 1-4-2004 www.HeathenHarvest.com/article.php?story=20040401074434912

565 Hine, *On Cursing*

566 Anverford & Lea. *Thundersaeak*. n 2

as the parameters and terms of reference are in constant flux, and the process of historical research is always a post-hoc one.

Having covered the necessary moral, political and historical background of the magical period under examination I will now move on to the specifically Crowley-related legacy of magic, by discussing Amado Crowley, who claims to be both the son of, and star pupil of Aleister Crowley.

Amado Crowley

Critical examinations of magico-religious self-fashioning.

In the modern Western occult world there are many who assume the mantle of magical teacher, and often they base their authority to teach on some claim to be either the present vessel of an ancient hereditary magical tradition, or to have learned their talents at the feet of an earlier famous Guru or teacher. This quality, of transferred magical essence, is referred to within the Sufi mystical tradition (an esoteric relative of the Muslim faith) and other belief-systems as *baraka*⁵⁶⁷.

Often Gurus had themselves been carriers of a hereditary tradition, or in the past had often traveled to distant lands and learned a great many esoteric abilities, or had acquired their talents or reputation by magical contact with some non-human entity - a spirit, God, angel, Demon etc (and in some cases from two or more of genetics, exotic travel and non-terrestrial contacts). The importance of being able to make such claims (however groundless they may be, as will be seen to be the case with Amado) is that anyone with claims to magical authority is often seen to have that authority, and can thus attract pupils or followers.

To be able to claim some lineage (hereditary and-or magical) from Aleister Crowley is very much the 'trump card' in modern magical self-promotion, since as was discussed earlier, Crowley is perhaps the most influential and important magician of any era.

To this end there are many instances of occultists (mis-)appropriating the reputation of the highly influential, well-travelled and claimed entity-contactee, the British occultist Aleister Crowley (1875-1947), since his death. As previously mentioned, Aleister Crowley is perhaps the most famous Western occultist of the 20th, or any other Century. He studied with many spiritual teachers around the world, eventually synthesising his own system of magic from a broad spectrum of world teachings (ranging from Buddhism to Egyptology to Ceremonial magic), and as such he is often cited as a teacher or major influence by modern occultists on a wide variety of different paths. His many books remain best sellers in the field and numerous extant magical Orders and individuals follow

⁵⁶⁷ Idries Shah. *The Sufis*. New York. Doubleday. 1964. p 268

his philosophy and practice his methods. These are in a large part based upon his *Book of the Law*, a text which was supposedly dictated to him by a spirit called *Aiwass* in Egypt in April 1904, following a magical ritual performed within one of the pyramids.

Among those who have claimed genetic, magical and/or psychic links with Aleister since his death are Victor Norris, variously a Satanist, militia dealer, fascist agitator and owner of a sex contacts agency who also claimed familial relationship with the leading occultist Dion Fortune (1890-1946)⁵⁶⁸, 'Alex Crowley' (name changed by deed poll) a 1990s child-murderer with mental problems⁵⁶⁹ and T. Casey Brennan who also believed himself to have been also involved in various CIA mind-control experiments and the assassination of John F Kennedy in 1963⁵⁷⁰. There are many more examples of varying claimed linkage with Aleister Crowley, most of them with little or no apparent factual foundation.

Amado

One exceptional example of this appropriation of Aleister's name and reputation will be examined in some chapters that follow. His pen name is 'Amado Crowley' and he claims consistently and unequivocally the paternal relationship "I am the biological son of Aleister Crowley"⁵⁷¹, that he was taught his magic by Aleister (thus portraying a heady *baraka* comprising both claimed hereditary authority *and* learned power), that Aleister's spirit still takes him over and talks through him on occasions, and that he is backed by the Gods⁵⁷². There is considerable doubt over the former two claims, which are examined in this piece: the third and fourth claims are a matter outside of the scope of a piece of historical research; as the cultural and religious analyst Paul Heelas rightly remarks, in such areas "the academic simply does not have the tools to assess the claim"⁵⁷³. In any case, to be making these important claims makes Amado unique in the field, and thus justifies a close academic examination of his claims and his work.

568 Anon. Golem's Gossip! *Lamp of Thoth*, 4.1, p 9.

569 Jeevan Vasagar & Nick Hopkins, Mentally ill stalker gets life for killing boy, *Guardian* (Online), 13-2-2001. www.guardian.co.uk/uk_news/story/0,3604,437263,00.html

570 *Konformist* (Online) www.konformist.com/mkkafe/tcasey/tcasey.htm

571 Amado Crowley, *Quest Magic*, Guildford, Diamond, 1997, p i

572 _____, *Riddles*, p 174

573 Paul Heelas, *The New Age Movement*, Oxford, Blackwell, 1996, p 6

There are echoes in Amado's work of the varieties of idealised history writing (or perhaps re-writing) and the pursuit of antiquarian studies that became very popular in the 18th century. Fantasised re-tellings of historical events on stage were extremely common and in demand, with the historian Meredith Veldman detailing how in the London of 1820 there were no less than 5 different versions of *Ivanhoe*, Sir Walter Scott's idealised and romantic view of the mediaeval world, playing at theatres⁵⁷⁴. This may be paralleled in some ways to the present when the recent *Lord of the Rings* trilogy of films had such massive appeal⁵⁷⁵, and it is my contention that Amado's books and presence fulfils a similar function to an audience, be they readers or students attending in person at his classes, who require a romanticised view of magic.

Despite the doubts over his pedigree, Amado allegedly heads a long-running magical Order, and has published a number of books and audiotapes over the past 30 years. In this chapter I refer to 'Amado Crowley' and Aleister Crowley by their forenames only, to prevent needless repetition of the surname. References to 'Crowleyan' (and 'Thelemite'; pertaining to the magico-religious cult of *Thelema* founded by Crowley senior; which is still followed by several occult groups and many individuals today) mean deriving from Aleister. Since 'Amadoanity' sounds clumsy and would not be the term of choice by Amado himself, I refer to 'Amado's system' where necessary.

Aleister Crowley was perhaps the most significant figure in Western magic in the 20th century, and his influences continue to affect a very wide range of contemporary magical thought and practice. Amado believes himself to be both an occult master and the one true exponent of his father's doctrines, and this view is expounded and expanded upon in a large number of books, audiotapes and various electronic media. No other self-proclaimed child of Aleister has formed a seemingly noteworthy magical order or claimed to have been involved in teaching occultism for remotely as long as this, or with so many publications or claimed followers; thus Amado is a significant figure for study. However he is not just parroting Aleister: Amado's take on Aleister's methods is controversial, running counter to 'orthodox' *Thelema*. Proponents of orthodox *Thelema*

574 Veldman, *Fantasy, The Bomb*, p 17

575 Directed by Peter Jackson, the trilogy of films (*The Fellowship of the Ring*, *The Two Towers*, *The Return of the King*) based on Tolkein's novels were immensely popular in the early 21st Century, with the final film of the trilogy winning an unprecedented 11 Academy Awards in 2004. www.lordoftherings.net

perform prescribed and often elaborate ceremonies drawn from Aleister's own writings, addressed to a pantheon of deities, many of them Egyptian, while drawing on the meditation methods of Yoga, ceremonial magic and a hierarchical Order structure loosely derived from Freemasonry.

Aleister's methods have a central motif of the philosophical principles of pragmatically seeking personal responsibility and autonomy, which Aleister called 'finding the True Will'. This is the prime aim of all of his magic; leading to the formation of an individual who is in full understanding of their role and place in the universe, and in direct and total control of their own life. This aim is seen by Thelemites as the opposite of the surrender of the will to that of (one or other) God, and making one's role in the world and control of it subject to the intercession of, and interpretation by, an intermediary such as a Priest, which is common in organised religions such as Christianity.

Similarly to Aleister's rationale, Amado employs an eclectic mix of magical methods drawn from several centuries of Eurasian magical techniques and Eastern methods such as Yoga, meditation and Tai Chi, but the focus is drastically different from Aleister's, as Amado appears to use no extant Thelemic rituals *whatsoever*. He does however include some positive use of Christian tenets such as redemption and atonement. This runs absolutely counter to Aleister's philosophy of the individual being utterly responsible for their own actions, and their consequences, rather than holding out for some nebulous possibility of Divine forgiveness implicit in those Christian ideas. Amado is also keen on the notion of him being a Guru and his pupils being absolute devotees to him. Holding these notions makes it impossible for Amado's philosophy to be called *Thelemic*, since the True Will, the central focus of *Thelema*, is being utterly subjugated here to an all-powerful leader.

Amado also claims, controversially, that Aleister's own published 'holy book' *The Book of the Law*, which forms the cornerstone of *Thelemic* belief and practice is a fraud; deliberately perpetrated by Aleister as a smokescreen for Amado, he being the sole holder of the one true Crowleyan holy text, *The Book of Desolation*, allegedly given to him by Aleister in secret and which has never been published. Amado claims (without offering any proof) to have a large following, both in millions of readers and thousands of personal students having worked within his magical group, which has been in existence for over three decades. If either or

both claims could be proven, this would make him one of the most significant and important magical teachers in the world.

It is important to place Amado within the larger context of modern Western occultism. The history of the Western magical tradition is a convoluted interweaving of methods, claimed histories and some noteworthy personalities. Aleister was trained in the very late 19th Century within the *Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn*, a quasi-Masonic magical group whose members included numerous artists and writers, including the poet WB Yeats. After internal political strife caused the Order to fragment, Crowley travelled the world, gaining great insight into world religious practices and joining or forming numerous magical orders.

The most significant of these was his membership of the *Ordo Templi Orientis*, an extant large European and American group who were practising ritualised sexual magic; which was much to Aleister's taste, since he had been developing his own system of sexual magic for some years. Aleister eventually became head of this Order and brought the OTO rituals more into line, philosophically, with the content of his *Book of the Law*.

Meanwhile, sprouting from the academic research of the Egyptologist-turned-Folklorist Margaret Murray (mentioned earlier) and the great enthusiasm of Gerald Gardner, (the retired plantation manager who returned to England after many years working in the Far East, also mentioned above) a revival, or at least a re-creation of witchcraft commenced in the late 1940s and early 1950s. This was coincident with the final remaining Witchcraft Law being removed from the UK statute books in 1951. Gardner started to run a series of covens, employing an eclectic mix of material drawn from Murray's researches, Crowley, OTO material, reconstructed Druidic rituals and Co-Masonic sources (among others) with a smattering of nudity and sado-masochism (these being Gardner's own personal tastes), and he was largely responsible for popularising a nature-worship based pagan Witchcraft, called Wicca, in the UK and America.

Alex Sanders, who was a performing psychic and creative scholar of magic, and much more of a showman than even the self-publicist Gardner, came to notice in the mid 1960s, after Gardner's death, with his own brand of Wicca. Understanding the needs of the print media for sensational

stories, Sanders was also extremely good at using the then relatively new outlet of television to promote himself and his ideas. Thus there were two strands of Witchcraft, Gardnerian and Alexandrian, which although competing (and often mutually hostile) were largely similar in philosophy and technique, although Sanders' version also drew heavily on the kind of ceremonial magic in use by the *Order of the Golden Dawn* seventy years previously.

In true 'scrambling for an occult pedigree' style, Sanders also claimed that when he was a child he met Aleister Crowley, and Aleister tattooed Sanders' thumb as a memento⁵⁷⁶, a claim which seems to be entirely false, but makes for an attractive magical pedigree. As discussed in the introduction, in the late 1960s and early 1970s there was a cultural occult revival of sorts, with Aleister being adopted into 'pop' culture, appearing on the cover of a record by the Beatles, and several of his major works were republished. Magic in general became more popular than it had been in over 50 years, with a diverse choice of paths for anyone seeking occult knowledge, ranging from Eastern gurus to magic to Yoga to UFO Cults to Wicca, and an explosion of publishing on the subject, much of it hastily written and un-researched sensationalised material.

It is at this point, in 1971 that Amado emerged, and he stands out as a composite character, taking a little from each available path of the time. While he relies on the Aleister Crowley connection for much of his initial impact he is certainly not any kind of 'card-carrying Thelemite', since from his expressed knowledge it seems unlikely that Amado has ever been an OTO member of any kind, nor performed any of their rituals. While Amado claims to be Aleister's son it may appear surprising that he has not called his own order the OTO, however the American OTO has in the last 20 years stringently maintained legal protection of their name. They regularly initiate courtroom disputes with anyone attempting to cash in on their trademark, which is now lucrative as they hold copyright to many of Aleister's written works, and have expanded their operations into over a dozen countries.

In any case, as the author, publisher and influential Thelemic magician Mogg Morgan said "Thelemic magick isn't an hereditary trad(ition)"⁵⁷⁷, so Amado's claim is, on that level, meaningless. Perhaps as a sign of some

576 Tony Looker, conversation, Summer 2003

577 Mogg Morgan, personal communication, 16-8-2002.

frustration or sour grapes at being blocked from this avenue of exploitation of the Crowley name by the OTO, Amado maintains, while giving no foundation to his remark, that "a large part of American occultism ... has links with organised crime"⁵⁷⁸, and he condemns "many established occult organisations" as "exploitative museum keepers"⁵⁷⁹, which is probably a bitter dig at the large finances generated by the OTO publishing arm in their regular reproductions of 'new' or at least rare Crowley texts from their archives.

Amado is also not a 'standard' modern-day Witch either, in that he appears to be running a large magical order, and not a 'coven' structure (and which is not organised on the often quasi-Masonic lines that many magical Orders follow). Although his ritual methods (see below) are in a large part similar to 'off the shelf' generic Wicca with a few garnishes, he does not appear to subscribe to any particular Gardnerian or Alexandrian Wiccan philosophy or pantheon. Quite the opposite, he regards Wicca as peasant magic⁵⁸⁰, and thus being perhaps somehow beneath his claimed position of 'noble birth', being Aleister's son. Although Amado apparently promotes various forms of Yoga, meditation and Tai Chi he does not exhibit proficiency in the technical language that accompanies an adept of any of those techniques (unlike Aleister, who was a very advanced Yoga and meditation practitioner).

Amado is important in any case for being the only occultist to claim that Aleister's published work is *totally and deliberately fraudulent*. Although Aleister has had many critics within occultism both during his life and since his death, most of these (which are remotely objective and do not simply damn the man as a Satanist, at least) have worked on a level of technical quibbles over small to medium size details, while giving broad-brush approval or assent to his beliefs and methods, and none of these have presented either such an all-encompassing denial of Aleister's work as Amado, or the notion that Aleister had deliberately faked all of his written material. This will be examined further on in the section, but first I need to start Amado's most remarkable tale at the beginning.

578 Amado Crowley, *Alba*, p 14

579 _____, Frequently Asked Questions, (Online) 2003. www.amado-crowley.net

580

Alba p 110

Birth of a Legend

Amado is not one for providing linear narrative in his books, but gives enough scattered details to allow the very determined reader to assemble a 'jigsaw' version of his history, and this account is found severely wanting when compared to verified fact. These are also many mutually exclusive contradictions within the written history given by Amado, which often necessitates investigation of several versions of the same story, although he insists, "the only things I have doctored are minor details that might help the wrong people to find me"⁵⁸¹.

Despite his insistence, this 'minor doctoring' reaches extreme levels: even extending to Amado's version of the circumstances of his conception and birth. Amado says that Len Standish (his future stepfather) and Stella Taylor (his mother) made a short trip, as an unmarried couple, to France sometime during 1929, and it was on the ferry journey *from* England to France that Aleister met Stella, and Amado's conception occurred in France later that day. Amado was apparently born on 26th January 1930⁵⁸². However Aleister was deported from France to Belgium on 17th April 1929 after protracted legal battles to remain in that country, which had started over three months previously⁵⁸³.

It seems most unlikely, amidst this highly uncertain tenure, that Aleister could have concentrated his energies on locating a woman, and a complete stranger to whit, to bear his child *en voyage from* England. Aleister's making this journey at all would have been risky, as leaving French soil after narrowly succeeding in negotiating his continuing stay in France (on grounds of such poor health that he was allegedly not fit to travel) would invalidate his claims and lead to his immediate expulsion from the country.

Aleister's alleged great plan for the conception of Amado (as described by Amado; there is, crucially, no account of this episode written anywhere by Aleister, nor anyone else) was that Aleister would meet a mystery woman on board ship, inveigle her away from her boyfriend, seduce, and later impregnate her at a French *Château* party, achieving this all in one

⁵⁸¹ _____, *Secrets*, p 14

⁵⁸² *Ibid*, p 33

⁵⁸³ Svmonds. *The Great Beast*. p 410

night, before they parted⁵⁸⁴. The reader may note the fairytale element, perhaps large helpings of *Cinderella*, here. Davis observes many standard stencils and techniques in personal stories, to create writings that seem 'real', using common literary devices. Beyond fairy tale motifs, perhaps one of these plot devices often in use is the 'amazing cosmic coincidence', such as Amado's account of being in hospital, for the same operation as the man in the next bed. Allegedly they found they had exactly the same birth date and time, and his ward-neighbour's father was a *stage* magician who had died in 1947 (as did Aleister).

There are biological calendar problems with this tale: even a child conceived on 16th April (Aleister's last night in France) would be 20 days over the standard 38-week pregnancy term on 26-1-1930, Amado's stated birthday. If conception occurred earlier, then Amado was *even more* overdue. Modern medicine views pregnancies exceeding 38 weeks by *less than* 20 days to have numerous severe dangers due to compounding health risks⁵⁸⁵. Such an overdue pregnancy would be particularly perilous for both mother and baby, given the lesser degree of medical technology available in 1930 compared to today. Stella was a financially poor Northern mill-worker, thus totally unable to afford a private physician in the days before the foundation of the free National Health Service in Britain.

Aleister was not a rich man in the 1930s and it is unlikely that even were he the father that he would have had the finances to pay for significant and lengthy private hospital treatment. While some Doctors' bills and receipts do survive in the Warburg Institute's huge collection of Crowleyana⁵⁸⁶, there is nothing I could find that remotely relates to any pre- or post-natal treatment of a woman, paid for by Aleister, they are all for his own medical care.

Elsewhere Amado claims a 'spooky' Friday the 13th of February birth date⁵⁸⁷, without giving a year, however the only instances of a Friday

⁵⁸⁴ See Davis, *Fiction*, p vii-viii, and Amado's *Riddles*, p 142-3

⁵⁸⁵ E.g.: Treger M., Hallak M., Silberstein T., Friger M., Katz M., & Mazor M. Post-term pregnancy: should induction of labor be considered before 42 weeks? *Journal of Maternal-Fetal and Neonatal Medicine*, January 2002, 11, 1, p 50-53(4)

⁵⁸⁶ For example, 18-Dec 1940, a doctors bill from Drs. McCallum, Hill & Hooper addressed to Aleister Crowley Esq., Warbury Rd, Torquay

⁵⁸⁷ Amado Crowley *Lucifer* 6: *The Supernatural* p 3

13-2 during the period were in 1925 and 1931⁵⁸⁸, neither of which, by extrapolation backwards, indicate probable conception dates when Aleister was known to be in France. These anomalies and Amado's remark elsewhere that "I avoid giving the year of my birth"⁵⁸⁹ (to prevent people casting accurate horoscopes, and thus apparently having some perceived magical insight into his character) suggest that either his three birth dates are slightly altered and one is correct, or his conception did not occur in France, or all three dates are complete fabrications, and thus a large element of this story is a knowing fabrication.

So, it would appear that from the outset Amado's *pre-birth autobiography* is at least in part fictitious; which rather bodes ill for the credibility of the remainder of his story.

DNA tests on Amado have been mooted on Internet forums (by sceptics) and elsewhere (by his followers), but major problems arise- Aleister's body was cremated in 1947 and so cannot directly provide a paternal DNA sample. Therefore it was proposed to take samples from a *sigil* (a symbolic spell, drawn on paper, being the recipient of a sex-magic operation, thus possibly being infused with Aleister's semen) once owned by (the late) Gerald Yorke, whom Amado claimed to have met. However if Yorke ever actually handed the sigil to Amado then DNA testing would give confused positive results (if indeed the paper is even testable at all after 60-plus years) due to contamination by Amado's skin cells, and be further confounded via the cells of *everyone else* that ever touched it.

In any case Amado recently neatly side-stepped the matter by agreeing it was a good idea, but claimed the sigil was stolen from the Warburg Institute long ago (Yorke's papers, including many of Aleister's books and letters now comprise the Yorke Collection held by the Warburg in London)⁵⁹⁰, a claim which has since been comprehensively refuted by the Institute's Director when I asked him⁵⁹¹. There are however some very credible descendants of Aleister's who could provide samples from which comparative DNA testing could be performed. A DNA test does

588 Frode S Stringer, Calendars 1800-2100 www.geocities.com/MadisonAvenue/1147/calendar.html

589 *Lucis* 2, p 3

590 "OBA" (a close friend of, or perhaps is Amado), personal communication, 19-3-2003.

591 "I haven't the faintest idea what ... (he) is talking about... I may have met Amado briefly once but certainly did not discuss any 'missing items'... one or two documents have gone missing... but nothing which might match the description (of a sex magick sigil)" Professor William Ryan, Warburg Institute. London. personal communication. 20-2-2003

not give an ambiguous answer, unlike many of the themes with which Amado surrounds himself. Positive results would only support claimed parentage, and a negative DNA result would be terminally catastrophic for Amado's claims, since they hinge on parentage; which then provided the environmental situation whereby he was able to visit 'daddy' and receive magical teaching for many years.

Naming

The confusion continues with the name. Amado's lot is apparently not a happy one: "I do often wish that I was someone else... EVERYONE ELSE perceives the name Crowley as ... unfair advantage...it has been a burden"⁵⁹². However at the point of Amado's alleged 1929 conception (and for some time before and after) Aleister was romancing one Maria de Miramar, and they married later that year⁵⁹³. This Mrs. Crowley (née de Miramar) is not Amado's mother. Regardless of the doubts over conception date(s) there is no record of Aleister being *ever* married to Amado's mother; Stella Standish (née Taylor), and so there was no legal obligation for Amado to take the surname. His taking the name Crowley is thus volitional, either legally by deed poll or simply assumed, so this dreadfully hard 'burden' could be removed as easily as it was taken.

Quite from when he was called Amado is also doubtful. In the early 1970s he wrote that he learned he was called Amado when he allegedly received a *post-mortem* package from Aleister, held in trust (by whom is not stated) until Amado was 18⁵⁹⁴, however he later claimed Aleister named him in person, when Amado was 7 years old. If Amado has such divergent memories of something as important as his own given name it must be questioned whether *any* of his story could be trusted.

Coming Out

If Amado's conception and naming seems unclear, the rest of his life must have been even more so. Amado claims to have told his story of

592 Amado Crowley, posting to weborama forum (On-Line) 18-6-2002, emphasis original. This forum is no longer accessible online.

593 Francis King, *The Magical World of Aleister Crowley*, London, Arrow 1987, original 1977, p 153-4.

594 MMM 000806

being the son of Aleister since he was seven years old⁵⁹⁵, but he only announced himself to the occult world *via* a letter to the partwork magazine *Man, Myth and Magic* in 1971⁵⁹⁶, when, whichever given birth date one believes, he should have been in his forties.

The publication was a partwork encyclopaedia and had no 'letters from readers' page; but the magazine printed an extract from the letter, with the very sensible editors' *caveat*: "we have no way of checking the authenticity"

He has latterly written three books specifically about Aleister, and several more general titles about magic, as detailed below.

There is a recognised academic problem in relying solely on autobiography, as there are often great liberties taken with fact, emphasis of events' importance and the linearity of narrative, and in Amado's case these liberties are considerable and wide-ranging. As will be seen, we are confronted with an author who is partially a secretive hermit and partially an exhibitionist/self-publicist, so it would be sensible to work as much as possible from verifiable, coherent and detailed independent sources. However, there appear to be none of these in this case, so in this research Amado's own accounts were used, with great caution, and reference made to any relevant external circumstantial material wherever possible.

Amado says if he were an impostor there would be "glaring gaps in my story"⁵⁹⁷, and this chapter highlights a very few of very many obvious gaps. One such is that when he publicly 'came out' as Aleister's son he said that his stepfather, Len Standish, had been killed in World War II, however this sorry tale is later described in one of Amado's books as a childhood device to elicit sympathy from strangers, with his stepfather later portrayed as living to old age, but having been the recipient of dreadful facial injuries during the war, and having been one of the first to have major experimental facial reconstructive surgery, one of the so-called 'Guinea Pigs.' However it appears that no one of the name L.

595 The Master Amado 777 (Amado Crowley) *Liber Alba*, (On-Line), 1999, p 10. Original 1975. www.amado-crowley.net

596 *Frontiers of belief: A letter from 777, Man, Myth and Magic*, 81, p 2285-6.

597 Amado Crowley. *Alba*. n 18

Standish was among their patients⁵⁹⁸.

The Emergency Medical Service was set up in 1939 with hospitals out of London (thus remote from anticipated bombing raids) chosen to cope with the anticipated problem of burns victims and the facially-disfigured during war. One such was the Queen Victoria Hospital in West Sussex, under the command of a brilliant, pioneering and innovative chief surgeon, Archibald McIndoe (1900-1960). The many patients treated during the war by this surgical method formed the *Guinea Pig Club*, named thus since the science of reconstructive and burns surgery was in its infancy. Intended to be a transitory drinking club, which would disband after the war, it grew in scope and continues, with annual reunions and providing monetary and moral support of those members in need. There were 649 surviving Guinea Pigs at the end of the war, of which around 200 were alive in 2004. For further information on the Guinea Pigs I can recommend the Queen Victoria Hospital website and the books that it publicises for anyone with a wider interest in that field.

The immediate concern is that if Amado can lie about his actual stepfather in print both on when he died and apparently completely fabricating the wartime injuries, and still be using this 'childhood device' when he was apparently over 40 years old with such ease, he could equally lie about his claimed father, Aleister Crowley.

This thread of contradiction running through Amado's prose is perhaps what Natalie Zemon Davis refers to as "a tissue of counter-truths"⁵⁹⁹, a virtual barrage of confusing information containing multiple and blurred conflicting signals, so much so that it becomes extremely difficult to isolate any particular thread, which often leads to contradictory comments becoming lost in the weave and weft of the story. However with careful and very slow reading many contradictions become apparent; to give just a few examples: Amado insists that Aleister has "no stigma" on the continent nowadays, it being purely a UK phenomenon⁶⁰⁰ (the latter of which is itself arguable as he has many British admirers), but within a

598 Cyril Balderson, Guinea Pigs website Manager, personal communication, 27-4-2004. Mr Balderson wrote: there are "two books, both called *McIndoes Army*, one by Peter Williams and Ted Harrison, and the most recent one by Edward Bishop. Both give a full list of all Guinea Pigs... neither includes the name L.Standish nor the name L.Walker." The Walker link is discussed later. www.queenvic.demon.co.uk/gpig.htm

599 Davis, *Fiction*, p 3

600 Amado Crowley. *Wrath*. n 12. fn

page, Aleister is still "damned by the Vatican"⁶⁰¹. Amado cites no official Papal statement in support of this claim.

Amado maintains "I have never tried to exploit my name"⁶⁰² and "I don't boast about my relationship"⁶⁰³ but one book jacket⁶⁰⁴ mentions the link three times in a few sentences and (elsewhere) he boasts "Aleister Crowley lives on in me, and ... (I have) his authority, approval and blessing"⁶⁰⁵ and "as Magicians go, I'm a good one. *It runs in the family*"⁶⁰⁶ however, confusingly, he also says "I am not claiming that anything special was transmitted to me by my father's blood"⁶⁰⁷.

601 *Ibid*, p 14

602 Amado Crowley, *Alba*, p 10

603 *Ibid*, p 11

604 Amado Crowley, *Riddles*, back cover

605 _____, *Alba*, p 12

606 _____, *Excalibur*, p 5, emphasis added

607 _____, *Alba*, p 11

Amado's Publications

What differentiates Amado from the many other claimants to a link with Aleister is the publication of numerous books from 1972 to the present, of which three (the '... of Aleister Crowley' trilogy from the early 1990s) are entirely reminiscences of his time spent with 'father' and many of his other books contain detailed references to Aleister. His major publications are as follows:

1. *Liber Lucis: a new exposition of the Law of Thelema prepared according to the instructions of Master Therion 666, and by his son here proclaimed Master Amado 777*. Duplicated typescript, privately published in a series of 7 volumes during 1972
2. *Liber Alba*, (On-Line), 1999. Original 1975.
3. *The Neophtye Robe*, (On-Line), 1999. This has been circulating as a photocopied typescript leaflet since the early 1970s.
4. *Rad Tungol (The Star Road) A handbook of Ritual Magick*, Privately published 1975.
5. *The Secrets of Aleister Crowley*, Leatherhead, Diamond, 1991.
6. *The Riddles of Aleister Crowley*, Leatherhead, Diamond, 1992.
7. *The Wrath of Aleister Crowley*, Guildford, Diamond, 1994.
8. *Lewd Ghosts*, Guildford, Diamond, 1994.
9. *Quest Magic*, Guildford, Diamond, 1997.
10. *A Beginners guide to Occultism*, (On-Line), 1999.
11. *Excalibur* (Electronic book), 2001.
12. *Frequently Asked Questions*, (Online) 2003.
13. A Tarot deck (with instruction book) and a large number of audiotapes are also available, some to the public, some to students only.

It is not clear whether this audio material is new comment, excerpts from the books, or a mixture of both. The full set is prohibitively expensive, costing over £700 UK when last I visited the site to do the maths.

Items 1, 3 and 4 are particularly intended for Amado's own students and there are several other privately published and/or internal magical group publications, which are not legitimately available to outsiders (part of Amado's website is a password-protected area, open only to paying students, and the site sells booklets, audio CDs and other items, some of which are for 'members only'). Item 8 is a collection of occult fiction and Item 11 is a volume of magic particularly for Men. This volume of publication makes him a very significant figure in Crowleyan literature, regardless of any veracity issues. Amado also maintains an Internet presence, and his magical group, which has apparently been running since the early 1970s, is of debatable size, scope and influence, but has, or at least *had*, cells in Northern, Western and Southern England. It seems likely there are also European if not worldwide sections, although, like much else, this is based on personal communications with Amado's assistants and not *via* independent confirmation⁶⁰⁸.

Amado's website has a French language version, and some of his publications are available in French, which, given the workload involved in translation, would be presumably based on some demand for the service rather than it being done on a whim. In any case, Amado's group is not as famous in occult circles as many other contemporary magical orders, such as the various groups calling themselves *Ordo Templi Orientis*, (OTO) whose Thelemic rituals (see above) and beliefs are derived from Aleister's published writings.

Amado's major 'claim to fame' is both the alleged genetic link AND the claim that *his* is the one and only true continuation of Aleister's work, despite various other, larger organisations such as the various branches of the OTO, who consider themselves to be 'carrying the baton' of true Thelema (which differs drastically from Amado's own system, as will be discussed below). Amado is thus an interesting case study of a modern magician with a particular agenda to promote, and as a still-living *claimed* associate of Aleister he is important as a source that can still respond to research queries (however difficult to rationalise and verify such responses may actually be) as with the passing of time such living witnesses are ageing and dying off and unable to be questioned at all (Aleister died in 1947, so those who knew him as adults entered the 21st Century in their late-seventies at the very youngest, and even those who were children then, as Amado claims to have been, will be over 65). The

story of another such surviving witness, Aleister's pupil, secretary and *post-mortem* literary editor Kenneth Grant (1924-) mentioned above, is dealt with in several chapters which follow the Amado section.

608 "OBA" Personal communication, 19-3-2003

Amado's Knowledge of 'Father'

Although Amado claims very close study of Aleister's published work he lacks credible basic knowledge of them. While Amado states "my father gave scant thought to sexual deviance and never wrote about it"⁶⁰⁹, Aleister's works include very many sexual/scatological poems, crude limricks, entire published books such as an allegory of homosexuality⁶¹⁰, another title which when imported into England was largely destroyed by UK Customs officials as pornographic⁶¹¹, plus numerous published letters or diary entries about sex (Aleister was bisexual, and enthusiastically sexually-active until very late in life).

Despite exhaustive and overt references in the literature to Aleister's very many male sexual partners, including the poet Victor Neuberg⁶¹² and a young man called Mohammed⁶¹³, Amado asserts Aleister was neither gay nor bisexual⁶¹⁴, but elsewhere he claims that Aleister had a sexual relationship with Grigori Rasputin⁶¹⁵. Although Aleister travelled to Russia at a time when Rasputin was alive⁶¹⁶ it is very unlikely that he ever met the Guru-Healer to the Russian Royal Family let alone had sex with him.

Amado also states Aleister only ever published books when short of money⁶¹⁷. The bibliophile and publishing industry historian Timothy d'Arch Smith⁶¹⁸ gives a fine commentary on Aleister's ritualisation of the publishing procedure, which shows Amado's assertion to be simply incor-

609 _____, *Riddles*, p 72

610 Aleister Crowley, *Bagh-I-Muattar, the Scented Garden of Abdullah the Satirist of Shiraz*. Paris. Renouard. 1910.

611 _____, *White Stains*, London, Duckworth, 1986. Original 1898.

612 Jean Overton Fuller, *The Magical Dilemma of Victor Neuberg*, Oxford, Mandrake, 1990, original 1965, chapter 13

613 Colin Wilson, *Aleister Crowley: the Nature of the Beast*, Wellingborough, Aquarian, 1987, p 137

614 Amado Crowley, *Alba*, p 114

615 55 _____, *Secrets*, p 2

616 William F Ryan, The Great Beast in Russia: Aleister Crowley's Theatrical Tour to Moscow in 1913 and his beastly writings on Russia, in (Arnold McMillin, Ed), *Symbolism and After. Essays on Russian Poetry in Honour of Georgette Donchin*, London, Bristol Classical, 1992, p 137-161

617 Amado Crowley, *Riddles*, p i

618 d'Arch Smith. *The Books of the Beast* Chapter 1

rect. Many books by Aleister - especially the lavish and symbolic earlier volumes using handmade papers and special coloured inks - were *deliberately* produced at a financial loss (when Aleister was an independently rich man) purely for art's sake. In any case, Amado contradicts himself one page later (as he often does on different topics throughout his books) when he says Aleister's occult titles were written '*mainly* for money'⁶¹⁹.

Amado maintains that "occultists find adultery wrong"⁶²⁰. As well as this being a moral judgment, which only a few pages earlier he asserted that occultists do not make⁶²¹ (yet another contradiction), adultery is a Christian sin, although many neo-pagans might concur with the sentiment of positively viewing sexual fidelity, albeit in a less prescriptive and doctrinal manner. Thelemites would simply not have the concept of adultery within their vocabulary. Such *Christian* perspectives would have been anathema to the promiscuous and adulterous Aleister (who as part of a magical ritual once baptised a toad in the name of Jesus Christ and then ritually crucified it as a magical attack on Christianity, as was mentioned earlier⁶²²) as would Amado's regular use of positive Biblical example and commentary, for example mention of the doctrines of redemption and atonement⁶²³.

Temporal Glitches

Amado's work contains very many references that do not tally with verifiable linear history. Amado quotes Aleister's mentioning 'Norma' as a reference to the American actress and sex-symbol Marilyn Monroe (birth name Norma Jean Baker, 1926-1962) who was not famous until after Aleister died, and when this was objected to by readers writing in to him, Amado merely called it "eerily prescient" in a subsequent book⁶²⁴.

Similarly Aleister supposedly mentioned the *Vietcong*, but that Vietnamese armed group were formed after Aleister's death and following queries from an alert audience Amado later modified this to 'evidence of

619 Amado Crowley, *Riddles*, p ii, emphasis added.

620 _____, *Excalibur*, p 47

621 *Ibid*, p 36

622 Aleister Crowley, *Confessions*, p 808-809

623 Amado Crowley, *Quest*, p III

624 _____, *Riddles*, p 50, fn

Aleister's prophetic ability'⁶²⁵. In his third book about Aleister, Amado perhaps reluctantly discloses that the many quotes he had previously directly attributed to Aleister from the 1930s-40s are actually more recent 'channelled' psychic communications, made since Aleister's death and received in a mediumistic fashion at séances⁶²⁶. This practice presumably (and very conveniently for Amado) allows for Aleister to have remarked about things which happened after his death in 1947, since in the Spiritualist world-view Aleister is still in the 'here and now' but as a disembodied spirit.

There is however a considerable (if not truly abyssal) credibility gap between academic acceptance of verified quotes from a living person when compared to alleged post-mortem messages from another world, delivered by a third party such as a medium, especially when the sources of such quotes are revealed only latterly, and only after serious doubt had been cast on their likely veracity when portrayed as 'in-life' comments.

This *post-hoc* hedging is the kind of literary device that Davis cites as ideal to "compensate for embarrassing gaps... in a story"⁶²⁷. However, previously Amado regarded mediumship (of the kind that would produce precisely such communications from beyond) as "a very obvious toy"⁶²⁸, so not only has he been exposed as not telling the whole truth about the source of some quotes he is contradicting his own previously expressed views in order to defend himself. This is despite the fact that his website sells (to students only) an item called (for some reason, unexplained) *Death of the King*, which is described as "a board for use in spirit séances (laminated, A3-size) with instructions on reverse side"⁶²⁹.

Suspiciously, Amado fails to give a single anecdote from his time at university, while providing numerous tales of earlier schooldays, military service and being a psychologist. Even those anecdotes he does give are dubious. His memory of being on National Service in December 1947 when he heard of Aleister's death jars terribly with his own history, since conscripted National Service was for 18-year olds, and his primary claimed birth date indicates he was only 17 when Aleister died, so he could not have been in the service, and his other birth dates would have

625 _____, *Secrets*, p 55 and *Riddles*, p 1

626 _____, *Wrath*, p 68, *fn*

627 Davis, *Fiction*, p 44

628 Amado Crowley, *Lucis* 6, *Postscript*, p 2,

629 Amado's website, resources for sale page www.amado-crowley.net

made him too old to be recruited in 1947.

Language Problems

Moving to more earthly matters, at age 11 Amado said he knew enough Latin to follow a Catholic Mass⁶³⁰, subsequently attending a famous grammar school (un-named⁶³¹, where he portrays himself as a star pupil) where Latin would have been a core subject in that era. Later, his claimed clinical psychology doctorate would have involved Latin medical terminology, and he writes about various Latin sayings with seeming authority⁶³². Yet he twice⁶³³ describes Aleister's published letters to a lady, whom Amado calls *Cara Soror*, with Amado believing this to be her given name, when it is schoolboy Latin for 'Dear Sister'⁶³⁴.

This is the same basic error previously published by the well-known 'mind, body and spirit' author Colin Wilson⁶³⁵ in his rather biting biography of Aleister. This is a book Amado has read, since elsewhere he registers his dislike for it⁶³⁶; so it is possible that he has simply blindly plagiarised Wilson here. These errors may highlight what Amado himself decries as a pretence to knowledge, being merely "a miscellany of facts picked up from books"⁶³⁷. However, he has still picked up followers, and the next section examines this angle.

630 Amado Crowley, *Riddles*, p 64

631 *Ibid*, p 14

632 For example Amado Crowley: *Quest*, p31; *Beginners guide*, sections 4.2; 14.1; *Neophyte Robe*, p 7; *Wrath*, p 5, *fn*; p 84; p 92, *fn*; p 96, *fn*; p 157, *fn*.

633 _____, *Riddles*, p 55, and *Secrets*, p 163

634 *Suster*, review of *Secrets*, p 156. Such a greeting would be totally appropriate from Aleister to a magical pupil.

635 Colin Wilson, *Aleister Crowley*, p 150

636 Amado Crowley, *Secrets*, p 167

637 _____, *Wrath*, p 7

The Followers of St Amado

Discussing his writings Amado writes, "I also take a little bit of artistic license"⁶³⁸ with his story, which may include his claims to have sold millions of books. Since his publisher, Diamond Books, is a small offshoot of a provincial Personal Computing company, this volume of sales seems unlikely. They only publish Amado's print titles; no other books or items (esoteric or otherwise), nor any material by other authors⁶³⁹. He also claims to have personally taught thousands of students in magic⁶⁴⁰. Since there is a limit to his student numbers⁶⁴¹, and training under Amado apparently takes up to fourteen years, even if he really has been teaching face-to-face for decades then the simple mathematics of this claim defies belief. While it may be that many of his students do not have Internet access, on 1st March 2003 the online forum section of his website only had 58 enrolled members. If he really did have thousands of students *in magic* it might reasonably be expected that many more than this number would be registered with his website.

Amado writes, "I have founded no movement. I head no organization. I detest grades, degrees, ranks and hierarchies"⁶⁴² but "I have more followers than any major group"⁶⁴³. The latter claim seems highly unlikely. So far as other well-known magical orders are concerned, worldwide membership for the 'Caliphate' OTO is around 4000, worldwide IOT membership is less than this, and The Fellowship of Isis claim to have over 11,000 worldwide⁶⁴⁴, as discussed in an earlier chapter. If Amado really does have more than these numbers on his membership roster he will front a considerable and vitally important magical group. Were this the case one might expect to see signs of a large global organisation, however Amado's extant groups are given by a students' website as being in East Sussex, Essex, Hampshire, Northumberland, South Yorkshire,

⁶³⁸ Amado Crowley, *Lewd Ghosts*, p x

⁶³⁹ *Ibid*, p 61 and Glenn Shearer, PR for Diamond, personal communications to Kate Hoolu, 15-8-2002 and 16-8-2002. Amado Crowley's Tarot deck and accompanying book is published by Twicen, which company shares the same BM Box address as him, so are presumably a spin-off venture run by him.

⁶⁴⁰ Amado Crowley, *Quest*, p 4.

⁶⁴¹ _____, *Alba*, p 7

⁶⁴² _____, Plea For Friendship, p 3

⁶⁴³ _____, 20 Questions, unpublished article, 2004, p 1

⁶⁴⁴ Phil Hine website www.philhine.org.uk/writings/ess_olivia.html

West Lothian (all UK) and Oklahoma in the USA⁶⁴⁵. What are not mentioned are an extant group in Devon, UK and presumably a French group (hence the translation of some books and Amado's own website as mentioned above). Such a geographical spread is hardly world domination material, though.

Quite when Amado started teaching is also very uncertain: it is variously claimed as 1951⁶⁴⁶, 1958⁶⁴⁷, 1937 (when he was possibly only seven years old!)⁶⁴⁸, in 2003 it was simply "over 40 years"⁶⁴⁹ which climbed to "seven years of training ... fifty years of experience" in 2004⁶⁵⁰.

Author, Author!

If Amado's occult books had sold so well as claimed it is more likely they would remain in print, which they have not⁶⁵¹, and they would be very common on the second-hand market, which they are not. There was nothing by Amado on any UK used-book trade lists in early 2003, while on the same date a worldwide aggregated catalogue of 40,000 used-book sellers (ABE Books Website www.abebooks.com) revealed only six second-hand examples of Amado's work on sale. Subsequent searches indicate that this level of availability is the norm. This discounts the unlikely alternative that Amado's magical prose has such an enervating effect that none of the 'millions of readers' would ever sell their copies, of course.

My experience of buying Amado's electronic book *Excalibur* in July 2002 might indicate true demand. For various reasons I did not get around to reading it until nearly three months later, when the computer file would not function. This took numerous emails to Amado's administrators to solve, including creation of a software modification by the vendors for the fundamentally 'bugged' file. Had the e-book been a big seller (or, arguably, sold even *one* other copy from July-Sept 2002) this fault would have arisen and been solved before my complaint, so it seems likely that the

⁶⁴⁵ The Old Religion (Online) is a site run by some of Amado's students. www.the-old-religion.net/

⁶⁴⁶ Amado Crowley, *Excalibur*, p 4

⁶⁴⁷ _____, *Wrath*, p 108

⁶⁴⁸ _____, *Quest*, p 23

⁶⁴⁹ _____, Website, www.amado-crowley.net

⁶⁵⁰ _____, Plea For Friendship, p 5

⁶⁵¹ Amazon.co.uk, email, 13-11-2002

realm in which Amado is a best-selling author is not an occult one, and is under another name or names, if indeed there is any truth in the claim at all. His website forum did not publicise the software problem until January 2003, which I take to mean that they did not have sufficient sales to justify the notice ⁶⁵².

There is also some confusion regarding the value of the Crowley surname in occult publishing. Amado says that Aleister's "name can almost make cheques sign themselves" although he writes elsewhere "I haven't made a penny" from exploiting the name. If true, this perhaps indicates unusual remuneration arrangements from publishing contracts, or his self-financing the books as 'vanity publications' ⁶⁵³ but given the relatively small market for such titles compared to best-selling general novels, Amado's alleged millions of sales, if actual and not merely another empty boast, are probably in other fields, and under other names.

He claims authorship of novels and technical works, yet in 1991, after presumably retiring as an eminent (and thus by derivation, published) psychologist and writing his first book about Aleister he said he was "not a professional writer" ⁶⁵⁴, but twenty years earlier he was claiming to be "a writer and would be slightly well-known" ⁶⁵⁵. More recently he was claiming to be a "playwright and a novelist" ⁶⁵⁶. It is unlikely his high sales (if they exist) have come from professional psychological texts, since these are seldom million-selling titles ⁶⁵⁷, the overall world market for even the most best-selling general undergraduate teaching texts, shared among the *very many* authors in the field being below 600,000 sales *p.a.* ⁶⁵⁸. Such books demonstrate thoroughly scientific, parsimonious, rigorous styles, with coherence, attention to detail and marshalled facts. Amado displays none of these qualities in either esoteric text or personal communication.

⁶⁵² Steve Ronan, Cthonios Books, personal communication, 12-2-2003 and Admin posting to Amado Crowley Net Forum www.amado-crowley.net/forum/viewthread.php?tid=21

⁶⁵³ *Secrets*, p 13.

⁶⁵⁴ Amado Crowley, *Secrets*, p 12

⁶⁵⁵ *MMM*

⁶⁵⁶ Amado Crowley, *Alba*, p 20.

⁶⁵⁷ Han Ismail, Marketing Executive, Hodder & Stoughton Academic Publishers, personal communication, 14-8-2002, said he would be "amazed if a heavyweight psychology title sold a million".

⁶⁵⁸ Martin Skinner, *Psychology Textbooks: Creating the Subject. Paradigm*, 16, May 1005. (Online) w4.ed.uiuc.edu/facultv/westburv/Paradigm/skinner.html

Amado's books, published under the Diamond or Twicen imprint, are distributed by a separate, and un-related commercial warehousing and distribution company; such outsourcing being very common in *smaller* publishing ventures ⁶⁵⁹. The website for Twicen ⁶⁶⁰ had a blank page with no information on it as of 10 April 2004, and, when checked on the same date, Twicen was not registered as a company in the UK with the official register at Companies House ⁶⁶¹. Neither was Diamond Books, Amado's main publisher, registered as a company. This is not to be seen as a sign of duplicity, since it is not a legal obligation for *small* British businesses to register as a company until they reach a certain financial turnover ⁶⁶².

However the computer company that runs Diamond, *Transym Computer Services* is registered (as Company 1723514, specialising in software consultancy and supply, incorporated as a company on 16-5-1983), and two financial reports purchased from Companies House indicates that (for the last year in which accounts were available, 2002) the company was running at a small turnover of around £11,000 pa and a very heavy after tax operating loss of around £27,000 pa, with accumulating and similarly large losses over the previous years.

The two directors (both with the surname Anthony, so *Transym* is presumably a family firm) are reported as agreeing to their accountants' comment that "although the Balance Sheet discloses that the liabilities of the company exceed its assets the directors have confirmed that they will continue to make finance available to the company for the foreseeable future" ⁶⁶³ which appears to be a standard accountancy phrase. I presume that their bookselling arm is included within these figures, since Diamond Books are not listed as a separate company, and if so, from the overall company turnover, and losses involved, it must be assumed that Diamond are not selling anywhere near the quantity of books that would make Amado a major author within occultism, and this has been the case for some years, since the losses are accumulating, and you would expect the books to be priced in such a way that they made a profit. A share-

⁶⁵⁹ Niche Logistics Ltd Website www.niche-logistics.com/

⁶⁶⁰ Twicen Website www.twicen.net

⁶⁶¹ Companies House website ws2info.companieshouse.gov.uk/

⁶⁶² *Ibid* www.companieshouse.gov.uk/infoAndGuide/faq/fullList.shtml

⁶⁶³ Current Appointments Report for TRANSYM COMPUTER SERVICES LIMITED (compiled 16/04/2004), and Transym Computer Services Report and Financial Statement for the Year ended 31 May 2002, acquired from Companies House Website, see above

holder list was not available to see if any of the suspected earthly names of Amado, or those of any known pupils was listed. So how do we think know what Amado's real name is? Read on...

Hunting Amado's Real Name

Although Amado's possible earthly name can be re-assembled from a close reading of his several books as 'Andrew Standish', the staunch Thelemite writer and journalist (and now the late) Gerald Suster claimed to have discovered that 'Amado' is a retired psychology teacher from Southampton Polytechnic called Mike ⁶⁶⁴.

Although Amado brushes this aside as "unpleasant rumours to do with a lecturer in Hampshire" ⁶⁶⁵, he does tell how he was a university lecturer (location not given), eminent psychologist and "a chief examiner for a national award" ⁶⁶⁶. Award unspecified: it is implied it is psychological, but could equally be in Cycling Proficiency, Origami or Cookery. Not to denigrate any of those disciplines, but they would not strengthen Amado's claims. Southampton Polytechnic is now called Southampton City College and their website confirms that *it is neither a University nor has a psychology department*.

While he claims a clinical psychology doctoral training and practice ⁶⁶⁷ the 'therapeutic' techniques he describes are confrontational, judgmental ⁶⁶⁸ and extremely odd, and do not fit neatly or coherently onto a general schema of psychological medicine in Britain during the time when Amado claims to have been practicing it. Amado gives no dates, although accepting the claimed 1930's birth, plus the duration of secondary education, National Service ⁶⁶⁹ and graduate studies, this indicates that his therapeutic practice could have commenced no earlier than 1957. This is based on the standard 3 years military service plus undergraduate and doctoral degrees taking at least 6 years.

However the asylums Amado describes resemble the 1930s 'Bedlams', not 1950s institutions, where chemical control of psychosis was almost

⁶⁶⁴ Suster, review of *Secrets*, p 154

⁶⁶⁵ Amado Crowley, personal communication, 30-7-2002; and www.southampton-city.ac.uk/

⁶⁶⁶ Amado Crowley, *Secrets*, p 7

⁶⁶⁷ _____, *Lewd Ghosts*, p 6; *Liber Lucis* 3, The Amethystine cycle, p 3; and elsewhere.

⁶⁶⁸ *Ibid*, p 7, 9

⁶⁶⁹ *Ibid*, p 11, and Amado's Admin, personal communication, 14-8-2002. Amado claims he did National Service between school and university. Riddles, p 176

universal⁶⁷⁰, yet Amado only gives one mention of a medical drug being used, so perhaps his account is simply a plagiarism of older, more sensationalised books about the Lunatic Asylum system, rather than anything remotely autobiographical. If, as it appears, he has clumsily borrowed such tales to falsify an identity wherein he was building the notion that he was an eminent psychologist, and he uses this professional position to give authority to his written wisdom in occult matters, then this again must cast huge doubt on his other claims.

In addition, even allowing for either of the two possible forenames, "there is no reference to an Andrew or Michael Standish" in the membership lists of the Royal College of Psychiatrists⁶⁷¹. The history of psychological medicine is confusing, various bodies offering certification from 1886 onwards, with the Royal College of Physicians offering a Diploma from 1954 until the early 1970s, but prior to 1971 it was not necessary to obtain *any* qualification to practice as a psychiatrist or psychotherapist⁶⁷², so any absence of record is not conclusive refutation of Amado's claim in this respect.

Unfortunately the UK's *Online Doctorial Theses* catalogue⁶⁷³ only covers from 1970 onwards, so it was impossible to search online for Amado's PhD, as his alleged career dates from before then. Searching the comprehensive *PsychInfo*⁶⁷⁴ psychological publications database for Andrew-or-Michael Standish showed nothing. *Psychinfo* is the standard, comprehensive and authoritative international database of published articles and books in psychology from 1872 to the present, and for an important psychologist to not be represented on that database would be unthinkable.

A 'surname only' search showed several publications. Omitting female authors and publications before or after Amado's likely career dates (also omitting much of the lengthy thought processes which led to other negative searches) left one: a Barry Standish, with a very few published papers from 1982 to 1991 on mental health (Amado's claimed area). However

670 David Healy, *The Suspended Revolution: psychiatry and psychotherapy re-evaluated*, London, Faber & Faber, 1990, p 65

671 Royal College of Psychiatrists' Archivist, personal communication, 28-2-2003.

672 *Ibid*, 9-8-2002, and Chief Librarian, British Medical Association, personal communication, 8-8-2002

673 British Library Document Supply (Online) www.bl.uk/services/document/articles.html

674 *Bath Information Data Services* (Online) www.bids.ac.uk

his writing style does not reflect Amado's, and Barry has not published any books at all, so I do not believe that he is Amado. A failure to have published numerous articles or books on the subject would create a major doubt that Amado was ever anything approaching an 'eminent psychologist'.

Regarding Amado's various claims (see above) to be a novelist and playwright in his books, a search of both the British Library Catalogue and the online booksellers *Amazon* and *Abe* (the latter specialise in second-hand and out-of-print titles) for either Andrew or Michael Standish revealed no titles for this claimed high-selling author. How odd.

A search by surname only showed numerous titles by a 'Buck L. Standish', published from 1963-1990, many being about the American Wild West (novels such as *Durango Kid* and *Custer Meadow*). Much as his critics might wish confirmation of Amado as 'cowboy author', in the derogatory sense⁶⁷⁵, 'Buck' is one of 30 pseudonyms of Luran Paine, a writer in many fields, who was born in 1916⁶⁷⁶. To further detract from any likelihood of Paine also being Amado, Paine's 1970s lurid book on occultism fails to mention Aleister *at all*⁶⁷⁷. So it seems that Amado, if he is telling the truth about his surname, is neither a published author nor playwright under any known names.

Standish is a town in Lancashire, UK, and so it may just be a whimsical choice of pen name taken on Amado's travels.

In early 2004, Amado kindly sent me some emailed drafts of some articles that he was trying to have published. These were Microsoft Word documents, and by examining the 'file properties' option in that software, this indicated that the pieces were written on a computer owned or used by one Michael Walker. Since Gerald Suster wrote that Amado's real name was Mike this gave the hint that they may be the same person (assuming for now that it was not simply a copy of the WORD software copied illegally and originally owned by a Michael Walker). Assuming that the piece was written on his own computer, and does not derive from a disk pirated from someone of that name, of course.

675 Definition: 'Cowboy; someone who does a shoddy job... to make a quick profit'. *Bloomsbury Dictionary of Contemporary Slang*, (Tony Thorne, Editor), Bloomsbury, London, 1991, p 111

676 Internet Pseudonym Index (Online) www.trussel.com/books/pseud_p.htm

677 Luran Paine. *Witches in Fact and Fantasy*. London. New English Library, 1977

The file properties show considerable time spent editing the piece, rather than someone briefly using a borrowed computer to perhaps perform some last-minute polishing. It may then be reasonable to assume that Amado is actually called Michael (Mike) Walker in earthly life. On this assumption a repeat trawl-search of psychologists and authors was made, using the same tools as described above as was previously done for the name Andrew (or Michael) Standish. I found several permutations of 'Michael Walker' among the published psychological fraternity, but none based in the UK throughout the time when Amado was actively recruiting and giving talks to his magical groups in this country, none with publication careers covering the expected period, and none in Amado's claimed clinical psychological area, thus the further extensive details of my fruitless and time-consuming searching for a 'hit' are omitted here.

A search of books on ABE.com and Amazon websites found many Michael Walkers who were published in numerous fields, including anglers, agricultural experts, and the memoirs of a New York Policeman. There were some novels as spin-offs for a BBC Television medical drama but, tellingly, nothing that would imply a famous playwright, million-selling novelist or an academic psychologist. A Mike Walker was the author of numerous English-Language teaching materials published by the respected educational publishers Longman, and a Mike Walker was also found to be a radio playwright for the BBC. If this was the same Walker, and Walker is Amado this might give credence to him actually having millions of readers since Longman books are very widely used in schools and in ESOL (English as a SecOnd Language) teaching environments all around the world, although this claim, made as Amado, is phrased disingenuously in the extreme, as it implies that his huge readership numbers are in a magical field.

Assuming that Amado's surname might be Walker and that some of his claims discussed above may be true, some repeat enquiries were made using this surname. They were all fruitless, for example there was no L. Walker (i.e. Amado's stepfather, if his name were not Standish) in the wartime register of the *Guinea Pigs Club*, as discussed above.

Some of the playwright Mike Walker's work shows some stylistic and contextual parallels with Amado's writing, so I located and emailed this Mike Walker (who as born in 1946) to introduce myself and discuss the matter. He was fascinated by my theory, and said he had a few acquaint-

ances who were 'into the occult', but he totally denied that he was Amado⁶⁷⁸, a denial that I must take at face value, concluding, on current evidence that Amado is quite possibly A "Mike Walker", but not THAT Mike Walker, and without more time to research this angle the trail has been left at that point, with my being very happy that with best use of all the energy available in the time I have falsified many of the claims Amado makes, and as yet supported none.

How many Amados?

With such 'biblical' degrees of contradiction in a relatively small number of published words (for example such as his story of how he was named by Aleister in person when he was a small child, or by mail with Aleister being dead and Amado at age eighteen; depending on which texts are read), there is a possibility that although a human being of a certain appearance called 'Amado' gives lectures, the books may instead be compiled by a fluid committee of 'hack' ghost writers. These persons are perhaps not in detailed communication with each other, since surely a professional writing team working very closely and doing even half-hearted research would not make multiple fundamental internal errors of contradiction and external errors of fact? If such a team exists its work may have been cobbled together by untalented writers, so far as preserving continuity is concerned. There is some credence to this view from Amado's third and final book specifically about Aleister, *Wrath of...* which heavily uses common expletives, whereas none of the previous books use such language. Such multiple authorship would of course cast major doubt both on the entire claimed history of Amado, and the motives for publication, the latter of which might then be seen as purely for financial gain, or perhaps as some kind of literary or magical joke, by a cabal of writers. I have considered the possibility that this is an 'inside job' and that Amado is a character created as a joke by a group of Chaos magicians, but my immediate feeling is that if that were so, the jape would have been done so much better and more stylishly than it has been.

⁶⁷⁸ Mike Walker, personal communications, 28-05-2004 and 2-6-2004

Amado and Anti-Thelema

Aside from his very debatable paternal parentage, perhaps Amado's second most outrageous, contentious claim among occultists is that "Aleister Crowley wrote *The Book Of The Law* ... as a red herring"⁶⁷⁹. *The Book of the Law* is considered to be a Holy Book by his adherents, and it forms the cornerstone to Aleister's creed of Thelema. Allegedly dictated to Aleister by a non-human entity in 1904, it comprises three complex and gnomic chapters describing the evolution of mankind, a means of magical self-realisation and an account of mankind's relation to the Gods of past, present and future epochs (called Aeons in the book). The text about the imminent God of the current Aeon, *Horus*, makes some compelling and arguably prescient predictions about the coming events of the 20th century: *Horus* being a god of war. Much effort has been expended by scholars and philosophers of the occult, including Aleister himself, in interpreting the book, for which there is not scope here to discuss.

The larger part of Aleister's magical system (and its subsequent developments) and writings after 1910 are concerned with understanding the short dictated text⁶⁸⁰, and it has a 'biblical' import among Thelemites, who would find it unthinkable that it was all a sham. However, according to Amado, Aleister's most central Holy text is allegedly a hastily-concocted fraud to mask the existence of a vitally-important ancient magical grimoire, the *Book of Desolation*, This, Amado says, was discovered by Aleister, in an archaeological, rather than a magical manner⁶⁸¹ but was never mentioned in any of Aleister's extensive works, and Amado claims to now possess this book but has never published it.

In more recent communications with Amado the publication appears to be a 'work in progress' but since the book is of a massive size (thousands of pages, he says) and the work involved in interpretation and rewriting for a modern audience is very taxing, and Amado says he has "been at it for fifty years, at least" it may be some time before any of it appears in public, although given the size it is possible it may be published as a series of books⁶⁸².

679 _____, *Quest*, p 232

680 Aleister Crowley, *The Book of the Law*

681 Amado Crowley, *Secrets*, p 100-102

682 _____, various personal communications November-December 2004

There is not space here to list all of Aleister's publications (which run to over 100 titles), or to describe their largely coherent magical system but it seems inconceivable that Aleister could maintain a fraud for so long (while completely concealing the alleged one true book). As has been said about the 'rascal-mystic' teacher GI Gurdjieff: "could anyone devote so much time and energy to creating something in which he did not believe himself, with the deliberate intention to deceive?"⁶⁸³. The most likely answer; is 'no'; however this question also applies to Amado, who has been publicly playing the role of Crowley's son for over 30 years. Aleister's huge published output has overall congruence (such as a progressive and developing magical and philosophical system, based around *The Book of the Law*), and Amado's lesser *corpus* does not, consisting largely of multiply-contradictory materials, rehashed folk magic, no clear philosophy and very unlikely claims, woven between repetitive and puerile out-dated sexual innuendo and jokes. Amado's system, as much as it is, is described below. In any case, Amado cannot 'have his cake and eat it': his reputation is derived from association with Aleister Crowley, and by derivation from the large *corpus* of authoritative magical texts that Aleister left behind. Amado cannot both trade on that reputation and yet denigrate the content of it, without appearing disingenuous.

683 Anthony Storr, *Feet of clay: Saints, sinners and madmen: a study of Gurus*, New York, Simon & Schuster. 1996. p 25-6

Where is Amado's evidence?

Amado maintains that, while other writers may speculate about Aleister, "I possess proof"⁶⁸⁴, however, none is produced; perhaps the closest being his quoting an alleged seventh birthday card he received from Aleister⁶⁸⁵ containing a sexually suggestive rhyme written by Aleister. The late Martin Booth, an expert on Aleister's poetry (and his recent biographer⁶⁸⁶) did not recognise the poem when I sent him the text, but "certain traits... suggest it probably is by him (Aleister). The rhyme scheme... the irreverence certainly ... and the erotic joke"⁶⁸⁷. However possession of a card is no proof it was sent **to Amado**. Crowleyana has been regularly re-sold and such a card may have been auctioned in 1971, included in a large cache that were described as "letters...cards.... *occasionally bawdy*" well before Amado wrote about 'his' card⁶⁸⁸.

A huge cache of Aleister's artefacts, books, correspondence and diaries was allegedly burned in the late 1960s⁶⁸⁹. Although this event is now considered of doubtful veracity it is perhaps by relying on this *presumed* evidential void that Amado has emerged. Amado knows of the surviving diaries of Aleister's held by the Warburg Institute⁶⁹⁰, but seemed initially unaware of their content and date range, since they cover the period in which Amado claims to have been present. Aleister's diaries neither describe the extraordinary events claimed by Amado, nor *any* visits by such a 'special son', while very mundane life events such as having an attack of diarrhoea were recorded⁶⁹¹.

This is most unfortunate for Amado's credibility, although he latterly claimed about one incident, "(Aleister's) diary does not mention the visit. *Neither does it mention many other things*"⁶⁹², and he says that Aleister

684 Amado Crowley, *Secrets*, p 5

685 _____, *Lewd Ghosts*, p 134

686 Booth, *Crowley: collected poems, and Magick Life*

687 Martin Booth, personal communication, 16-8-2002

688 Sotheby and Co, *Auction catalogue 5/6-7-1971*, p 38, Lot 233, Emphasis added.

689 Janine Chapman, *Quest for Dion Fortune*, York Beach, Weiser, 1993, p 154-5

690 Amado Crowley, *Riddles*, p 38, 171

691 Hutton, *Triumph*, p 208-9

692 Amado Crowley, *Wrath*, p 140, emphasis added

required him to be a secret, thus he is not mentioned in Aleister's will⁶⁹³.

The convenience of these comments for Amado's narrative should not be underestimated, meaning that *anyone* of a certain age can make the same claims; however Aleister's own specific instructions for the keeping of a magical diary insist a detailed record be kept of *everything*, of which technique Amado is aware⁶⁹⁴. Thus it seems most likely that Amado is absent from Aleister's diaries simply because he was absent from events. In much the same way the authors of the legal papers that the historian Natalie Zemon Davis worked on had "a corpse to explain and their texts had 'wounds' in them... gaps in the argument"⁶⁹⁵, this diary problem is a major injury to the corpse, and Amado fails to plug the wound.

Davis is an important referent here, as she has done considerable work with 'Pardon Tales' - the often incredible stories told by defendants charged with very serious crimes such as murder, to 16th Century French courts to give reason and alternative meaning to their actions, in the hope of escaping punishment, or at least reducing any sentence handed down. Davis work is a superb example of the interpretative difficulties inherent in working with individual, self-referential and personally motivated historical accounts.

One example of this is a marvellous fabricated story given by one defendant, who was (he said) among a group of men out singing, playing bagpipes and good-naturedly carousing in order to encourage the giving of traditional gifts of food and drink from the occupants of various villages during the celebrations of New Year's Eve. The group were carrying staves and pitchforks, but apparently only to aid them in vaulting ditches and streams, and to deter any unruly feral dogs they encountered. The men were attacked by a group of local "rowdies" and, reluctantly and after considerable attempts at pacifying by speech, they were forced to defend themselves, and one man died. The defendant fled the region, despite, from his version of the tale, his obvious innocence of nothing more than justified self-defence after an unprovoked attack.

The alternative view from this account might be that a rough band of armed, noisy and threatening drunks were causing such a nuisance in

693 _____, *Riddles*, p 11

694 _____, *Lucis* 6, p 5

695 Davis, *Fiction*, p 47

forcibly extorting food and drink from householders that an attempt was made to expel them from one village, and the confrontation turned violent.⁶⁹⁶ Davis' study gives useful commentary on the varying individual perceptions of truth, and the embroidering of stories with compelling supportive details as compared to more objective and likely matters of fact, and so provides a useful overview of the mechanisms of duplicity and charlatanry in any field.

However with such historically remote accounts, and with all participants long deceased we can never know how much is objective fact and how much is embroidered; by the plaintiff for reasons of self-preservation in the eyes of the Law, or by the relatives of the injured party for reasons of desiring a hefty sentence in revenge. In Amado's narrative, since there is a large corpus of published material, diaries, and some still living witnesses, there is considerably more scope for deconstruction and academic analysis, as will be seen below. In many cases there is found a much more parsimonious and credible explanation of various matters than those that Amado attaches to them.

Charlatans, Magicians and Amado

Regarding the veracity and credibility of the leading occult figures of any century, the modern occult philosopher Lionel Snell makes the important point "is there a single name that is untainted by the smell of charlatanry?... I defy anyone to find a stainless steel saint among occult leaders"⁶⁹⁷. Snell goes on to analyse the function of trickery and duplicity in occultism: "in terms of sheer numbers, the majority of mankind probably subscribes to some religion that insists that the world is an illusion... (so) might you not find out more about the nature of an illusion by following those who deal with illusions?"⁶⁹⁸ e.g. charlatans. He adds that "the history if not the literature, of occultism was too full of accounts of those who had dedicated their lives to the search for a master, and had ended at the feet of some egotistical junky"⁶⁹⁹.

Snell concludes that duplicity plays an intrinsic and simply *vital* part in the teaching of magic; on the one hand by creating a sense of disbelief, or extended beliefs beyond the norm (i.e. in the case of Amado that one is being taught by a direct descendant and pupil of a very famous magician) it performs the function of creating an environment in which magic can happen more easily, and on the other hand it establishes a scenario for a potential test of faith at a later date, as Snell continues: "when you discover your favourite guru has feet of clay, the natural reaction is either to deny the evidence, or to desert your guru in anger or contempt"⁷⁰⁰.

Aleister's former pupil, secretary and magical writer Kenneth Grant (who is discussed in following Chapters) does not go so far as to say Amado is a fraud; however Grant is himself a writer of convoluted, complex occult books, rarely making unequivocal statements, and he uses fictional sources (such as the supernatural horror novels of HP Lovecraft) as reference material for his own occult theories, and confusingly calls one of his novels 'quasi-autobiographical'. One of Grant's more recent books; *Ninth Arch* (2003) very briefly comments on Amado's books in the midst of a short discussion of the hoax and trickster element in magic⁷⁰¹, from

697 Ramsey Dukes, *The Charlatan and the Magus*, in *Blast!*, p 203-236, p 208

698 *Ibid*, p 212-3

699 Ramsey Dukes, *Blast!*, p 17

700 *Ibid*, p 210

701 Kenneth Grant. *The Ninth Arch*. London. Starfire. 2003. p 20

which it *might* be implied that Mr Grant includes Amado in those categories. Since Grant was Aleister's secretary, accountant and administrator during a time when Amado was allegedly alive and in contact with 'father' one might expect him to mention if he recalled any such communications, or perhaps remembered ever sending money to the boy. He has never written about such an event.

The Magical System

Leaving aside Amado's claims of heredity, there is the important question of interpretive history: 'Aleister had a magical system, does Amado have one?' (and if so, does it compare to Aleister's?). Aleister's magic was internally coherent, with a detailed and structured set of rituals for defined purposes, and was either based on a new source; such as *The Book of the Law*, demonstrative of great creativity and occult scholarship in use of existing sources, or profoundly inventive and novel. By comparison, some of Amado's magical rituals seem largely derivative, being drawn unchanged from (at the latest) early-19th Century published 'cunning folk' material that can be found in Barrett's *Magus*⁷⁰², which dates from 1801 and is widely available in cheap reprint, and is itself a compendium of earlier materials, such as collecting dew, exposing water to the moon, love magic, employing apples, herbs, plaited coloured strings, the evil eye, and addressing requests to 'Lady' – who could be Mary of the Catholics, since a lot of cunning craft derives from using Christian elements within magical practice.

There is one working in Amado's books involving moonlit sexual congress with an oak tree⁷⁰³ and two other folkloric rituals requiring another man's semen. None of this is remotely Thelemic.

Owen Davies' recent study of 'cunning folk' magic from the 15th to early 20th Centuries includes examples of early-modern and more recent herbalism⁷⁰⁴ and love magic⁷⁰⁵. Modern (20th Century) witchcraft books by various practitioners, which themselves pillage older sources, also cover herbalism, cords, love magic, collecting dew, reflecting the moon in water

702 Francis Barrett, *The Magus*, London, 1801, numerous reprints since

703 Amado Crowley, *Excalibur*, p 97

704 Owen Davies, *Cunning Folk*, p 102, 110-111, 192, (one 'bible' of Herbalism, Culpeper's Herball, having been in print since 1653)

705 Davies, *Cunning Folk*. v xi. 2

and divination *via* apples⁷⁰⁶. Gerald Gardner, the 1950s witchcraft revivalist (who knew Aleister), describes cords as a witch's working tool, and he mentions love magic⁷⁰⁷. The reflection of the moon in water is highlighted as a mystical tool by the early anthropologist Frazer, writing in the 1920s⁷⁰⁸, and the early-modern esoteric scholar Agrippa mentioned the magical influence of rays from stars and planets in 1531⁷⁰⁹.

Magical belief involving the evil eye is also of considerable antiquity, Elworthy's 1950's study of the Evil Eye analyses examples from Ancient Egypt onwards, and gives many from the early-modern period⁷¹⁰. While Owen Davies is a modern and currently respected academic, the far earlier writers Elworthy and Frazer are perhaps less accepted as verifiable sources now. In their writings, and in the case of the magical practitioner sources mentioned above it is not so important whether these techniques were actually historically in use at the times claimed, indeed some, including the Gardner and Frazer references, are rather contentious for historical or other reasons (Gardner appears to have had a considerable talent for invention, inflation and confabulation at times; very similar to Amado's, for example his use of the media to promote witchcraft, employing young girls who were not witches, in diaphanous robes to dance suggestively for photographers⁷¹¹), however the point being made is that all of their mentions in print *predate* Amado's published methods, in some cases by many centuries.

As yet I can find nothing in Amado's published methods that is *not* a technique already mentioned in detail elsewhere, and thus something which could be researched by any author and recycled. There is neither novelty nor apparent talent in Amado for invention in magical technique, whereas his ability to craft a tall story is undoubted, as has been described above.

706 e.g. Doreen Valiente, *An ABC of Witchcraft past and present*, London, Hale, 1973.

707 Gerald B Gardner, *Witchcraft Today*, Thame, I-H-O, 1999, p 113-4, 124, original 1954

708 James Frazer, *The Golden Bough: a study in Magic and Religion*, Macmillan, London, 1954, p 711, original 1922

709 Cornelius Agrippa, *De Occulta Philosophia*, 1, Chapter 33, (original 1510) in Peter G Maxwell-Stuart, *The Occult in Early-Modern Europe: a documentary history*, London, Macmillan, 1999, p 71

710 Frederick Elworthy, *The Evil Eye: The origins and practices of superstition*. MacMillan, New York, 1958.

711 Gerald Gardner to Cecil Williamson, unpublished letter in Museum of Witchcraft Archive

Amado's system also co-opts standard yogic posture, Tai-Chi-esque dance, Wiccan-like wording, the use of poppets (dolls used in 'image magic' as a symbol of the human target of the spell), and other extant and nominally Wiccan techniques such as ritual sharing of food⁷¹², which, if performed before an averagely-experienced Pagan observer who was ignorant of their supposed author, would probably be judged as being extremely derivative and 'broad church' basic pagan ceremony, and not Crowleyan at all.

Odd, then, that Amado dismisses Wicca as "little more than peasant magic"⁷¹³, when "I have students who are Wiccans"⁷¹⁴, and his methods lift large sections of the same type of Wiccan rituals virtually unchanged.

This might partially explain why someone with such an apparently dubious claimed heredity is still able to run a successful magical group: he is co-opting 'tried and tested' methods from other successful groups and magical orders, and simply reprising them in slightly new packaging, rather than producing entirely novel and unfamiliar material. This is in much the same way that a fast-food entrepreneur looking to succeed would most likely start up a new take-away business in a British town High Street as a burger bar or chip-shop than a Vegan Nepalese Sushi Bar.

Fishing for pupils

Amado seems unsure as to how he actually acquires followers, writing that "a genuine (magical) Order needs no publicity"⁷¹⁵, but Amado himself advertises for his magical group, with one potential pupil saying: "I'd replied to an ad in *Time Out*, which sought applicants for an occult group"⁷¹⁶ (taught by Amado). *Time Out* is not an occult magazine but a general London events and culture guide.

Amado has advertised for some years on an 'occult contacts' website, of the kind which is much more aligned to people finding dates with potential

712 Amado 777, *Rad Tungol*

713 Amado Crowley, *Alba*, p 119

714 _____, Plea For Friendship, p 2

715 _____, *A Beginners guide to Occultism*, (On-Line), 1999, section 17.1

716 Tony Looker, personal communication, 30-8-2002.

romantic partners than seeking magical teachers⁷¹⁷. To multiply the confusion further he criticises the kind of magazine that is the very location of his own adverts: "when a would-be student is wavering between me and a small-ad in '*Time Out*' ... I am not flattered"⁷¹⁸. Amado also has no faith in "teaching... at weekly meetings 'of a group'"⁷¹⁹ but his own groups work (or at least have worked for many years) in precisely that way, with one ex-pupil telling me of his once-a-week experiences: "I met Amado... in 1978-79...it was a study group for Amado's writings..."⁷²⁰.

Amado's basic approach to exciting interest and recruiting acolytes is not unique. Carlos Castaneda's story notably parallels that of Amado. Castaneda was an anthropology postgraduate student based in America; he allegedly discovered some powerful Mexican folk magicians and his best-selling books about his special initiations with them made him famous (considerably more so than Amado). Castaneda's tale, like Amado's, has several contested birth dates, numerous factual and 'narrative-time-to-calendar-time' conflicts and convenient amnesia towards difficult questioning. His experiences are derivative of already-published sources and add nothing new (except unlikely or impossible detail, of the kind never witnessed by numerous other researchers in the same field) to a corpus of knowledge about his subject area.

The numbers of followers vary, but like Amado, despite conclusive refutations, Castaneda has such a reputation among his converts as not to be "brought to earth again by mere 12-gauge conclusive proofs of fictioneering"⁷²¹. Others who have made outrageous magical claims have, occasionally, later apologised; one Vaughan Purvis issuing a public letter to explain that his previous claimed authority (in print) to run a named magical order was not the truth but "a product of my own self-delusion"⁷²².

There is also a fascinating reflection of Amado in Sigmund Freud, creator

717 Advertisement, *Fellowship of the Sphinx Contact Announcements* (Website), most advertisements being 'pagan personals', such as: "female...searching for Contacts in Oxford..." rather than 'Guru, seeks disciples' www.sorcerers-apprentice.co.uk/fotsads.htm

718 Amado Crowley, *Alba*, p 129

719 _____, *Wrath*, p 90

720 Dave Lee, personal communication, 1-3-2003

721 Richard de Mille, *Castaneda's journey: the power and the allegory*, London, Sphere, 1978, p 29, 32, 202, 201, 83, 50, 76 and 204. 12-Gauge is a shotgun.

722 Vaughan Purvis, public apology letter, insert to *Sothis*, 1.4, 1975

of psychoanalysis. Freud's published autobiography is considerably contrary to established fact, his theories were incomplete; oft-promised proofs never appeared and his work is not supported by *any* established science, in the same way that Amado has no positive independent referent among any other 'names' in occultism. When challenged on aspects of his work, Freud had convenient memory lapses, often appealing to antiquity to bolster his validity, or appropriating the ideas of others, unacknowledged. Any expressed criticism is seen as 'transference' - a symptom of mental illness (under flawed Freudian psychology, at least) and thus all opponents are automatically pathologised, becoming utterly invalidated as critics. His claimed "thousands of cures" are impossible, given the very lengthy and full-time nature of individual therapy, and his Messianic state of mind was due to long-term use of Herculean quantities of cocaine ⁷²³.

Excluding drug use, which he decries, this can all be overlaid on Amado, who bases his authority on several grandiose claims, which we mere mortals would have great trouble in overcoming:

1. Being the son and pupil of perhaps the most influential magician in the modern period (or indeed any period) and having thousands of pupils/selling millions of books
2. Being the one true psychic channel of Aleister Crowley today
3. As a professional psychologist being thus both profoundly sane and an irrefutable expert on human behaviour, mind and sexuality
4. Being sole guardian of Aleister Crowley's *only* true and ancient magical book, all others being nonsense

⁷²³ Elizabeth M Thornton, *Freud and Cocaine, The Freudian Fallacy*, London, Blond & Biggs, 1983, p 2, 9-10, 264, 292, 279, 278, 312, 7-8 and 4. Freud's dosage was immensely higher than that required today to qualify for serious addiction status. Grandiosity, distorted sex drives and paranoia are symptoms of addiction. Liz Thornton's truly fabulous book is essential reading for anyone with an interest in Freud, scientific process or the nature of charlatanry.

5. As a Master himself, being; "backed by the mandate of the gods" ⁷²⁴

Once in a Lifetime

Aleister Crowley made some dazzling, amazing claims, but these were often true, since he appears to have led an extraordinary life, filled with adventure and bizarre events. By contrast, Amado's claims seem to be based largely on fantasy. A danger of Amado's stories is that they will circulate, attract embellishments from verified history and thus give the impression that it all happened exactly as described, and contaminate the factual material already present in the public domain. This process has already started: Amado gives an account of a major magical ritual with Aleister performed at a megalithic site, the Men an Tol stones in rural Cornwall in 1943, with concurrent dramatic effects on the same day at a secret US Military research base across the Atlantic Ocean at Montauk ⁷²⁵.

Two American authors first published the Montauk story in 1992, which is grounded in the paranormal and 'conspiracy theory' genres, to do with US Government secret wartime military experiments with 'other dimensions' ⁷²⁶ (with no Aleister Crowley referents), and Amado only described the alleged Cornish ritual *afterwards*; presumably having read the American book and seen a new bandwagon to jump upon. Amado added no new verifiable detail, but in subsequent Montauk-related books by the same authors ⁷²⁷, Amado's account (and his claimed lineage; thus magical and historical authority) is included by them, both as accepted hard fact and as independent verification for their own unusual theories. This acceptance of Amado's story as fact is spreading: for example the historian Malcolm Gaskill mentions a wartime magical ritual in Ashdown Forest in Sussex as factual ⁷²⁸, a claimed event that Amado describes as being conducted by Aleister in order to tempt Hitler's deputy Rudolf Hess to flee to Britain. However the claimed witness that Gaskill cites,

⁷²⁴ Amado Crowley, *Frequently Asked Questions*, (Online) 2003. www.amado-crowley.net

⁷²⁵ _____, *Wrath*, final chapter

⁷²⁶ Preston B Nichols & Peter Moon, *The Montauk Project: experiments in time*, New York, Sky Books, 1999, Original 1992

⁷²⁷ _____, *Pyramids of Montauk: explorations in consciousness*, New York, Sky Books, 1995, p 177-8

⁷²⁸ Gaskill, *Hellish Nell*, p 280

Cecil Williamson, wrote elsewhere (in circumstances where knowing Aleister would actually have been very useful), that he had never met the man and knew little about him. Thus if this is true he could not have been at the alleged event at Ashdown, since Aleister was allegedly there⁷²⁹. An article in the paranormal and folklore magazine *Fortean Times* in 2004 cited Amado's tale of this same event as fact, admittedly with considerable reluctance over using it as source material⁷³⁰, that matter being something which I highlighted in a subsequent letter that was published in the magazine.

Amado and Williamson presumably had some kind of contact since in his private library there is a book by Amado warmly inscribed to Cecil, and it is possible that they cooked up some marvellous tales between them, or had a session of one-upmanship on swapping anecdotes, Cecil being well-known for his ability to spin a good magical yarn, with absolute and verifiable truth often not being his prime ingredient⁷³¹.

The Cornish-based occultist, author and artist Ithell Colquhoun wrote in 1952 about Aleister's travels in Cornwall and claimed he had only visited the county once. This was a ten day period spent at Mousehole and Penzance in August 1938, with Colquhoun concluding, from examining Aleister's diaries of the period, that "there is no hint... that he carried out any magical ceremonies"⁷³² while on holiday there, instead he seems to have spent the time relaxing, sunbathing, swimming, visiting the theatre, writing sexual limericks⁷³³ and dining with friends. Since war was obviously looming in Europe this was perhaps Aleister pragmatically taking in some sun, fine wine, gourmet food and culture before the war happened.

The diaries for August 1943 indicate that Aleister was very ill for the

729 "In one way I couldn't care less about A.C.... Myself 100% ignorant of most of his ups and downs. I know nothing of his work" Cecil Williamson, Letter to Gerald Yorke, 7-8-1952, held by Warburg Institute, Yorke Collection, Folder YC1EE2, pages 347-50. The late Mr. Williamson presumably had met Amado, since in his private library there is a book by Amado warmly inscribed to Cecil (Museum of Witchcraft Library)

730 Gordon Rutter, Magic goes to war, *Fortean Times*, 185, 2004, 50

731 Conversation with Graham King, June 2005

732 Colquhoun, *Living Stones*, p 169-177 covers Aleister's pre-war visit to Cornwall in detail

733 From the Yorke Collection, Warburg Institute: On a card approx 6 inches by 5, bearing the address of the Lobster Pot Hotel in Mousehole, Cornwall (Telephone number Mousehole 46) At Newlyn a furious filly Cried: Christ! I have frigged myself scilly I cannot get Granny To Tickle my Fanny: I'll marry that buxom Bodilly (undated)

period when Amado alleges they travelled to Cornwall for the ritual (and there is no mention of travelling anywhere on those dates, let alone an arduous and indirect train journey across almost the entire country). Having visited the site myself I cannot envisage how an old and ill man, as Aleister was then, could remotely have walked from the road to the megalithic stones across that rough terrain. Nor can I see how someone who in the war years (and afterwards) was struggling even for basic food-stuffs⁷³⁴ could afford the outlay for a lengthy journey of this nature, even if permission to travel there could have been acquired.

In addition, with the invasion of Europe approaching and troops and equipment being amassed, much of that part of Cornwall was a large and very secure tented US Army camp, and freedom of travel in the area for non-local civilians would have been unlikely. In July 1943 240,000 US troops were billeted in the southern UK, and by January 1944 this had risen to 930,000⁷³⁵. Many of these would have been encamped in the West Country, since this is where they embarked from for the Normandy invasion in June 1944, after using the coastline and moor land for training for the landings.

Magically and geographically speaking, the 'gunsight' arrangement of the stones (two uprights with a holed stone between them) points approximately 247 degrees West, and the magician on site would assume this has meaning. Taking that compass bearing from Cornwall and extending it misses Montauk on a North Atlantic map by a considerable distance. When including curvature of the earth factors, which would bend the line further south in reality (i.e. if one were actually sailing a ship or flying a plane along that bearing), and that misses *America* entirely. Not just misses Montauk, not just misses that part of the US coast, but it misses the *entire country*.

The Men an Tol monument has no local or regional folklore associated with Montauk, it is considered much more to be a place for healing various minor illnesses. Looking at the site in a practical magical frame of mind the immediate assumption is that the stones point at 'something'

734 Yorke Collection, Microfilm 10, Roll 3 has a letter from Crowley to Professor EM Butler dated 18-12-1945 asking her if she could bring staples such as "eggs, milk, sugar, butter" on a forthcoming visit. Times were obviously hard.

735 Julian Humphrys, *Monty's Men: The British Soldier and the D-Day Campaign*, London, National Army Museum, 2004, p 117

very specifically, since there are front and back markers on each side of the ring (perhaps these mark a significant seasonal sunset point).

This is not any piece of supportable academic conclusion making, as the vaguely Leyline-related thinking behind it is still often relegated to 'crank science' in many quarters (although Astro-archaeology, the investigation of alignments of stones with celestial objects, is gaining some academic respect in recent years). It does perhaps serve well as a metaphor for Amado's general accuracy, though, in that not only has something not been close to what is intended, it has literally 'missed the target' (in this case an entire country) by a staggering magnitude.

Also Aleister noted with concern in a letter to his friend and administrator Gerald Yorke in 1945 that he had heard no news of Deidre McAlpine, the mother of his actual son Ataturk, "since Sept '42... whose last known address was in Newlyn, Cornwall"⁷³⁶. One would think that had he travelled all the way to the Men an Tol stones in August 1943 that he would have certainly made the few miles diversion in order to pay a visit or ask after McAlpine's whereabouts and the health of his son in wartime. Cornwall's port towns were in range of the danger from German bombers, and at that point he had not heard from her for nearly a year. Depending on his mode of travel (had that been possible at all under wartime restrictions) it is probable that he would have passed *through* Penzance-Newlyn in any case, thus the diversion would have been miniscule.

The other numerous logistical, logical and factual problems with Amado's account of this alleged event would make an extra chapter here on their own, and hopefully this aspect is likely to be a lengthy article for a West-Country occult magazine in the future.

Will the real Amado please stand up?

These chapters give just a few of very many examples of divergent, dubious stories within Amado's narrative, selected from many hundreds of inconsistencies that I found. There should be slight caution, however when talking in absolutes of truth. When Adolf Hitler's purported handwritten wartime diaries were 'discovered' in the 1980s the 'totally conclusive' verifications of expert graphologists and historians were accepted, and the diaries were hailed as a major historical discovery.

Later, after a massive sum of money had been expended in buying the artefact from the owner, simple laboratory testing exposed the paper as modern, thus the entire diary was falsified. The forgery was such a success, perhaps, because audiences yearn for 'talismanic connection' with compelling historical figures⁷³⁷ (and especially 'celebrities'), over verifiability and likelihood. Earlier purveyors of faked Saints' bones were prime exploiters of this⁷³⁸ and Aleister's ephemera commands similarly fervent desire (and commensurately high financial price) among followers.

There is also great kudos for any magickal group who own a 'holy relic' from a previous influential occultist or group. Kenneth Grant's Nu-Isis lodge had a prize-winning and impressive collection of magickal implements including a glass 'blasting rod' (a wand) which had belonged to Allan Bennett (one of Crowley's major teachers in the Golden Dawn), Aleister Crowley's magickal dagger with which he had invoked the demon Choronzon with the poet Victor Neuberg, numerous pictures and articles produced by Austin Osman Spare, a fragment of a mummy case⁷³⁹ which had belonged to the actress Florence Farr, (a leading member of the Golden Dawn, discussed briefly earlier) and Aleister Crowley's portrait⁷⁴⁰ of the non-human entity *Lam*. The ownership of the Farr and Bennett articles was despite

⁷³⁷ Robert Harris, *Selling Hitler*, London, Arrow, 1996 p 24-5, 387

⁷³⁸ Alexandra Walsham, *Providence in early-modern England*, Oxford, OUP, 1999, p 227

⁷³⁹ Kenneth Grant, *Hecate's Fountain*, Skoob, London, 1992, p 1

⁷⁴⁰ *Ibid.* p 2

Kenneth Grant's avowed aversion to the Golden Dawn in general⁷⁴¹.

Under the influence of such desire the possibility to go beyond souvenirs such as signed letters, Aleister-annotated first editions, artefacts etc and actually physically interact with 'Aleister's son' in an intimate fashion such as being taught magic might suspend any critical faculties of the audience. Several occultists (including Phil Hine, who may have first coined the term) have taken to calling this phenomena, in magical fields at least, 'the Crowley's Socks' effect' - people will bend over backwards to experience something amazing, like wearing a pair of allegedly authentic Aleister Crowley socks, or handling something else which had actually touched his person. And paying through the nose and-or exposing their lower orifices in return for the dubious experience, which is often completely unprovenable. It should be noted that reason and desire are often strange bedfellows, as Ramsey Dukes points out:

"just as a pendulum's field of movement can be locally distorted by a powerfully-charged magnet, so also can a human's field of reason be distorted by a powerfully-charged concept. And in the vicinity of that concept reason can run along a path that appears warped to an outside observer, yet appears perfectly straight to the thinker"⁷⁴²,

so a pupil of Amado may not even see the rational contradictions in the life story of their teacher, and instead, as mentioned above, be impressed by a functioning system of magic (regardless of whether that system is entirely plagiarised from extant, and non-Thelemic sources).

In a short piece of fantasy fiction by Amado Crowley, when God makes the earth peaceful again after millennia of strife, "occult orders burned the documents attesting to their authentic origins and superb lineage"⁷⁴³. Considering Amado's own considerably less-than solid claims as to his parentage by Aleister Crowley, this may be read as an ironic statement. However in several places elsewhere he remains adamant of his lineage: "You'll ... pooh-pooh my words... (but) I'm also a magician. Check out

741 In 1951 Grant wrote "I have nothing whatever to do with the GD, neither do I want anything to do with it... the OTO in England ...has nothing whatsoever to do with the GD ...the Rituals of the GD are obsolete" Museum of Witchcraft, Boscastle, Correspondence collection, Kenneth Grant to Cecil Williamson, 16-5-1951

742 Dukes, *Blast!*, p 206

743 Amado Crowley, *Lewd Ghosts*. Diamond. Guildford. 1004. p 270

my name again"⁷⁴⁴, "as my own father told me: breeding still counts"⁷⁴⁵, and "male virginity has no political value - and no bearing on who was the father of some important baby. A question of heritage and land, rather than hymen"⁷⁴⁶ however some years after writing that he claimed to have never traded on the name.

This is despite making such comments as "I don't blame anyone who admires Crowley for wondering about me, but have you considered how the majority of people react? It is no fun thing to "claim" to be the son of such a notorious person. I think that you should judge me by (a) my appearance (a dead ringer for my dad), and (b) what I can tell you."⁷⁴⁷ Methinks he doth protest too much. And Physiognomy is no proof of anything, in any case....

"I don't want to get sidetracked into defending my identity. If my dad made it hard for me to prove it, then why should I complain? Let's say that certain folk do recognise me for what I am, rather than who I am. Whatever he had in mind when he set the strategy up, it still works."⁷⁴⁸ I have yet to find any of these alleged certain folk who are prepared to stand up for Amado, and plenty of important Crowleyan occultists who are more than happy to criticise him.

However the *Hitler Diaries* affair also highlights how enormous errors in absolute judgment can be made by experts, so while Amado's claims are highly implausible at present this is always contingent on future evidence. Amado mooted such disclosure of evidence in March 2003, a projected article he was writing for the occasional-sporadic Occult Magazine *Lamp of Thoth*, to "address some of the misgivings expressed by his critics"⁷⁴⁹. Since the piece had not been published by spring 2004, there being no issue of *LOT* produced in the interim, Amado kindly sent me the final draft to use in my research. The article is actually 'more of the same' and provides no actual evidence of his claimed identity whatsoever, as indeed Amado limply admits in his text:

744 *Ibid*, p x. There is or was a Radio Disc Jockey (Gary Crowley) among many others with the same surname, none of whom, to the best of my knowledge claim lineage; so that comment is meaningless.

745 Amado Crowley, *Lewd Ghosts*, p ix

746 *Ibid*, p 215

747 Amado Crowley, posting to weborama discussion forum (On-Line) 13-6-2002

748 *Ibid*, 18-6-2002

749 "OBA", personal communication. 18-3-2003

"my incredible story has no solid evidence to back it up... *the key, though, is not whether I am right, but whether I am sincere.* People who doubt my story should not therefore assume I am a liar. To quote Oliver Cromwell: "I beseech you in the bowels of Christ, think it possible you may be mistaken"⁷⁵⁰.

Since Amado seems to here be moving to a stance of *appearing sincere rather than being factually correct*, perhaps he realises that his imposture is untenable forever, and is preparing the ground for some gradual retractions of his story. The irony of Amado, who relies upon his alleged birth father for much of his magical authority, invoking Cromwell (1599-1658) the British historical figure who actually *ended* the Divine Right of Kings to rule in England, is simply sublime. It is also rather ironic that Amado told me at the time that this article, on the subject of truth, was unpublished, but I later found that virtually the same piece (but for about five words extra) had appeared in *Greenmantle* magazine some two years before⁷⁵¹.

On a functional level, the popular claimed psychic and psychokinetic Uri Geller "did not become famous for providing an amusing evening's diversion: he became famous for opening a crack in the public's sense of reality"⁷⁵². While Amado is far from as famous as Geller, it is likely that he performs a similar role to his pupils - by encouraging them to believe he is the son of Aleister, and thus that some intangible, but effective and worthwhile Crowleyan essence, or *baraka* is being transmitted *via* Amado to them, it is possible that their beliefs in the efficacy of their own magical practices are given a kick-start which they would not otherwise have, and that from innocently believing such a fraudulent basis they are performing *real* magic (however that problematic term might actually be defined). As the modern magician Phil Hine pragmatically remarked: "what matters is the results ... not the 'authenticity' of the system used"⁷⁵³.

Belief is perhaps on a continuum, also. There is considerable attraction in a knowing falsehood and fakery entering into the reality of some neo pagans, for considered purposes. A BBC Television adaptation of CS

⁷⁵⁰ Amado Crowley, 20 Questions- article submitted to *Lamp of Thoth*, p 1, emphasis added

⁷⁵¹ *Greenmantle*, Samhain 2002, p 3-7

⁷⁵² Dukes, *Blast!*, p 217

⁷⁵³ Hine, *Oven Ready Chaos*, p 10

Lewis' mystical *Narnia* stories in 1988⁷⁵⁴ involved the building of a stone circle (of real stone, rather than merely a transient televisual prop made from plaster or foam) for a filming location in a field near the TV Studios in Bangor, North Wales. Subsequently the stone circle was left, adjacent to a children's public play area, this presumably being cheaper than having the site demolished and re-instated as grassland.

By day the circle was simply another place for the children to indulge in make-believe, but at night various individuals and neo pagan groups regularly used it as a setting for magical rituals. I witnessed this myself when I was an undergraduate at Bangor University from 1996-1999: the field concerned was one I regularly passed by at night. The immediate geographical area contained a number of far older and more 'authentically sacred' pagan sites for potential rituals, including more historically-verified ancient stone circles and burial mounds, wild and scenic mountains, lakes, waterfalls, rivers etc. Could it be that the site of the filmed depiction of the slaying and resurrection of Lewis' Lion-hero (and ersatz Christ figure) *Aslan* was thus a 'special' place in the eyes of those neo pagans using the site for ritual, since it had become charged with some kind of media-created *baraka*?

Ama-Do, or Ama-Don't?

In the meantime, there is considerable duplicity and contradiction in the writings of "Amado Crowley", a.k.a. "Aquarius", a.k.a. "Andrew or Michael Standish", a.k.a. "the Chalice 777", a.k.a. "The Master Amado 777", and perhaps a.k.a. A, but not THE, Mike Walker, (or a cynical committee of professional writers) who himself criticises magicians for the way that they "often hide behind lies and pseudonyms"⁷⁵⁵. From my researches so far it is impossible to conclusively identify Amado, but it is easier to say what he is probably *not*: it seems most unlikely he is a learned chartered clinical psychologist, best-selling author in a magical field or fluent Latin speaker; thus casting profound doubt on *every* facet of his story.

There are many knowing confounds (such as two or more conflicting versions of a tale, both of which cannot be true), including his name(s), at least three birth dates, and a misleading military record, raising pro-

⁷⁵⁴ CS Lewis, *The Chronicles of Narnia*, (Television Series). Dirs. Marilyn Fox & Alex Kirby, BBC Television, London, 1988. Transmitted in 1988, 89 and 90.

⁷⁵⁵ Amado Crowley, *Excalibur*, p 64

cedural problems - 'what part is truth (if any) and what is fiction?' His lack of a coherent and deep knowledge of accepted Crowleyan matters is particularly damning.

This revives my earlier *caveat*; that 'if autobiographical detail is untrustworthy, use independent sources'. **There are none**, which itself is telling - no independent witness has come forward with any positive corroborative detail about Amado and Aleister's relationship. This is practically unheard of in Crowleyan matters, where every last bus-ticket owned by Aleister and the most remote 'friend-of-a-friend' *en passant* anecdote about him seems to have been published for profit.

A birth certificate search (which might possibly have Aleister Crowley named as a father) is a pointless and financially wasteful task given Amado's uncertain name and birth date(s). These tangled collage of factors on a continuum of impossible-to-unlikely and absence of independent verification makes it currently quite unsupportable that Amado is both the biological son and magical heir of Aleister Crowley.

However as discussed by Lionel Snell, above, there has seldom, if ever, been a completely credible and 100% 'stainless' occult teacher, including of course Aleister himself. Regardless of any claimed genetic link, there is a memetic link from Crowley to **all** modern magicians:

Aleister's own 'Book of Lies' is a selection of deep mystical aphorisms, which was subtitled "also falsely called breaks..."⁷⁵⁶, the emphasised also implying that the title of 'Lies' is itself a lie. The flyleaf continues the semantic trickery before assuring the reader that the publisher's imprint contains no "joke or subtle meaning"⁷⁵⁷. However the stated original publication date is apparently wrong by at least a year⁷⁵⁸, and since Aleister was professionally meticulous about such publishing matters, he was probably continuing his mind-games here.

Imposture, the use of 'creative narrative', confabulation and outright deception are regularly encountered in examinations of significant magical figures, with the modern magician and writer Phil Hine being very candid in his remark that in the sphere of occult history it is *almost a*

756 Aleister Crowley, *The Book of Lies*, flyleaf, emphasis added.

757 *Ibid*, title page.

758 Robert Anton Wilson, *Cosmic Trigger*, London, Abacus, 1977, p 76

given that occultists will trawl backwards in time "selectively editing, and sometimes fabricating evidence to support particular models and propositions"⁷⁵⁹.

The teacher's assumption of various masks to suit the personal needs of their followers is very common, and as the occult author Lionel Snell remarked: belief is a primary and critical factor in making magic work (however one actually defines 'work' in this context): "a statement such as 'Beyond the realm of the senses there exist dark forces which govern this world, mighty powers mastered by a Priestly caste before the Fall using secret knowledge ... (is) terrific stuff, and damn good Magic for those ... able to swallow all that'"⁷⁶⁰. Similarly, the belief that one is being taught in person by a direct, lineal descendant of, and star pupil of perhaps the greatest magician who ever lived is 'terrific stuff' for the mindset of a pupil with the ability to swallow that much, which might explain Amado's apparent longevity in this field.

The magician Phil Hine discusses the general heredity angle, and in particular what he perceives as the Wiccan obsession (rather like Amado's) of proving unbroken initiatory lineage back to some authority figure, saying that "membership of (such) a group can be the perfect setting for those who are unwilling to initiate themselves, preferring fantasies of being powerful magicians to the hard work of self-appraisal"⁷⁶¹. Conversely, Wiccan matriarch Patricia Crowther said, "I cannot see how self-initiated witches can be 'valid'... it is said that the quintessence of initiation lies in the one who gives it, when ... numinous gifts are bestowed (upon the initiate)"⁷⁶². Mrs. Crowther was herself initiated by Gerald Gardner in the nineteen-forties⁷⁶³... at least in one version of her own two rather divergent and mutually exclusive memories of the event⁷⁶⁴.

Supposed 'hereditary' witches claiming lineages stretching back to the year dot are particularly hard on Gardnerian and Alexandrian 'newcomers': "who the bloody hell do you think you are to insult other Wytches (sic) with your presumption and lack of manners? You come from a tradition which has little in the way of history, little in the way of manners and

759 Hine, *Prime Chaos*, p 60

760 Johnstone, *SSOTBME.*, p 17

761 Hine, *Prime Chaos*, p 43

762 Interview with Pat Crowther, by 'Morgana', *Pagan Dawn*, 143, p12

763 Interview with Pat Crowther, by 'Morgana', *Pagan Dawn*, 143, p 11

764 In separate published accounts her dates for this event vary by around two decades.

even less in the way of breeding!"⁷⁶⁵. As with the Montague Summers quote many pages ago, you can almost see the spittle....

However so far as verifiable historical matters go, as Amado says, (when talking about the supernatural in this case), "scientific logic should always prefer the most economic explanation"⁷⁶⁶ Personally I was very disappointed by the direction my research had to go in this area - at the outset of my work I really wanted to be able to corroborate Amado's story, as it was the kind of claim that fascinates people, and I would have loved to have believed that Aleister did indeed leave behind a magical vessel in the form of a child, containing his teachings. If he did, it isn't Amado. The late Gerald Suster may have been thinking about Amado, of whom he was a critic, when he wrote, citing the name of a major Crowleyan deity: "BABALON, some say: BABBLE-off one tells boring charlatans"⁷⁶⁷.

The magician and author Lionel Snell puts it beautifully as a general point about charlatans: and this is perhaps the best way to deal with Amado; not as a true descendant and star pupil of Aleister Crowley, but as some kind of at least partially convincing magical teacher but with no such lineage:

"now we have grown up enough that we no longer are in awe of the charlatan, it means that we are now free to delight in the charlatan - to *dig* the charlatan. Now we are mature enough to realise there aren't any ancient brotherhoods with secrets passed down from time immemorial, we are now free to *dig* those brotherhoods who put on a good act of being just that"⁷⁶⁸.

Despite any appearance of verbosity here, the actually quite limited space in these chapters only give outline material to support this view, and considerable extra material, including manifold further examples of conflicting stories, internal contradictions and external invalidity has been necessarily left out (the overflow materials left out from this could make

⁷⁶⁵ Anonymous Editorial, *The Hedge Wytch*, 5, 1999, p 2. Spelling author's own- 'Wytch' is presumably meant to differentiate one kind of 'Wytch' (hereditary) from another kind of 'Witch' ('modern tradition', if that is not an oxymoron), although the magazine is on sale by mail order to those who are not 'Wytches' of any kind.

⁷⁶⁶ Amado Crowley, *Beginners guide*, section 14.1

⁷⁶⁷ Gerald Suster, *Skoob Occult Review*, 3, 1990, p 26, a review of E Graham Howe, *Mind of the Druid*

⁷⁶⁸ Snell, *Deceptions of Magick*, emphasis original

a small book on their own). I was actually advised to edit out a lot of it for the original thesis, as "you've pretty much killed him in the first fifteen pages (this was on A4 sized paper originally), and you can do other things with the words you save by not jumping up and down on the corpse for another fifty pages" Good point.

Perhaps it is best to end with this, which although Amado uses in another context, is an apt self-denouement: "there is not the least value in trying to use writers of 'fiction' as witnesses"⁷⁶⁹.

I will now move on to someone who certainly did learn magic with the man; Kenneth Grant.

⁷⁶⁹ Amado Crowley, *Riddles*, p 60

Kenneth Grant and the Magical revival

Trafficking with an “onslaught of compulsive weirdness”⁷⁷⁰

While ‘Amado Crowley’, whoever he really is, may be historically unique in the huge scope of his claims about Aleister Crowley, Kenneth Grant (1924-) is certainly unique in the history of modern British magic in that he really did have close dealings with perhaps the three most influential Western occultists of the 20th century: Aleister Crowley, Austin Osman Spare and Gerald Gardner, who were all discussed above.

Grant was Crowley’s pupil, secretary, *post-mortem* literary editor and successor as head of Crowley’s magical order. Grant was also a pupil of Spare’s and later his literary executor, and he knew Gardner quite well (Gardner being an associate of Crowley’s), including performing several magical rituals with him, and allegedly introducing him to Spare.

Grant’s published works so far, covering almost 50 years of output, provide both a detailed synthesis *and* new interpretations of Crowley and Spare’s works, mixed with Grant’s own magical experiences within a broad range of techniques including psychic experiments, sexual magic, group ritual work and philosophical analysis. This includes the controversial step (among some occultists) of incorporating the supernatural entities depicted by several ‘fictional’ writers such as HP Lovecraft into his pantheon, which is discussed in a subsequent chapter. The over-riding content of his books are descriptions of entities which are ‘other-than-human’ and how they can be contacted, and interacted with, via his magic. His books provoke mixed and often polarised reactions in their readership and sometimes within the same critics - the writer Alan Moore said: “It’s hard to name another single living individual who has done more to shape contemporary western thinking with regard to

⁷⁷⁰ Alan Moore, *Beyond our Ken* (a review of Kenneth Grant, *Against the Light*), in *Kaos*, 14, London, *Kaos Babalon Press*, 2002, p 155-162, p 156.

Magic”⁷⁷¹, yet despite such acclaim, in the same article Moore also doubts Grant’s sanity and maturity, calling him “a schoolboy gone berserk on brimstone aftershave”⁷⁷².

Despite major difficulties in academic verification and analysis of some of his claims, and an often confusing, oblique and sanity-challenging writing style; which blends actual events with possibly fictional accounts of the actions of ‘real people’, the enigmatic and reclusive Grant has been highly influential in several different factions of modern magic. These include the development of chaos magic (see a later chapter), the popularising of the works of Spare and Crowley and his continuing leadership of an influential magical order the *Typhonian Ordo Templi Orientis*, based on Crowley’s own Order of the same name.

The use of fiction in magic is an area that can only be touched briefly, later in the Grant chapters, but the first remark needs to be that imaginal or fictional literature is still a very useful historical tool, in precisely the same way that Charles Dickens should not be ignored by anyone wishing to academically research social conditions in early 19th Century Britain; since his novels can provide an illustrative source of detailed information that can be allied to other, more ‘usual’ sources. In the same vein, both Lovecraft and Grant’s own novels are of relevance here to understanding magical thought.

Kenneth Grant has been variously applauded and labelled insane throughout his 50-year literary and magical career, as discussed above. These chapters will outline his early influences and literary output, examine some seeming factual and historical anomalies within his narrative and describe the broad influences that he has had on the historical development of modern magic. The subsequent chapters deal with his use of Lovecraftian magic, and the influences this had on the genesis of Chaos Magic in more detail.

Early Life and Crowley

Grant was born in 1924, had read very widely on occultism and Eastern philosophy by his early teens⁷⁷³, and had been using his own personal

⁷⁷¹ *Ibid*, p 162

⁷⁷² *Ibid*, p 156

⁷⁷³ *Svmonds. King of the Shadow Realm*, p 570-577

magical symbol inspired by a powerful dream vision, since 1939, when he was only 15 years old⁷⁷⁴. Since it was wartime, Grant volunteered for the army at 18, expecting to be “sent to India where I had hopes of finding a guru”⁷⁷⁵; which as Moore remarks, shows “a grasp upon conventional worldly reality that was at best precarious”⁷⁷⁶, given that had he reached the East, Grant was much more likely to be rather busy shooting at the Japanese, and being shot at in return. However this did not arise as Grant developed an unspecified medical condition and was invalided out of the service aged 20, before being posted abroad.

Continuing his magical studies, Grant tried to meet the ageing magician Aleister Crowley by writing to Crowley’s publishers, fruitlessly, as it turned out, as the address he took from the flyleaf of a book was a decade out of date. When Grant discovered London’s *Atlantis Bookshop* he tried to gain an audience with Crowley through *Atlantis*’ proprietor, Michael Houghton, who knew Crowley. Houghton refused to help (privately writing that Grant was “mentally unstable”⁷⁷⁷). Grant considered it to be because Houghton did not want to “incur evil karma”⁷⁷⁸ from linking him to Crowley, but later modified this to a perhaps more pragmatic notion that “Houghton had earmarked me for his own organization, *The Order of Hidden Masters*”⁷⁷⁹ and was thus trying to divert him from Crowley’s influence, despite the apparent paradox of Houghton-as-bookseller selling Grant numerous expensive Crowley books in the meantime.

Grant wrote instead to the publishers’ addresses in these newer Crowley books and eventually his mail was forwarded. Grant and Crowley met in the autumn of 1944,⁷⁸⁰ and after several amicable encounters and a further exchange of letters Grant offered to work for Crowley as secretary-cum-personal assistant, in return for magical instruction in lieu of pay. Crowley, by then rather poverty-stricken by his own standards, agreed, and in the early spring of 1945 Grant moved into in a lodge cottage in the grounds of *Netherwood*, the boarding house in Sussex where the ageing Crowley was then resident.

774 Kaczynski, *Perdurabo*, p 440

775 Kenneth Grant, *Remembering Aleister Crowley*, London, Skoob, 1991, p v

776 Moore, *Kaos*, 14, p 156

777 Kaczynski, *Perdurabo*, p 440

778 Kenneth Grant, *Outside the Circles of Time*, London, Muller, 1980, p 87.

779 Grant, *Remembering Aleister Crowley*, p 1

780 *Ibid.*, p 6

Crowley had an ambivalent magical and financial relationship with Houghton and warned Grant (far too late, as it transpired) “don’t let *Atlantis* know you know me”⁷⁸¹. Grant busied himself working with, and for, Crowley for some months, dealing with Crowley’s correspondence and daily needs, reading voraciously from Crowley’s own library and magical record, running errands to London, writing occult essays, performing rituals including ether-magnified magical path workings with Crowley⁷⁸² and becoming a high initiate of Crowley’s magical order, the *Ordo Templi Orientis*, with Crowley writing in his diary: “value of Grant. If I die or go to the USA, there must be a trained man to take care of the English OTO”⁷⁸³.

However Grant left *Netherwood* in June 1945⁷⁸⁴, after only a few months with Crowley, due to familial pressure to take on a ‘proper’ (i.e. paid) job⁷⁸⁵ in the immediate aftermath of the allied victory in Europe. In the face of this problem the financially bankrupt and aged Crowley, by then reliant on supporters’ donations to survive was unable to canvas sufficient regular funds to make Grant’s position a salaried one. Crowley later wrote to Grant’s father “I am very sorry to part with Kenneth... I feel ... that he is giving up his real future”⁷⁸⁶.

This could be read as referring to a *magical* future, since at the time there were certainly huge performance deficits in Grant’s more earthly, administrative performance, Grant admitting “I was unable ever to acquire a practical approach to mundane affairs... which so exasperated Crowley”⁷⁸⁷ and “when it comes to ‘accounting’, the incompetence remains”⁷⁸⁸. There may, however be some business acumen shown in later life, since Lionel Snell has criticised Grant for often claiming in his books that “certain Crowley works were ‘out of print’ at a time when excellent Israel Regardie edited versions of those titles were available”. This could be either a simple business strategy (so that potential customers waited for a Grant-edited version), or a doctrinal manoeuvre; Grant’s editorial slant being perhaps different to Regardie’s. Either or both of these motives, with the

781 *Ibid.*, Crowley to Kenneth Grant, Letter of 22-2-1945

782 Sutin, *Do What Thou Wilt*, p 406

783 Symonds, *King of the Shadow Realm*, p 572

784 *Ibid.*, p 570-572

785 Sutin, *Do What Thou Wilt*, p 406

786 Grant, *Remembering Aleister Crowley*, Crowley to Kenneth Grant’s father 14-5-1945

787 *Ibid.*, p v

788 *Ibid.*, p 27

same outcome, would have hindered dissemination of works that were not Grant's own or his joint editorial efforts with John Symonds, one of Crowley's other literary executors⁷⁸⁹.

Both Grant and Regardie had been Crowley's secretary-cum-pupil, but 20 years apart, and had very different experiences under his tutelage; Regardie seeing the international traveller, gourmet, well-dressed Crowley at around 50 years old, then being expelled from Sicily and living in often abject poverty, but in times of great magical excitement. Grant witnessed a more sedentary Magus at rest, living in increasingly faded grandeur, exasperated by wartime rationing, engaged in magical writing and only occasionally receiving exciting company.

The hard taskmaster Crowley had criticised Grant's secretarial failings and flights of fancy regularly, which perhaps contributed to his leaving (although it seems the Grant was also missing his fiancée, Steffi): "it's all very unsatisfactory. You *must* put a sock in it if you still want to work with me for the Order"⁷⁹⁰. Crowley also found Grant's verbosity and general flights of imagination "a terrible defect in your outlook on life; you cannot be content with the simplicity of reality and fact; you have to go off into a pipe-dream"⁷⁹¹. However after Grant had left his employ, Crowley moderated this, in a letter to another OTO member, David Curwen: "I feel that I may have treated him too severely"⁷⁹².

Grant's elective publication of these Crowley's letters and the comments therein which cast Grant in a negative light is something which may show a degree of courage and humility, for which the author and Thelemite Gerald Suster, so often an arch-critic of Grant (as will be seen later), applauded him⁷⁹³. While the capacity for publicly airing such possibly stinging personal comments about himself may be an ability beyond many other occultists, there remains the unanswered question of what, if any, other negative factors he has chosen *not* to reveal about his time with Crowley. But then that criticism could be made of any such memoir of any time spent with anyone else.

789 Lionel Snell, *Letters, Nox*, 3, 1986, p 16-17

790 Grant, *Remembering Aleister Crowley*, p 40, Crowley to Grant, 21-06-45, emphasis original

791 *Ibid*, Crowley to Kenneth Grant, 15-2-1945

792 *Ibid*, Crowley to David Curwen, 22-1-46

793 Gerald Suster, Review of Kenneth Grant, *Remembering Aleister Crowley*, *Skoob Esoterica Anthology*, London, Skoob, 1005, p 152-153, p 152.

Although Grant continued to correspond with, and support Crowley he never saw him again. Since much stock could be placed on Grant being a pupil of Crowley, it should be emphasised that their face-to-face association was not long, only a matter of months (however intense a period of training that was) and thus although Grant is now regarded as an authority on Crowley he did not have a lengthy apprenticeship 'at the feet of the master', so to speak; although this short but verified period should be contrasted with Amado Crowley's false claims of 'seven years tuition' with Aleister, as discussed in the previous chapter.

Aleister Crowley died in 1947 and Grant attended his funeral⁷⁹⁴.

Grant Family Relations

In his *Ninth Arch*, published in 2003, Grant claims a biological link to Crowley: early in their relationship Aleister Crowley had allegedly asked him "it's a large clan, I know; but do you know Gregor Fergus Grant... my cousin?"⁷⁹⁵. In Grant's book where this remark is published, from 1991, Grant does not footnote this with any commentary at all, let alone in the affirmative, which seems odd when 12 years later he claimed *distinct and long-term knowledge* of such a familial relationship. Gregor Grant is mentioned several times in various of Crowley's own volumes which were either jointly or solely posthumously re-edited for publication by Kenneth Grant⁷⁹⁶, but again no editor references are made there as to any familial link.

It is indeed a large Clan: given the common nature of the surname Grant, any genealogical research to verify this claim would be pointless without considerable further information such as given names, birth dates and places.

This claimed link is through one Dr Phineas Marsh Black, a *fictitious* character in one of Grant's 'novels' (although confusingly the same novel is *dedicated to Phineas*) - both Grant's great-uncle⁷⁹⁷ and a claimed cousin of Gregor Grant, which could provide a very distanced familial,

794 Symonds, *King of the shadow realm*, p 579

795 Grant, *Remembering Aleister Crowley*, p 3, Crowley to Kenneth Grant, 27-11-1944

796 For example Aleister Crowley, *Magick Without Tears*, Scottsdale, Arizona, New Falcon, 1991, p 357. This volume originally appeared as 'Aleister Explains Everything' in 1954

797 Kenneth Grant, *The Ninth Arch*. London. Starfire. 2002. p 408

if not specifically *genetic*, link from Kenneth Grant to Crowley. As was mentioned in a previous chapter, Thelema is not an hereditary tradition, so familial links, verified or not, are not magically important in any case.

Dr Black was allegedly a competitor with Crowley to find a particular ancient magic book, *The Grimoire of Clan Grant*⁷⁹⁸, this being a record allegedly created over generations of the Grant Clan and their experiences of having magical traffic with otherworldly entities. Grant gives various details of Black in his *Against the Light*, including a prodigious lifespan (1854-1957) and names one of Blacks' publications, as a medical doctor, which book has to date been untraceable⁷⁹⁹. This *Grimoire*, Phineas Marsh, Phineas Black or Phineas Marsh Black all fail to merit any mention in the index of Crowley's autobiography, *The Confessions*⁸⁰⁰, which seems unusual given the 900-plus pages of very detailed autobiographical information given by Crowley therein, which covers often very brief and whimsical acquaintances and which would be expected to mention other prominent occultists with whom he had any significant dealings, especially given Crowley's often vicious wit in criticising others in his field.

However a potential confounding factor might be that *this autobiography is a book edited by Kenneth Grant, and indexed by his wife Steffi Grant*, so there would have been ample opportunity to delete references to Black or the *Grimoire* if they wished to keep the matter secret for whatever purpose at that time. However, neither does Phineas Marsh Black (or permutations thereof) nor the *Grant Grimoire* merit a mention in the indices of seven major biographies of Crowley which predated publication of *The Ninth Arch*, and with which Kenneth Grant was *not* connected as editor. These were John Symonds, *The Great Beast*; John Symonds, *The King of the Shadow Realm- Aleister Crowley, his life and magic*; Richard Kaczynski, *Perdurabo: the life of Aleister Crowley*; Martin Booth, *Magick Life*; Colin Wilson *Aleister Crowley: the nature of the Beast*; Roger Hutchinson, *Aleister Crowley: the Beast demystified*; and Susan Roberts, *The Magicians of the Golden Dawn*. Full publication details of all of these can be found in the bibliography.

798 Ibid, p 411-412

799 Kenneth Grant, *Against the Light: a Nightside Narrative*, London, Starfire, 1997, p ix, the questionable book being Phineas March Black, *Clinical Studies in Senescence and Diseases of Memory*, Edinburgh, 1886 via an un-named publisher.

800 Aleister Crowley, *Confessions*

This absence would seem unusual if Phineas did indeed exist as an eminent occult researcher in contact with Crowley, and had left any kind of paper trail for subsequent researchers to locate. I have been unable to find anything about him outside of Grant's own references.

To add a possibly spurious European flavour, Grant also describes an ancient Italian version of the book, *Il Grimoire Grantiano* apparently held by a branch of the family from Florence⁸⁰¹. Neither grimoire is published so cannot be examined, but the linguistic veracity of this title is rather dubious. Dr Marco Pasi, an Italian academic well-versed in occult matters, said of the phrase: "it should rather be *Il Grimorio Grantiano*... although the adjectival form of the name sounds quite modern to my ear, usually you would rather say *Il grimorio dei Grant*"⁸⁰². It may be that in some way the *Grant Grimoire* is a personal analogue of *The Necronomicon*, a non-existent book found first in the fictional novels of HP Lovecraft, but the notion of which, the ultra-grimoire of magic, a secret and dread tome of ancient provenance, still has had important occult influence and which is discussed further in a following chapter.

Perhaps more conclusively, none of the terms Phineas Black, Phineas Marsh Black or *The Grant Grimoire* appears in the index of *any* of Kenneth Grant's own books prior to 2003's *Ninth Arch*, which would seem unusual given the alleged vital importance of Phineas and the *Grimoire* throughout Grant's life.

There is one other, unconnected, and perhaps teasing aside, given Grant's tendency to occupy the often-difficult territory between hard fact and possible fiction (which is discussed later), which may be purely coincidental and nothing to do with him. *Phineas Nigellus* (of which a rough translation from that Latin would be Phineas Black) is the ex-Headmaster of the school for wizards in the extremely popular *fictional* series of *Harry Potter* magical books written by children's author JK Rowling, which were mentioned earlier⁸⁰³.

Although there have been other secretaries, other pupils and other claimed relations of Aleister Crowley, as discussed in the previous Chapter about Amado Crowley, no-one has coherently claimed to be all

801 Grant, *Against the Light*, p x

802 I am most grateful to Marco Pasi, personal communication, 4-10-2003

803 For example JK Rowling, *Harry Potter and The Order of the Phoenix*, London, Bloomsbury, 2001

three. As if being Crowley's secretary, pupil *and* claimed relative is not enough *kudos* for one occultist to bear, and the latter being a detail that would have been a boon to the publicity for Grant's earlier books, had it been mentioned, Grant has other claims to magical family members.

To further enhance his occult image, Grant weaves into his narrative another claimed ancestor who was allegedly executed in 1588 as a witch⁸⁰⁴. This was one Margaret Wyard from Bury St Edmunds, whose historical existence, on the dates given by Grant, is still debatable. From examining Francis Hutchinson's *An Historical essay concerning Witchcraft*, 1720, which details very many trials. Despite Wyard and Hutchinson being both from the same town, Hutchinson fails to mention her, thus I suspect that at least the 1588 date Grant gives is incorrect, if not the entire tale. Hutchinson does have an Elizabeth *Weed*, but she was hanged in 1646 in a different geographical area. There is a Wyard in East Anglia mentioned in C L'Estrange Ewen, *Witch hunting and witch trials*, 1929, but the century is similarly wrong for the Grant account to refer to this actual woman⁸⁰⁵.

The collage endpapers of Grant, *Remembering Aleister Crowley* show a letter addressed to Grant at Ford Wyard Ltd in London, which I believe was his family firm. In any case, witchcraft accusations in early-modern times often had very little to do with practice of anything magical, so this claim is of limited use in academically substantiating any 'occult blood-line' for Kenneth Grant, regardless of the probably irresolvable argument whether such magical abilities (*if* this Wyard actually existed, *and* had such powers) are of hereditary nature, which is outside the scope of a historical study in any case. In any case, witchcraft accusations in early-modern times often had very little to do with practice of anything 'magical' under our own conception of the term, or anything which bears any comparison to what modern Wiccans do. For the current academic reasoning behind this see those titles mentioned earlier in the section covering the demolition of Margaret Murray's thesis on witchcraft, especially Cohn.

⁸⁰⁴ Grant, *Against the Light*, p x-xii

⁸⁰⁵ Francis Hutchinson, *An Historical essay concerning Witchcraft, two sermons*. London, R. Knaplock, 1720, and C L'Estrange Ewen, *Witch hunting and witch trials: the indictments for witchcraft from the records of 1373 Assizes held for the home circuit A.D. 1559-1736*. London. Keegan Paul. Trench. Trubner. 1020.

Grant and Austin Spare

Kenneth Grant's life intersected with another very real and documented magical figure soon after Crowley's death. A brief biographical background of Austin Osman Spare (1886-1956) was given earlier in the book. Spare was a much-feted artistic child prodigy, later a member of one of Crowley's magical orders for a short time and the author of several books on art and magic, plus an arts magazine editor. Steffi Grant said she sought out Spare in 1949 and shortly afterwards introduced Kenneth to him⁸⁰⁶.

By that time Spare was living a fairly Spartan existence in South London, having published no books for decades and living in virtual obscurity, eking out a living as a jobbing artist, sometime art tutor and quietly practicing and developing his method of visual, symbolic (sigilic) magic that was extremely innovative, and has subsequently become a seminal influence on Chaos magic, see a subsequent chapter.

Frank Letchford (1916-1998) had known Spare since 1937- twelve years longer than Grant (admittedly with some time apart due to Letchford's overseas war service)⁸⁰⁷. Without Letchford's huge financial and emotional support Spare would probably not have survived the aftermath of losing virtually everything (home, studio, material possessions and his health) in a German bombing raid on his London home in 1941⁸⁰⁸. Letchford was posted to India in the armed forces and when taken ill *there* (with malaria) found time during convalescence to travel, visiting *Sadhus* and other religious figures⁸⁰⁹, and published about his journeys⁸¹⁰, which may have elicited some later jealousy in Grant, who, as mentioned above, had failed to ever reach India in his youth to study with such people. There was obviously considerable affection held between the three men. Spare publicly referred to Letchford to third parties as "son",⁸¹¹ and Kenneth Grant began, apparently unbidden, signing his letters to

⁸⁰⁶ Kenneth & Steffi Grant, *Zos Speaks! Encounters with Austin Osman Spare*, London, Fulgur, 1998, p 30

⁸⁰⁷ Gavin Semple, *Study for a portrait of Frank Letchford*, London, Fulgur, 2002, p 15

⁸⁰⁸ *Ibid*, p 16-17

⁸⁰⁹ *Ibid*, p 11

⁸¹⁰ Frank Letchford, *The search for a Guru*, *Skoob Occult Review*, 1990 3, p 30-36

⁸¹¹ Semple. *Portrait of Frank Letchford*. p 16

Spare "thy son" in 1954⁸¹². Letchford was the first named in Spare's will, not Grant⁸¹³, as an indication of the regard the old man held for him, and it was often the case that Letchford and Grant have very differing views on particular aspects of Spare's life and activities, as will be seen later.

There are many problems with the easy academic or magical interpretation of Spare, in that he was, by today's standards, probably dyslexic⁸¹⁴ and as Grant writes "Spare just invented, amalgamated or altered words to suit his meaning"⁸¹⁵: examples include "there is a word preception meaning 'anticipated perception' or I've imagined it!"⁸¹⁶, (he imagined it) and "strectatorially" (which I have been unable to find in any dictionary)⁸¹⁷. I doubt that Grant is a qualified educational psychologist and cannot give a legitimate or authoritative diagnosis, but given the various evidential examples he produces, and from reading various AOS material in concert with my psychological qualifications I agree that it is quite possible that Spare had some kind of word-related learning difficulty, while still possessing a formidable vocabulary and philosophical knowledge.

To compound the problems of interpretation, as described by Steffi Grant "sometimes his spelling was very odd... Kenneth made a lot of tactful enquiries about the meaning"⁸¹⁸ and as the modern magician, author and Spare publisher Gavin Semple writes, he had "cryptic handwriting"⁸¹⁹, and in any case Grant writes he was "notoriously lax in checking his quotations"⁸²⁰. Either, some or all of these factors make Grant's minute, lengthy and often cabalistic interpretations of Spare's writings potentially fraught with error; such as investing them with arcane esoteric meanings that are perhaps simply not there. Elsewhere Grant's crucial misreading of a letter during his researches into Jack Parsons (an American occultist connected with Crowley, briefly mentioned above) led to possibly similar problems. The letters were handwritten and Grant does not mention that 'backside' may actually read "blackside". This is presumably because 'backside' fits better into Grant's magical worldview of the

812 Grant, *Zos Speaks!*, p 111, 113, 115 etc

813 Semple, *Portrait of Frank Letchford*, p 18

814 Grant, *Mauve Zone*, p 33.

815 Grant, *Zos Speaks!*, p 20

816 *Ibid*, p 284 fn 119

817 *Ibid*, p 123

818 *Ibid*, p 20

819 Semple, *Portrait of Frank Letchford*, p 18

820 Kenneth Grant, letter to A Private Correspondent, unpublished, 10-11-1002

'other', or 'back' side of the cabalistic Tree of Life being so important to his magical system.⁸²¹

The modern artist and occultist Jan Fries believes that "Spare's writings, and Grant's presentation of them, have been too cryptic for a mass audience. Numerous individuals and organisations have confused the basic simplicity of the method..."⁸²² and the modern academic and magician Matt Lee sees Spare's works as perhaps "artificially *assimilated* by Grant, to a particular, linear magical current, when they are more fluid than this should allow"⁸²³. Spare himself seems to have had some reservations about Grant's writings on occasion: "I think you are a trifle ambiguous for the ordinary reader"⁸²⁴.

To further cloud the matter, according to the modern occult writer Keith Richmond, Spare had recollections that "cannot be fully trusted... due to vagaries of memory"⁸²⁵ for example his first book *Earth: Inferno* was privately printed as a run of 265 copies which took over a decade to find buyers for all, but he later recalled it as '500 that sold out immediately'⁸²⁶. This seems to have been a lifelong problem: he failed his art examinations as a youth because, as his old friend Frank Letchford wrote "he could never remember technical terms for parts of the body"⁸²⁷, and later in life he had problems reprising some of his unpublished textual works lost in the wartime bombing of his house, about which he lamented his "loss of memory (from the severe bombing injuries and general shock) and *lousy normal memory*"⁸²⁸.

821 _____, *Hecate's Fountain*, Skoob, London, 1992, p 25, citing a letter from Jack Parsons to Marjorie Cameron, 27-1-1950, and www.babalon.net

822 Fries, *Visual Magick*, p 42. In this instance Fries is talking about sigilisation techniques.

823 Matt Lee, 'Memories of a sorcerer': notes on Gilles Deleuze, Felix Guattari, Austin Osman Spare and anomalous sorceries, *Journal for the Academic Study of Magic*, 1, 2003, p 102-130, p 124, Emphasis added

824 Grant, *Zos Speaks!*, p 68

825 Keith Richmond, *Discord in the Garden of Janus: Aleister Crowley and Austin Osman Spare*, in *Austin Osman Spare: Artist, Occultist, Sensualist*, Bury St Edmunds, Beskin, 1999, no page numbering

826 Sunny Shah, *An Edwardian Blake: an introduction to the Life and Works of Austin Osman Spare*, Thame, Oxon, Mandrake Press, 1996, p 20

827 Frank Letchford, *From the Inferno to Zos*, Volume 3, Thame, Oxon, First Impressions, 1995, p 44

828 Grant, *Zos Speaks!*, p 03, Emphasis added

Even almost at the end of Spare's life, after 6 years of dealing with his handwritten papers intended for a book, Grant was still having troubles transcribing the words into typed text, complaining to Spare that "little of this last batch is intelligible to me"⁸²⁹.

On those occasions when Grant was confident that he *did* understand Spare, he was sometimes wrong: in early 1955, when he had been working with Spare's writing for five years, he wrote to Spare with horror at his discovery that he had made a continual transcription error, misreading "predicate" (a word Spare used a lot) for "predict", thus substantially changing meaning⁸³⁰. Spare's response that "I get mixed up with 'per' and 'pre'"⁸³¹ failed to make any sense of the matter, since *both* words begin with 'pre'.

Additionally, in many accounts of time spent with the Grants (and others) late in his life there is a distinct feeling of Spare as an old man, almost exclusively inhabiting a bar-room environment, with the alcohol-based culture that implies ("a relentless round" of drinking as Steffi Grant recalled it⁸³², and this was despite the hedonistic Crowley's personal lifestyle warning to Kenneth about alcohol of a few years before "drink: at your age, the less the better"⁸³³). Perhaps Spare was toying with young and possibly over-earnest acolytes, seeing how far his raconteur's act would go before any tall tales were 'found out'. As he said to his dear friend Frank Letchford, as a general philosophy: "if you are going to tell a lie, tell a big one for it is more likely to be believed!"⁸³⁴.

There may not have been any particular malice implicit, it seemingly being done for his own plain amusement, perhaps to bring some colour to an immediately post-War austere lifestyle and/or simply providing entertainment which might justify the price of another drink to keep the narrative flowing. There was certainly stimulation to weave a good yarn: his narratives, according to Steffi Grant "became more elaborate with *Kenneth's unfailing encouragement*... and the lateness of the hour, cosy pub, convivial company and the agreeable vapours of alcohol and

829 *Ibid*, p 128

830 *Ibid*, p 129

831 *Ibid*, p 129

832 *Ibid*, p 13

833 Grant, *Remembering Aleister Crowley*, p 15

834 Letchford, *Inferno to Zos*, p 69

tobacco"⁸³⁵, with Letchford believing that Spare often told "white lies...to boost a flagging ego"⁸³⁶. So far as the shade of the lies is concerned, Spare variously had told Letchford that during World War One he had once been stuck in a pile of corpses in 'no man's land' between the opposing armies' trenches, had contracted malaria in West Africa, and was aboard a troopship that was torpedoed. Much later Letchford checked Spare's war records and found all of these tales to be complete falsehoods⁸³⁷.

Yet despite all the public bar verbosity, Grant says that Spare said he found "pleasure in destroying words... reducing a concept to its most simple verbal form"⁸³⁸. Grant, by comparison, does the opposite in his general writing, making almost an art form of complexity and learned ideas, an example being

"this symbolism, although apparently complex, is simple, as may be seen by equating it with the well-known Buddhist formula: First there IS (i.e. *Malkuth*)- Form (i.e. presence of Object). Then there is NOT (i.e. *Kether*) - Void (i.e. presence of Subject). Then there IS (i.e. *Ain*)- Neither Form nor Void, but absence of the presence of both Object and Subject (i.e. the Absolute Absence, or Void)"⁸³⁹ Malkuth, Kether etc are spheres on the cabbalistic tree of life, which was discussed earlier. The capitalisation used may also hide a code, in the same way that Crowley used to, in the sentence above Grant may be covertly referring to the magical order the AA, *Argentum Astrum*, by his use of capitals, and Lionel Snell writes similarly "with infinite subtlety the fountain of truth is forever being poisoned - witness those commentators on Thelema who forget the capital 'W' in 'Do what thou Wilt'"⁸⁴⁰.

Crowley had also apparently earlier twice rebuked Grant for verbosity and other related faults in his use of language: "I wanted an answer, not a sermon!"⁸⁴¹, and "you must learn to be systematic & accurate and unambiguous"⁸⁴².

835 Grant, *Zos Speaks!*, p 15, Emphasis added

836 Letchford, *Inferno to Zos*, p 87

837 *Ibid*, p 103

838 Grant, *Zos Speaks!*, p 20

839 Kenneth Grant, *Nightside of Eden*, Skoob, London, 1994, p 40

840 Angerford and Lea, *Thundersqueak*, p 181

841 Grant, *Remembering Aleister Crowley*, p 58

842 *Ibid*, p 28.

Perhaps this is learned behaviour: Grant's mentor Crowley was not shy of codifying and making matters obscure, for example: "the verses of... several... of the Holy Books of Thelema are numbered from nought (the *ain* ⁸⁴³ or zero) instead of from one" ⁸⁴⁴ so that a verse numbered four is sometimes but not always actually the fifth; for example. Then later, when Aleister Crowley might refer back, perhaps to 'verse four' of that piece of writing, one is often not sure which verse he means.

As well as being a very creative performer with his anecdotes, Letchford reported that the financially-straitened Spare was "streetwise" with his money, with an eye for a bargain and likely sources of income well before he met Grant ⁸⁴⁵, and he was not averse to subtly pitting Grant against other potential (or sometimes non-existent) buyers in order to manifest quicker sales of his artworks ⁸⁴⁶. He also became aware that very cheap bric-a-brac items (such as pseudo-ethnic carvings) that he purchased from flea markets as content or background for the scenes of his pictures then became very saleable in themselves once the picture was completed, for being 'one of his models' ⁸⁴⁷.

Although dyslexics sometimes also have genuine cognitive problems with numbering, Spare also *deliberately* and fraudulently mis-dated some artworks for sale; Keith Richmond describes how two contemporary and just-completed sketches were signed and dated many years apart to suit the desire of the intended buyer who was keen to acquire 'Spare originals from different artistic periods' in one fell swoop and at a seemingly favourable price ⁸⁴⁸.

There is also very plausible speculation that Spare's 'Zen-like' detachment from material life in middle age, so lauded by some of his *post-mortem* admirers as a sign of his holiness and magical commitment to a higher plane than the mundane, may have instead been a necessary and expedient withdrawal from artistic society and the up-market art publication scene.

⁸⁴³ Cabbalistic term: "neither Form nor Void, but absence of the presence of both Object and Subject (i.e. the Absolute Absence, or Void." Kenneth Grant, *Nightside of Eden*, Skoob, London, 1994, p 40

⁸⁴⁴ Grant, *Nightside of Eden*, p 36, fn 7

⁸⁴⁵ Letchford, *The search for a Guru*, *Skoob Occult Review*, p 31

⁸⁴⁶ Semple, *Portrait of Frank Letchford*, p 21

⁸⁴⁷ Letchford, *Inferno to Zos*, p 281

⁸⁴⁸ Keith Richmond, *Discord in the garden of Janus*, *Austin Osman Spare: artist, Occultist, Sensualist*, Bury St Edmunds, Beskin, 1999, no page numbering, fn 58

This is believed by the Spare-centric author and publisher Tony Naylor to be due to rumours of extensive plagiarism and fraud (which appear now to be accurate), which may have prevented many other artists and editors from ever risking their reputations by working with Spare again on any publication projects.

Naylor believes that this also casts doubt on the veracity of Spare's claimed 'psychic automatic' drawings, and mentions that some of his illustrations as an official war artist (during and just after World War One) were banned since some scenes he depicted were either highly inaccurate or completely fake ⁸⁴⁹. In any case, Spare's subsequent choice of home, in poverty-stricken South London was said by the Grants to be from "force of circumstances, lack of cash" and a wish not to be disturbed ⁸⁵⁰ rather than any 'class-conscious' act or spiritual retreat from Bohemian 'arty' London.

Mrs. Pat(t)erson and other conundrums

One particular aspect of the account of 'Spare's world according to Grant' is found severely lacking under scrutiny; Spare's childhood relationship with a 'Mrs. Patterson', who supposedly taught him a hereditary form of witchcraft, but about whom no independent information can be found. In 1975 Grant wrote that Spare "was extremely reticent about Mrs. Patterson. All that I was able to elicit from him during the eight years of friendship was that she was very old when he met her and that she claimed descent from a line of Salem (New England) witches that Cotton Mather had failed to eradicate" ⁸⁵¹.

Despite this apparent dearth of information, in subsequent books Grant has written a considerable amount about Mrs. Patterson, investing her with particular magical abilities and a 'witch heritage' in great detail, which detail, in light of his comment above, does not seem to have come from Spare (and Patterson was an old woman in Spare's early life, so would have been long dead by the time Grant first met Spare). In addition, the veracity of those tried at Salem in the 17th Century being any kind of 'witches' - in the modern understanding of the word as someone

⁸⁴⁹ For an extensive discussion of Spare's alleged plagiarism see Anthony R Naylor, *Stealing the Fire from Heaven*, Thame, Oxon, IHO, 2002, especially p 9-22

⁸⁵⁰ Grant, *Zos Speaks!*, p 16-17

⁸⁵¹ Kenneth Grant, Introduction to Austin Osman Spare, *The Book of Pleasure*, 1975, London. Fulgur

with claimed real magical powers and a ritual methodology - has been largely discredited.

In a challenging article, the freelance writer David Cantu demonstrates how this initially scant information on Patterson has been drip-fed over several decades by Grant, often when convenient to him, as confirmatory 'evidence' of his own published magical theories, and that very little independent information about Patterson survives. There is a lead that I was pursuing from a possible Patterson descendant - with a likely Mrs. Patterson being described as having a large occult library, including a rare 14th Century alchemical treatise which sold for a very large sum of money after her death, and it seems her family was associated with Watkins Occult bookshop in London early in the 20th Century. However further information, including a hoped-for birth certificate from which to make further enquiries, is likely to be slow in emerging due to internal divisions and communication breaks within that family. It is only after such information should become available that the depth of any link with Austin Spare will become researchable.

As Richmond points out, often when writers quote Spare "by his own account...(of) Mrs. Patterson"⁸⁵² they are actually reliant on the accuracy and honesty of *Grant's* published accounts of something Spare may or may not have said, either in exactly the words given, or at all. Equally, much of the seemingly Grant-corroborative information from Spare's old friend and financier Frank Letchford *is* corroborative simply because it derives from Grant's accounts, rather than being a confirmatory remark heard direct from Spare⁸⁵³, since Letchford wrote only that "Austin mentioned the woman in *vague terms* to myself"⁸⁵⁴. Letchford was an avid reader and was certainly aware of Grant's later writings about Spare in general. The copy of Grant's, *Aleister Crowley and the Hidden God* that I owned came from a sale of the library of Mr. Letchford after his death. It had been well thumbed, and someone had taken the trouble to cover it in a second dust jacket to preserve it. It seems unusual that Mrs. Patterson, who was *supposedly, according to Grant*, so very influential in Spare's life would not have been a major topic of conversation between Spare and such a dear friend as Letchford, given the latter's interest in spiritual matters.

852 Richmond, *Discord...*, in *Artist, Occultist, Sensualist*, no page numbering

853 Correspondence between David Cantu and Joel Biroco, in *Kaos* 14, p 42-44

854 Letchford, *Inferno to Zos*. p 147. Emphasis added

Grant has said that Spare said very little about Patterson, however there is a lot of ill-provenanced detail about her in Grant's books. If Grant's remark above is *not* true then there is an alternative possibility, that Spare was spinning a special yarn to Grant that was particularly tailored to Grant's interests. This is not without precedent. Frank Letchford wrote that to others "Austin liked to believe (without much foundation) that he was descended from an illegitimate son born to Lord Nelson and Lady Hamilton... objects belonging to the Admiral were sold by Spare when he was in financial stress (a fairly frequent state)"⁸⁵⁵. This seems to be both a flight of fancy and a useful way to earn money from the credulous by profitably recycling various 'naval' artefacts that Spare probably picked up cheaply from the same London bric-a-brac shops where he found props to include in the backgrounds of his drawings. Given Grant's overwhelming occult fascination, what better way to keep him interested than to claim to have had a powerful witch-figure as a childhood mentor, a character perhaps nominally based on a local fortune-teller dimly recalled from Spare's youth, but whose magical attributes and abilities were considerably 'beefed-up' in the repetitive re-telling?

There is also a problem with the very spelling of Mrs. Patterson's surname. More recently in 1991, in private correspondence⁸⁵⁶ Grant disclosed that Patterson was spelt with only one 'T', and yet his books published both before and after that period continue to use the 'two T' spelling. Obviously a variation of surname spelling makes such things as birth certificate or parish record checking doubly difficult when one does not even yet have a birth date for someone who may or may not have existed.

Perhaps equally surprising, given that they were two such close and contemporary associates of Spare, Grant and Frank Letchford first met at a hospital; only shortly before the seriously ill and by then mostly unconscious Spare died in 1956, so there was never scope for a 3-way confirmatory conversation about Patterson, magic or anything else around the bedside⁸⁵⁷.

Whatever the source, this gradual accretion of 'facts' onto the name of Mrs. Patterson reached such a point that Grant's emerging and expanding mythos of 'Patterson the great witch' was taken up by others

855 Letchford, *Inferno to Zos*, p 35

856 Kenneth Grant, letter to A Private Correspondent, unpublished, 1-10-1991

857 Semple, *Portrait of Frank Letchford*, p 21

who created a probably spurious link between her to an extant coven of modern witches, and this 'news' was breathlessly ushered back into Grant's writings as independent supporting evidence of his own beliefs about Patterson the Witch⁸⁵⁸, when it may instead merely be an evolving and distorted 'Chinese Whisper' that had finally returned to its progenitor, or at least, its publisher. Since Grant and Letchford, two of Spare's closest confidantes, have both written on occasion that Spare didn't speak much about Mrs. Patterson, then if these comments are both true the main source of 'information' about her seems to be Grant himself, who never met her. An alternative is that Grant was prey to Spare's possibly bar-room fuelled elaborate recreation of Patterson and that much of his subsequent mythologising of her, by repeating some tall stories of Spare's, and incorporating these into his own system has distorted his own magical writings considerably.

In any case some kind of recognisable witchcraft element to Spare's work may be totally spurious, as highlighted by Gavin Semple: "since the publication ...of *Zos Speaks!* the fallacy of subsuming Spare the magician within some 'tradition' becomes clear; look at the texts - where is the witchcraft, exactly? Even the text of (Spare's book) '*Witches' Sabbath*' refers explicitly to 'Ehr' ... *Lao Tzu*, the Taoist sage"⁸⁵⁹. Lionel Snell, one of the foremost analysts of Spare, whose own works about AOS were highly influential in the early development of the techniques and philosophy of chaos magic⁸⁶⁰, compares his view to Grant's:

"Kenneth actually knew Spare at a late date, and has written about him as he was in his later years... whereas I only had Spare's books which he wrote as a younger man. So **we are not writing about the same thing**... I never felt that Grant had 'got it all wrong', because I knew he was writing about material I had never seen...our views on Spare are probably complementary rather than contradictory"⁸⁶¹.

The latter point, that Grant has privileged access to certain (and very numerous) unpublished papers, plus detailed and long-term personal

858 Hutton, *Triumph*, p 303; Kenneth Grant, *Outer Gateways*, London, Skoob, 1994, p 17-31

859 Hermetic Com website, Interview with Gavin Semple, February 2001, www.hermetic.com/spare/semple-interview.html

860 Jaq Hawkins, *Understanding Chaos Magic*, Chieveley, Berks, Capall Bann, 1996, p 30

861 Lionel Snell. Letters. Nox. 3. 1086. p 16-17. Emphasis added

contact is important here, Grant himself writing to a correspondent in 1992 that "apart from myself there are few people alive today who knew Zos personally and who questioned him over a number of years concerning his occult activities"⁸⁶², (and since then several of AOS's other close associates, such as Frank Letchford, have died) as this may potentially hinder all other researchers seeking a holistic view of Spare. Snell emphasised this point in a later conversation, insisting that Kenneth and he are performing complementary tasks on Spare: "I am trying to shine a light into dark corners" to allow a clearer philosophical interpretation of Spare "and Kenneth is creating new and useful dark corners" under the cover of which exciting magical things can happen⁸⁶³.

Frank Letchford, a mystically-interested writer, bibliophile and appreciator of art rather than outright practicing occultist, gave a different, somewhat more rounded view of Spare than others, being "especially keen to communicate his (Spare's) humanism, often lost on somberly-garbed seekers after sigilic mysteries"⁸⁶⁴ (the latter description being a snide dig at the fashion sense of many modern chaos magicians), similarly Semple's book *Zos Kia* attempted to "reconcile the rather austere yet joyful... mystical philosophy we find in *The Book of Pleasure* with the image of the skulduggery sorcerer which emerges in the works of Kenneth Grant."⁸⁶⁵

This view has considerable plausibility, since Spare did not know what the *Qliphoth* was in 1955⁸⁶⁶, this being a technical Cabbalistic term, and one absolutely central to the dark magical work that Grant was engaged in with his Typhonian OTO in the same year and ever onwards. Such a knowledge gap for a member of Grant's Order would perhaps be of the same magnitude to a practicing Christian not knowing anything about Judas. Gavin Semple's modern book about AOS was written:

"to broaden the readers' perspectives, instead of endlessly reiterating the so-called 'witchcraft' aspect, which, as we can now see was something of a masque he assumed in dealings with certain occultists in the 1950s, just as in the 'thirties he had proclaimed himself a Surrealist - with tongue firmly in cheek."⁸⁶⁷

862 Kenneth Grant, letter to A Private Correspondent, unpublished, 10-1-1992

863 Lionel Snell, conversation, 17-10-2003

864 Semple, *Portrait of Frank Letchford*, p 29

865 Interview with Semple, Hermetic.com

866 Grant, *Zos Speaks!*, p 135.

867 Interview with Semple. Hermetic.com

There is also some doubt as to who introduced Spare to whom. As seen above, Steffi Grant claims she met Spare, and introduced him to Kenneth in 1949. Cecil Williamson (1909- 1999) however, wrote that it was he who introduced Spare to Grant ⁸⁶⁸, but this claim was made in a letter written around 40 years after the event, after Williamson's very busy life as a 'public occultist', meeting many prominent people in the field, so it may be a slightly jumbled detail in the memory of an old man.

Grant, however does not mention his introducing Spare to Williamson in any of his books. Whoever introduced them, Spare and Williamson did meet several times in the late 1940s or early 1950s, until the latter gave up on the association due to Spare's unreliability at keeping appointments with him if there was a drinking establishment *en voyage* between Spare's home and the arranged meeting point (itself usually being another public house) ⁸⁶⁹. It is perhaps unusual that in a cache of several letters about numerous magical matters (OTO, Crowley, Gardner etc) to Williamson from Grant between 1951-2 ⁸⁷⁰, when Grant was then very busy working with Spare, he does not mention Spare to Williamson *at all*.

An additional temporal problem with Grant's adoption of Spare as another magical mentor is his claim to have co-founded the magical group the *Zos Kia Cultus* with Spare, based on Spare's methods, in 1948 ⁸⁷¹, when Grant's own published correspondence indicates he did not actually meet Spare until 1949 ⁸⁷².

The final thing to remember about Grant's work with Spare is that it was *never finished*, Spare had been variably in poor health for some years, but was taken very suddenly seriously ill and died in a very short space of time, so his remaining cryptic notes were only partial at the time of his death ⁸⁷³, and Grant has had the metaphorical task of reconstructing a jigsaw without benefit of a full picture as a guideline. This might help to explain why Grant took nearly 20 years to produce his first major book about Spare and over 40 years to produce the second.

⁸⁶⁸ Cecil Williamson, letter to Robert Ansell, 18-2-1987, Mus. of Witchcraft Archive, W367

⁸⁶⁹ *Ibid*

⁸⁷⁰ Mus. of Witchcraft Archive, Williamson Correspondence File

⁸⁷¹ Grant, *Outside the Circles of Time*, p 140 fn 10

⁸⁷² Grant, *Zos Speaks!*, p 29

⁸⁷³ *Ibid*, p 150

All of these factors imply that the enigmatic Spare was cryptically hard to understand, often a sharp businessman under the guise of a mystic (and probably *vice-versa*), may have been a dyslexic and suffered several problems with his memory. He was shrewd to the point of creating some very tall tales, often within an alcohol-fuelled culture, and Grant's work with him was unfinished, yet considerably 'varnished' (and perhaps carved to fit a Typhonian OTO Magical schema which might have been inappropriate for the material) so far as accuracy, selectivity and honesty of reporting when it was published. Thus without denying their magical veracity, any all-encompassing interpretative historical overview of both Grant's and Spare's works must include these considerations as a major *caveat*.

Perhaps oddly, despite Grant's major role and truly Herculean effort in preserving and then promoting Austin Spare materials and methods; and the efficacy with which he regards them in his own practice, his magical order the Typhonian OTO do not currently formally incorporate any Austin Spare techniques into their teachings or ritual work ⁸⁷⁴.

⁸⁷⁴ Michael Staley, personal communication, October 2001. Mr. Staley is a senior officer in the Typhonian OTO of Kenneth Grant, and runs their publication arm, Starfire.

Grant's Publications

not just "books about Magick;
these books are Magick"⁸⁷⁵

After Crowley and then Spare had died, Grant began in earnest on his major writing work. He had exclusive access to Spare's unpublished written works, having been bequeathed them in Spare's will, and his remit to use Crowley's unpublished and published archive was all but unchecked since Grant worked directly with Crowley's literary executors on editing and re-producing several of the Beast's major books.

He also wrote his own pieces for publication, and apart from miscellaneous articles and essays this currently extends to over a dozen, usually hefty books. The modern academic Henrik Bogdan sees him as "perhaps (the) most original and prolific English author of the post-modern occultist genre"⁸⁷⁶.

Grant's occult publications are as follows: The *Carfax Monographs* was a limited print run of only 100 sets of illustrated short articles on particular aspects of magic published in a series of ten instalments between 1959 and 1963. A set of the original monographs was part of a display of important magical books at a prestigious Magic Exhibition at the University of Texas in 1995⁸⁷⁷. The 'King of the Witches' Alex Sanders apparently also owned a full set and knew Grant well in the London magical scene of the 1960s⁸⁷⁸. These were reprinted in one slim volume as *Hidden Lore* in 1989 and a new version is due in 2006.

The *Magical Revival* (1972, reprinted 1991) was Grant's first mainstream occult book to be published in an appreciable number of copies, and

⁸⁷⁵ Nema (Margaret Ingalls), *Maat Magick: a guide to self-initiation*, York Beach, Weiser, 1995, p 218

⁸⁷⁶ Henrik Bogdan, *Kenneth Grant A bibliography- from 1948*, Academia Esoterica Press, Gothenburg, 2003, p viii

⁸⁷⁷ University of Texas Website, History of Magic exhibition, July 10-December 8, 1995 www.levity.com/alchemy/texas_ex.html

⁸⁷⁸ "G" (Anon. An initiate of Sanders'), telephone conversation, September 2002. Similarly to Grant, Sanders made several claims that appear counter-factual and this comment has yet to be supported by any other material.

was the first volume of the eventual nine in the three sets known as the *Typhonian Trilogies*. As well as the historical slant to the title and content, *Magical Revival* can also be seen as a vitally important manifesto for the future of magic, encouraging interested parties to become involved.

Aleister Crowley and the Hidden God followed in 1973 (reprinted 1992), being volume 2 of the *Typhonian Trilogies*. It deals with the sex-magickal system of Crowley (much of it previously unpublished), Tantra and alluded to some of the methods used within Grant's Typhonian OTO.

Images and Oracles of Austin Osman Spare (1975) was a groundbreaking collection of the occult art and cryptic magical philosophy of Spare, the result of almost 20 years' work by Grant. It was not a rapid or high selling title initially, being remaindered⁸⁷⁹ before becoming a very sought-after volume, with scarce copies later consistently selling on the second-hand market for very many times the original cover price. A long-awaited 2003 reprint of the work seemed destined for the same *kudos* only weeks after publication.

Cults of the Shadow (1975, reprinted 1994), was *Typhonian Trilogies* volume 3. The First trilogy ended with Grant providing details of, and his theories about the linkages between Left-Hand path magical cults (both those currently in existence, and historical) and his own practices. This included Crowley and Spare's work, Voodoo cults and Eastern Tantric groups, and was influential in the modern perception of the role of the Left Hand Path in magic, as discussed in chapter 3.

Nightside of Eden (1977, reprinted 1994) was *Typhonian Trilogies* volume 4: Part One of the book discusses various dense magical formulae in Grant's (by now usual) complex and gnomic manner, including detailed cabbalistic exegesis. Part Two details the numerous branches of *The Tunnels Of Set*, a dark and dangerous magical realm explored by Grant using the formulae examined in Part One. Reaction was mixed, and polarized; readers either hated it, Gerald Suster deriding him as "ignorant... perverted ... *Tunnels of Set* ? Sewers of shit... those who accept Grant's statements ... are eating his used lavatory paper"⁸⁸⁰, or loved him: the modern Crowley biographer Richard Kaczynski believing that in general Grant in the 1970s was "practically alone in offering new contributions to

⁸⁷⁹ Shah, *Edwardian Blake*, p 12

⁸⁸⁰ Gerald Suster, *Letters, Nox*, 5, 1987, p 7-8

the literature of magick”⁸⁸¹. Christopher Bray, proprietor of the Sorcerer’s Apprentice (one of the UK’s leading, and longest-running occult shops) wrote to Grant that his work was “the greatest contribution to Thelema since A(leister) C(rowley)’s death”⁸⁸².

Outside the Circles of Time (1980) was *Typhonian Trilogies* volume 5; covering similar materials as before, with the addition of a discussion of ‘Ufology’ with relation to occultism, some vague autobiographical information, and a great deal about insectoid symbolism, which prompted one critic, the musician and magician David Tibet, to highlight a plausible belief held in some quarters that as well as Grant being actually insane, he made basic errors of fact: Grant “went totally loopy... it’s biologically incorrect some of the things he says about honey bees”⁸⁸³. Kaczynski, who lauded him for his huge contribution during the 1970s, wrote “while he gets high marks for originality, his manner of exegesis is difficult for the beginner, and his later books are *progressively bizarre*”⁸⁸⁴. Another, anonymous, reviewer remarks, “while *parts are inaccurate in the strict historical sense*, it remains a valuable source”⁸⁸⁵.

Grant then either lost or had completed his publication contract with Muller and no new material by him appeared in book form for eleven years, until 1991’s *Remembering Aleister Crowley*, a thin and rather expensive volume of diary entries, correspondence, photographs and general memoirs of Grant’s short time with Crowley. His new publisher, *Skoob*, reissued several of his previous volumes in the early 1990s, and *The Trilogies* resumed with *Hecate’s Fountain* in 1992 (*Typhonian Trilogies* volume 6). In this book Grant gives many anecdotes of the workings of the New Isis Lodge, with the preliminary comment that: “it would seem that almost all successful magick manifests as a ricochet, a sidekick to group ceremonies... or to isolated magickal workings. I call this peculiarity a *tangential tantrum*”⁸⁸⁶.

881 Kaczynski, *Perdurabo*, p 461

882 Christopher Bray, unpublished letter to Kenneth Grant, 29-5-1981, Private Collection

883 Uncarved website: Interview with David Tibet, June 1989 www.uncarved.demon.co.uk/music/OOCc93.html

884 Kaczynski, *Perdurabo*, p 461, Emphasis added

885 Anon, Review of Grant, *Outside Circles of Time*, *Cincinnati J. of Ceremonial Magick*, 1, 5, 1983, p 76, Emphasis added

886 Grant. *Hecate’s Fountain*. *o. i. italics authors own.*

He then devotes much of the book to these various magical accidents (including insanity and many deaths, believed to be directly as a consequence of ritual work) that his group encountered (some of which are discussed in the next chapter). On occasion these deaths were due to seemingly very bizarre circumstances, with evoked alien entities being culpable. Quite how these deaths, illnesses and injuries can be viewed as ‘successes’ on any level is debatable. Before an extremely hostile review of the book draws to a close, the Thelemic writer Gerald Suster castigated the body count and injury list as being the results of “crass magical incompetence”, for which he says Grant seems almost proud⁸⁸⁷. An anonymous online reviewer concluded that far from being a sign of success, this as “nothing more than the result of *bad magic*, just as the thrill of electricity coursing through the body, a fabulous display of sparks and fire are the result of ... poorly insulated electrical wiring short circuiting”⁸⁸⁸.

Outer Gateways (1994) continued the *Typhonian Trilogies*, being volume 7. Part One of the book covers Grant’s theories regarding the older pre-history of Typhonian traditions from around the world, with relation to Crowley, Spare and the works of HP Lovecraft and the book concludes with the entire text of, and a lengthy analysis of, a clairvoyantly-received symbolic magical text, *The Wisdom of S’lba*.

Against the Light: A Nightside Narrative (1997) is a novel, involving one ‘Kenneth Grant’ as a character. There is a major emergent academic problem that is highlighted at this point in reading any of Grant’s *supposedly* fictional work as pure fiction, since elsewhere he makes comments about this book being both “quasi-autobiographical”⁸⁸⁹ and a “magical biography”⁸⁹⁰. This implies strongly that many of the events in the ‘novel’ actually happened, although Grant does not specify which events come under this heading. With this book Grant changed publishers again to *Starfire*, the Typhonian OTO’s own imprint, where he remains, apart from the following for *Fulgur Ltd*, a specialist publisher on Austin Spare matters.

Zos Speaks! Encounters with Austin Osman Spare (co-authored with Steffi

887 Gerald Suster, Barking up the wrong tree: Review of Kenneth Grant, *Hecate’s Fountain*, *Skoob Esoterica Anthology*, 1, London, *Skoob*, 1995, p 187-190, p 190

888 Frater M.E.D, Review of *Hecate’s Fountain*, Online, emphasis added www.geocities.com/Athens/Parthenon/7069/grant6.html

889 Grant, *Ninth Arch*, p 85

890 *Ibid.* p 260

Grant, 1998), was a weighty and presumably comprehensive collection of 7 years' worth of chronological diary entries and correspondence (from 1949 to Spare's death in 1956), photographs, illustrations and Grant's extensive, epic and heroic reconstruction of Spare's magical techniques and philosophical aphorisms.

Beyond the Mauve Zone (1999) was *Typhonian Trilogies* volume 8. The Mauve Zone is a magical realm which Grant claims to have explored, and believes to be a place accessed by all manner of mystics, mages and artists over the ages; many of which he discusses in detail. He does this by now familiar blend of cabalistic permutations and with repetitive reference to 'the usual suspects', Spare, Lovecraft and Crowley; plus some contemporary occultists from around the world who had contacted him in previous years to compare notes.

Snakewand and the Darker Strain (2000) were two stories in one volume, describing African sorceries, voodoo and the like. It is not clear whether any elements of these stories are partly autobiographical.

The Ninth Arch (2003) was *Typhonian Trilogies* volume 9, and a huge concluding volume in the three trilogies. It comprises more of Grant's continued convoluted cabalistic interpretations and musings on Crowley, Spare, Lovecraft *et al* and then a lengthy verse-by-verse analysis of some more material, called the *Book of the Spider*, received by mediumistic methods from the era of the New Isis magical group; similar to the format of *The Wisdom of S'iba* in *Outer Gateways* (above).

Gamaliel and Dance, Doll, Dance! (2003) was another example of Grant's 'fiction', being two supposedly fictional stories in one volume, one tale of a vampire and one about a Tantric sexual group. Again, it is not clear whether any elements of these stories are partly autobiographical, but an advertising flyer for the book proclaimed: "these tales... illuminate the darkly obsessive forces that are erupting in our midst with all the violence of profound and massive psychoses"⁸⁹¹, indicating that there were some real-life referents contained within the stories.

The Other Child, and other tales (2003) was another fictional tome in the 'Nightside Narratives' series, the title story being of an academic who becomes caught up in a metaphorical dark-versus-light struggle involv-

⁸⁹¹ Starfire Publishing, advertising flyer for *Gamaliel* by Kenneth Grant, Spring 2003

ing ancient Egyptian sorcery, in a style that can easily be referred back to Lovecraft and Arthur Machen. The second story is 'The Stellar Lode', a far shorter version of which appeared in the *Skoob Esoterica Anthology* of 1995. Four short stories follow, all being of the same style as *The Other Child*.

Other titles, (including a volume of poetry) are planned for 2006-7. Despite this wealth of titles, and his editorial work on Crowley re-issues, publishing life has not been all plain sailing for Grant. After often slow sales in the earlier years and some temporary remaindering of titles in bookshops Grant's works are now all much sought-after and of considerable resale/collector value, especially if signed, and one of his staunchest critics, Gerald Suster, conceded that all of Grant's books are "graced by artwork of the utmost distinction"⁸⁹² and beautifully presented, a lesson learned probably from Crowley's consummately high publication standards. For a superb examination of the ritualisation and elaborate quality of the publication process by Crowley, from whom Grant learnt so much, see d'arch Smith, *Books of the Beast*, chapter 1. Although his titles are due for serial re-printing commencing in 2007, the mere thought of a paperback mass-market standard Kenneth Grant volume would be anathema.

Despite the several lengthy gaps between books (and in some cases between publishers) this amounts to a considerable and detailed *corpus*. Some of these temporal gaps are perhaps explained by major preparatory work before the publication dates of his edited editions of works by Aleister Crowley, and Grant's own *Zos Speaks* was the result of four decades' work. The modern academic Henrik Bogdan believes that "the works of Kenneth Grant... can be seen as a modern 'lesemysterium' - a mystery one experiences while reading the books"⁸⁹³ which provides a "consciousness-jerking shift", according to the magician and author Phil Hine⁸⁹⁴. Grant himself simply summarised his books as primarily to "prepare people for encounters with unfamiliar states of consciousness... extra-, sub-, and ultra-terrestrial encounters"⁸⁹⁵, (whatever those distinctions actually mean) although one pseudonymous online critic sees those states of consciousness induced as being more mundane, and painful: "one might suspect that he is employed by the makers of headache relieving medications"⁸⁹⁶.

⁸⁹² Suster, Barking up the wrong tree, *Skoob Esoterica Anthology*, 1, p 187

⁸⁹³ Bogdan, *Kenneth Grant A bibliography*, p viii

⁸⁹⁴ Phil Hine, Review of Kenneth Grant, Hecate's Fountain, *The Occult Observer*, 2, 3, Winter 1992, p 56-7

⁸⁹⁵ Anon, Interview with Kenneth Grant, *Skoob Occult Review*, 3, 1990, p 5-7, p 5

⁸⁹⁶ Frater M.E.D. Review of Hecate's Fountain, online. *Ibid*

Grant's Magical System

Although Grant states explicitly that his magick is a system of ceremonial and ritual magic that primarily relates to psychosexual mysteries⁸⁹⁷, for the most part little specific unequivocal detail is given, and certainly no actual full instructions of how to perform these rituals, which is unusual for a writer on practical magical matters; where books often contain ritual scripts, guides and descriptions. Although Grant admits that in some instances it may be impossible to describe, "because the formula may not be communicated in dualistic language, but only in the depths of the dream itself"⁸⁹⁸, primarily his books are at most only partially, and often obliquely descriptive of the work done, rather than a set of prescriptive instructions, with the main focus of his description being on the underlying theory and experienced effects.

It is of some practical magical concern that only in the very last few pages of his ninth and final book of the *Typhonian Trilogies* that he gives comparatively simple (or at least brief) practical details of a special work of magical protection that could have been profoundly useful to have known earlier for anyone trying to reconstruct and work the fragmentary rituals based on his earlier books in the trilogies, stretching back 30 years⁸⁹⁹.

However Grant does give some operational detail with regard to a formula to communicate with the entity *Ateh*. This ritual seems, subjectively, to exceed the most lurid orgiastic excesses ever speculated upon in the sensationalist occult novels of Dennis Wheatley or in the UK Sunday Tabloid press. It involves the magician performing a sequence of anal sex, followed by cunnilingus and then "normal coitus", (whatever Grant *means* by that, presumably vaginal penetration of a human being in the missionary position, if one can presume anything about Grant), with each variation on the act being sequentially performed, one with each of three different partners; all of this being in a magical ritual setting⁹⁰⁰.

The only contact that can presently be traced between Wheatley and

897 *Ibid*, p xi

898 *Ibid*, p 181, footnote 16

899 Grant, *Ninth Arch*, Appendix 1, p 521-525

900 Grant, *Nightside of Eden*. v 246

Grant⁹⁰¹ is Grant's provision of a condensed introduction to a reprint of a Crowley novel (*Moonchild*), which appeared as Volume 3 in the *Dennis Wheatley Library of the Occult* series in 1972⁹⁰². This had a cover with Wheatley's name in a typeface *three times larger than Crowley's*. Wheatley's offhand and brief introduction to the book recycles a series of pejorative historical fictions about Crowley. This appears to be a sensationalised and outright fantasy involving Crowley's alleged stay in a French Mental hospital after a ritual went wrong, which never happened, and a tale that Wheatley recycled continually in many of his introductions to his own magical novels. I have discussed Wheatley's 'creativity with the truth' in my MA thesis⁹⁰³, which Grant would have probably strongly objected to had he seen them, and Grant's own introduction includes some complex Cabbala, occult history and dense magical theory. This might have been technically beyond, and thus perhaps discouraged, a future audience for what was being marketed as a horror-fiction novel, to which Wheatley might have demurred.

The "*Wheatley library of...*" series was a lengthy project, this book being only the third of at least nineteen in the series, so if there was any damage to readership it was not terminal to sales figures. However given their respective possibly mutually-inflammatory introductions it seems unlikely that either had seen the other's contribution to this work prior to publication. None of Grant's titles were in that proportion of Wheatley's extensive library that was sold soon after his death (approximately half);⁹⁰⁴ neither does Wheatley mention Grant in his verbose autobiographical trilogy⁹⁰⁵.

However, apart from the rare *Carfax Monographs*, Grant's more mainstream and available publication of his own writings rather than editorship only began to emerge in 1972, and since Wheatley died five years later, with his last occult-based novel being published in 1973, it is unlikely that Grant's more widely-published materials would have had the time to be influential on Wheatley's occult fiction output, had Wheatley ever read them⁹⁰⁶. His

901 Wheatley's name does not appear in the indices of any of the *Typhonian Trilogies*

902 Aleister Crowley, *Moonchild*, London, Sphere, 1972

903 Dave Evans, Aleister Crowley & the magical revival, MA Thesis, Exeter, 2001, E-book 2002, forthcoming in print

904 Blackwells Catalogue A1136.

905 Wheatley, *The time has come...the memoirs*

906 Dennis Wheatley's other horror-magic books published in the 70s were *Gateway to Hell* and *The Irish Witch*

laughable and arguably racist 'non fiction study of Satanism' *The Devil and All His Works* mentions Crowley but not Grant. Wheatley is not mentioned in the comprehensive indices of any of Grant's books, which might seem an odd omission for a magician who is so very appreciative of fictional occult works in general, such as those of Lovecraft, Blackwood, Rohmer, and Machen *et al.*

"Knowledge... channelled rather than researched"⁹⁰⁷

Grant has written a considerable quantity, and in a seemingly impressive and learned fashion, but there has been doubt cast on the verifiable content, such as by the modern magician and author Gavin Semple: "Grant... has a knack for creating glammers, weaving mystique for specific ends,"⁹⁰⁸ and the magician and author Lionel Snell admired his "ability to make magic by projecting glammers"⁹⁰⁹. The author Colin Wilson was captivated, but read Grant's books "without believing more than one word in ten"⁹¹⁰.

In one book Grant refers to an article on Chinese magic in the *Journal of the University of Pennsylvania* for 1933; however according to that University itself there is, and has never been, a journal of this name or any journal of a similar name fitting the description⁹¹¹. This may be a genuine error and a mis-citation of something that does exist; perhaps a mis-hearing of the title of a *Journal of the University of Philadelphia*, although a *Journal of that name* does not exist either⁹¹²; or a deliberate fabrication. Grant is also an avid proponent of referring to documents that the reader simply cannot access themselves, such as 'secret grimoires' (usually un-named) or restricted papers that are only circulated within the exclusive membership of small magickal groups, themselves often un-named⁹¹³. While on first appearance this may be seen as helpful in offering the reader a small taste of 'secret' literature held inside a magical

907 Moore, *Kaos*, 14, p 155

908 Interview with Semple, Hermetic.com

909 Lionel Snell, conversation, 17-10-2003

910 Colin Wilson, *Tentacles across time, Skoob Esoterica Anthology*, 1, London, Skoob, 1995, p 13-15

911 Unhelpfully, Grant does not name the article or authors but merely alludes to the content in *Hecate's Fountain*, p 19. Denial of this journal's existence came from Chief Librarian, University of Pennsylvania, personal communication, 14-8-2002

912 www.philau.edu/library

913 Grant, *Nightside of Eden*, p 90 fin 37

order, it raises the doubt as to whether this is just not some kind of magical one-upmanship or teasing, and relies totally on the reader's trust as to whether such documents, and indeed such groups, really exist.

Given Grant's track record for veracity, this stance is perhaps asking too much of the reader's credulity: he has been criticised, mildly, for being not strictly accurate historically in one book (*Outside the Circles of Time*, see above).

This sentiment may be hardened, and extended to his entire output, as simple errors of fact are common, for example Grant, writing of Aleister Crowley and Victor Neuberg's dark magickal adventures in 1909 with *Enochian* entities, describes these as being of the same magical arenas "partially explored two centuries earlier by Dee and Kelley"⁹¹⁴. John Dee and Edward Kelley are credited with discovering (or inventing) the *Enochian* alphabet, and those entities that are summoned by using it, however Grant's remark places Dee's life dates to the 1700s, which is wrong by approximately one hundred years (John Dee, 1527-1609⁹¹⁵). It seems a slipshod factual mistake for Grant to have made, especially in the light of Grant's seemingly expert knowledge of Lovecraftian matters and him presumably knowing something about Dee, the latter's *Liber Loagaeth*⁹¹⁶ being a real historical book, to which Lovecraft's terrifying magical grimoire the *Necronomicon*, if it existed at all, may have had similar content, as is discussed elsewhere.

Grant's use of external references to support his ideas is also not a strictly academic exercise, since he apparently gives equal weight to citations from learned history, anthropology and physical science disciplines, quotes from fictional authors such as Sax Rohmer (1893-1959) was the pen name of Arthur Henry Sarsfield Ward, a "prolific mystery writer best known for the master criminal Fu Manchu" among his characters, with his first successful novel being published in 1913 and his numerous works including some occult fiction remaining best-sellers into the 1950s. Ward was possibly a significant member of the Hermetic Order

914 _____, *Hecate's Fountain*, p 5

915 Benjamin Woolley, *The Queen's conjuror: the science and Magic of Dr Dee*, London, HarperCollins, 2001, p 3, p 322. The exact birth and death dates are open to debate, as discussed by Woolley, but they are not of such possible doubt as to make Grant's comment remotely accurate.

916 John Dee, *Liber Loagaeth, or Liber Mystorium, Sextus et Sanctus*, Approximately 1581. British Library Sloane Ms A3180

of the Golden Dawn, although this is latterly under some dispute among academics)⁹¹⁷.

Grant also heavily uses the works of HP Lovecraft (see a following chapter below), ancient historical manuscripts from the British Museum⁹¹⁸, the actor Bela Lugosi (1882-1956)⁹¹⁹, the occult symbolism which Grant perceives within Salvador Dali's⁹²⁰ (1904-1989) artwork, the supposed magickal voodoo rhythms within the music of Count Basie (1904-1984)⁹²¹, a considerable number of linguistic puns and wordplay⁹²², the early vampire film *Nosferatu*⁹²³, and perhaps most bizarrely a cat called Tibbles⁹²⁴, from whose name he makes some important cabbalistic links to HP Lovecraft, Crowley and Madame Blavatsky.

This may seem particularly strange to the academic for a writer to include as a source, but at least Grant does not go so far as to write an *entire occult book* about mystical cats, as was done by Mama San Ra-Ab Rampa. Mrs. Rampa was the wife of T Lobsang Rampa, the probably fraudulent 'Tibetan Lama', actually a British plumber, who published numerous spurious occult titles after World War Two, and whose financial success (so far as copies of books sold) may have been some inspiration for 'Amado Crowley'.

Gerald Suster saw it as laughable that Grant "casually assumes... as facts... (that) Atlantis and Lemuria existed"⁹²⁵, when in the continued absence of credible archaeological records they are still regarded as mythology in most academic quarters. Grant also regularly uses the works of the 'Reverend' Montague Summers (1880-1948) as an authoritative source.

917 Kirijasto website, www.kirijasto.sci.fi/rohmer.htm

918 For example Grant, *Ninth Arch*, p 512

919 Most famous for his horror film roles such as *Dracula*, the Hungarian Bela Lugosi (Bela Ferenc Dezso Blasko) was at the height of his fame in the 1920s and 1930s. EOFTV.com website www.eoftv.com/names/l/lugosi_bela_main.htm

920 Salvador Dali, Famous Spanish Cubist and Futurist artist. Grant makes seventeen references to Dali in one book alone (*Outside the Circles of Time*)

921 For example Grant, *Nightside of Eden*, p 148. William "Count" Basie: an extremely popular 20th Century Black American Jazz-Swing Pianist and Band Leader who reached the height of his fame either side of World War II. Harlem Org Website www.harlem.org/people/basie.html

922 For example Grant, *Ninth Arch*, p 337, where Grant equates a Chinese character called Li Sing with one of his mediums, Margaret Leasing

923 Grant, *Ninth Arch*, p 509

924 *Ibid*, p 490, and Mama San Ra-Ab Rampa, *Pussywillow*, London, Corgi, 1974.

925 Suster, Barking up the wrong tree, *Skoob Esoterica Anthology*, 1, p 188

However as discussed previously, Summers is now largely seen as a fantasist or poseur⁹²⁶. Just as Grant seems almost fixated on seeing significant cabbalistic links in every cat and every piece of horror fiction, Summers was just as insistent that malefic witches lurked behind every hedgerow and Satan crouched in every shadow.

Those are areas in which Grant *may* perhaps have been aware of his historical errors, or the reliance on (academically) dubious source materials, however in a tale of a magical ritual in 1949, (first published in 1977) Grant makes a huge and knowing factual error in detailing the fates of various of those who took part. This was apparently an aborted group ritual which 'short-circuited', resulting in unfortunate consequences to the participants, including some mysterious deaths almost immediately afterwards and "Gardner was himself not long in following suit"⁹²⁷. However, Gerald Gardner died in 1964⁹²⁸, and Grant *must* certainly be aware that he lived for at least five more years after the ritual in 1949, since the two men were in contact by letter at various points after the ritual and it was in 1954 that Grant claims to have personally introduced Gardner to Austin Spare⁹²⁹. This would appear to be a knowing distortion of facts, with possibly the only matter in question being whether either of five or fifteen years later after 1949 constitutes 'not long' when writing in terms of a human lifespan.

I was able to proffer this question (among several others regarding his work) to Mr Grant by letter in 2002. Having outlined the problem with the physical death date I made the suggestion that his talk of Gardner's death 'soon afterwards' might be a symbolic comment, in that this was around the date when Gardner withdrew from the OTO arena and took on his role within the revival or recreation of the modern witchcraft movement, which could be seen as a 'death' so far as OTO-style magick was concerned.

Mr Grant replied kindly and patiently, citing the complexity of my questions as a whole (some of which were, I believed, simple yes-no matters) needing "a book, no less, to meaningfully explicate the queries" and invoked his understandable unwillingness to breach confidence to

926 d'arch Smith, *Books of the Beast*, p 37-46

927 Grant, *Nightside of Eden*, p 124 (Skoob 1994 edition, original 1977)

928 Hurton, *Triumph*, p 205

929 Grant, *Zos Sneaks!*, numerous mentions in correspondence, p 86-07

provide me with excerpts from “confidential correspondence over the years, some of which would still leave questions incompletely explained”⁹³⁰. From this I concluded that Mr Grant did not mean a simple, physical death being involved, and the question was one or both of too difficult, or inappropriate, for me to examine further as I may be unequipped to recognise, let alone *understand* any answer that I might uncover. Perhaps the Gardner tale and other apparent manipulations of historical data is an example of the writer Martin Starr’s view that Grant “recycles ideas and refits them to his real science of the universe, which is *unconstrained by the limits of academic knowledge*”⁹³¹.

While Grant makes errors that can be highlighted with reference to history, his many other magical theories described in his books are supported by the results of ritual and trance experiment and detailed cabbalistic exegesis. The use of cabbala (which is spelt in various ways by occultists) is complex, but can be roughly summarised as being that all words and phrases have a coded magical numerical value, based on the schema of the Hebrew cabbala. Words with the same value have a magical kink, and thus magical importance, and this link can be found, and utilized by the magician.

There is a considerable literature of the use of cabbala and numerology (also known as Gematria) in magic, but Grant’s own use of Cabbala has been frowned upon from many quarters, including expert Cabbalists who considered his methods to be dubious. Crowley said “do quit that nonsense mock Qabalah”⁹³² which Grant defended as “perfectly legitimate”⁹³³. His methods include using variant spellings of the word under analysis until a numerical significance is hit upon, inconsistencies of approach to suit his agenda and allowing near-misses on numeration, a number ‘one off’ the target score being considered still significant- “a number preceding or succeeding a given number partakes of its influences, as an echo partakes of its source”⁹³⁴. However another anonymous critic rails against the practice: “this one-more-one-less thing is NOT gematria. It is not qabalah. It is the product of a mind so loaded with Knowledge that it is tripping over itself in its mad flight to prove that it

930 Kenneth Grant, personal communication, 17-7-2002

931 Martin Starr, Foreword to Bogdan, *Kenneth Grant A bibliography*, p vi, Emphasis added.

932 Grant, *Remembering Aleister Crowley*, Crowley to Grant, 1-6-1945

933 *Ibid*, p 39

934 Grant. *Ninth Arch*. v 54 fn 4

is the supreme mind of the universe”⁹³⁵. Since that criticism was made Grant has relaxed the required accuracy of cabbalistic ‘hits’ on any given number still further by employing the ‘umbrella effect’, where: “numbers immediately adjacent to each other...are affected by mutual ‘radiation’ which diminishes in intensity as the numbers become more distant from one another”⁹³⁶- thus allowing for some occult credence still to be given to cabbala which doesn’t quite add up by a few or even several digits. Perhaps a more serious complaint by his anonymous critic, if true, is that “Grant bases so much upon his inane brand of Gematria while many of his simple addition calculations are incorrect”⁹³⁷.

The magician and author (and Crowley’s former secretary, as mentioned above) Israel Regardie made a more general comment on the practice in the 1970s “it makes little difference ... whether one uses the traditional Hebrew system of gematria or numerology, or the more modern so-called Pythagorean numerology. *The only criterion is consistency.*”⁹³⁸, a consistency which Grant does not appear to demonstrate in his own take on Cabbala, since the ‘radiations’ technique is a recent change to his methods. It should however be remarked that there are many forms of the cabbalistic process, and none of them is an absolute science, it might be seen as more akin to wine appreciation, in that there are many different methods and apparent differences in accuracy between practitioners, and difference does not necessarily equate to deficiency.

It is possible however that these outside critics have missed the point: Bill Seibert, a former Typhonian OTO initiate, who worked with Grant in the 1970s, remarked more recently: “do not try to verify Uncle Kenny’s Qabalah. *It just does not work that way.* You can hurt your head trying. Just look for the connection he is trying to make & use it as a jumping off point for meditation... *do not fuss over things which do not seem to add up properly*”⁹³⁹. Again, this may be magically efficacious to the practitioner, as Grant says “correspondences may appear dubious in their gross

935 Frater M.E.D Review of *Nightside of Eden*, Online

936 Grant, *Ninth Arch*, p 176 fn 26

937 Frater M.E.D Review of *Outer Gateways*, Online, emphasis original, although the author does not give enough detail for his claims about incorrect maths to be checked.

938 Israel Regardie *How to make and use talismans*, Wellingborough, Aquarian 1972, p 23; Emphasis added

939 Alobar (Bill Seibert), Posting to Wyrldglow discussion group, Online, 22-7-2003. Emphasis added. I am grateful for kind permission to quote his remarks made on a private e-list.

aspects, but their astral linkages are firm”⁹⁴⁰, however this apparently selective rule bending is academically very awkward to reconcile.

Neither of ritual or cabbala, although common and acceptable occult techniques would be considered as valid *academic* methods of research in any case, although accepting as historical fact that the practitioners *believed* in both the veracity of techniques and their results would be a valid academic approach. Aside from Cabbalistic workings, Grant’s more general tales of magical life are often rather lurid, seemingly without complete justification, and imply a tendency to exaggerate and-or make wild claims, aside from the ‘many deaths after ritual’ element discussed above. The artist and occultist Ithell Colquhoun, a former member of his *Nu Isis* working group, wrote that Kenneth Grant “makes the (Magical Order of the) Inner Light set-up sound more exciting than any impression of it which I received,”⁹⁴¹ and Gerald Suster wrote, in general that “it is difficult to take Mr. Grant’s claims seriously”⁹⁴². Grant himself tries to give some degree of clarification about the reality of his writings: “by fantasy is here meant the fantastic or ‘impossible’”⁹⁴³, and, in more detail:

“terms such as vampirism, cannibalism, death, sleep etc., connote operations applicable not to terrestrial levels, but to alien dimensions ... confusion arises principally from an interpretation in mundane terms of concepts not relating to mundane dimensions. This leads certainly to ludicrous and sometimes dangerous results”⁹⁴⁴,

the former implies that much of it is outside the realm of earthly verification or mundane description, making academic enquiry painful and all but impossible to complete. The latter point is that the effects of supposed fictionality in magic can be totally real to those who believe in it, and subsequent practical magical mistakes made with ‘fiction’ can thus be dangerous, leading to one becoming a casualty, as the author Alan Moore (mentioned above) has so elegantly and beautifully named, in *Wizard of Oz*-esque terminology “Yellow Brick Roadkill”⁹⁴⁵. Moore provides a

⁹⁴⁰ Grant, *Ninth Arch*, p 109

⁹⁴¹ Ithell Colquhoun, *Sword of Wisdom: MacGregor Mathers and the Golden Dawn*, London, Spearman, 1975, p 189

⁹⁴² Gerald Suster, *The Legacy of the Beast: the life, work and influence of Aleister Crowley*, London, WH Allen, 1988, p 216

⁹⁴³ Grant, *Hecate’s Fountain*, p 221

⁹⁴⁴ *Ibid*, p 197

⁹⁴⁵ Moore, *Kaos*, 14, D 161

useful cultural-literary analysis of Grant, seeing *all* of his books as being “an apparent deliberate blurring of the line between describing Separate Reality and writing Magic Fiction, if there ever really was a line to blur”⁹⁴⁶.

Michael Bertiaux, one of Grant’s magickal collaborators adds a further clarifying remark:

“there is the cosmic world of the imagination, and that is what we are talking about when we discuss our magical creations and discoveries... there is the world of archetypal images... which is ‘between’ the world of sense-perception and the world of the abstract essences of ideas in the mind of God”⁹⁴⁷,

so in other words, very little of this material may happen ‘really, on earth, as written’, even if it is presented as such. Regardless of the earthly reality aspect, it appears that among magical practitioners both the risks and rewards of such a magical approach are regarded as commensurately greater than other, ‘safer’ occult practices, Moore writing that Grant’s books “despite, or possibly because of their forays into dementia, have more genuine occult power than works produced by *more conventionally coherent authors*”⁹⁴⁸. Although controversial in many ways within occultism, perhaps Grant’s most frowned-upon quality is his insistence on citing HP Lovecraft and other authors, these being nominally fictional writers, as presenting highly relevant occult ‘facts’, and his then performing rituals to contact Lovecraftian entities, which is discussed further in the next chapter.

Grant’s accounts of various seemingly incredible rituals are in many respects reminiscent of the unearthly referents sometimes described in early-modern accounts of the alleged Witches’ Sabbat. An important difference here is not one of content, but of context. Many historical witch-trial transcripts were very often written by hostile, clerically biased scribes, during (or closely following) intimidation or torture of the accused; and adhering to an ecclesiastical agenda of seeing the Devil ever-present in the world. Grant’s accounts are his own, freely written, albeit perhaps some time after the event in some cases, and *electively published* in a country where his activities are not outside the law.

⁹⁴⁶ *Ibid*, p 156

⁹⁴⁷ Michael Bertiaux, *La Couleuvre Noire Course*, Section GG, 2, 2, in Grant, *Hecate’s Fountain*, p 197

⁹⁴⁸ Moore, *Kaos*, 14, D 161. Emphasis added

To an extent, modern academics looking into occultism are in a similarly difficult interpretative position to the early-modern judiciary when examining such claims. The modern academic Carlo Ginzburg discusses the legal problems inherent with trying witches who claimed to have been to the witches Sabbath (especially when they make a seemingly impossible, or magical claim, such as having *flown* there, for example) and perhaps consorted with the Devil. A major consideration in Law at the time was whether this act had been physical, or imaginal, but Ginzburg concludes, "even if the sabbat *had* been a purely mental phenomenon (and this cannot be proved) its importance for the historian would not be diminished"⁹⁴⁹.

In the same way, Grant's accounts of ritual are important, whether they 'really' happened 'on earth' or as now seems more likely, on some 'astral plane' since the imagery has since been written, printed and circulated, thus entering the consciousness of and influencing a great many occultists, who will themselves have developed their own ideas as to what plane of existence such events occurred on. The historian Malcolm Gaskill remarks on the academic problems inherent in exploring "alternative and contrasting definitions of what too often we confidently call 'the truth'"⁹⁵⁰ and the manner in which cultural boundaries and memes often determine truth, at least as much as perception and historical record within that cultural group is concerned. Grant himself remarked in correspondence, "I am very exact in matters of occultism and would not make any statement I could not substantiate either historically *or magically*"⁹⁵¹, which appears to give equal weight to *either* discipline, and thus either view of what is 'real'. It also implies that the two disciplines are not mutually conducive, in his eyes.

In any case, such magical writing satisfies needs that are, as the modern academics Bengt Ankarloo and Stuart Clark write, "not necessarily the same to ... believers and to observers (particularly historians)"⁹⁵². It is only 40 years ago that the nature of Witchcraft as based on the academic researches of Margaret Murray, discussed earlier, was largely accepted as

949 Carlo Ginzburg (John & Anne Tedeschi, Trans.) *The Night Battles, Witchcraft and Agrarian cults in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries*, Baltimore, Johns Hopkins University Press, p xiv Emphasis added

950 Gaskill, *Hellish Nell*, p 2

951 Grant to Cecil Williamson, 25-6-1951, Mus. of Witchcraft Archive. Emphasis added.

952 Bengt Ankarloo & Stuart Clark. *Athlone History of Witchcraft and Magic*. p vii

hard historical fact. As discussed in the introduction, these notions have now been almost comprehensively dismantled as fundamentally flawed; and Murray seen, *post mortem*, as guilty of deliberately selective and agenda-driven use of materials when a broader brush approach would have prevented that theory ever emerging. The whole of her work in that field has been consigned to the fringes of academic belief, but still informs many Wiccan-based 'histories' of age-old traditions still practiced today.

The same fate will probably befall many of today's academic constructions of the world in various disciplines as new material comes to light and new researchers, and new methods of research arise. It should not be forgotten that all academic 'truth' is only contingent on new discoveries, and that hindsight is often the platform from which major ridicule is heaped on past theories which *at the time* seemed rational and coherent. Whether material described by Grant 'happened' or not in the materialist, earthly, historically-supportable sense becomes almost immaterial to the effects on his readers, and in any case, as Paul Heelas points out, "the academic study of religion *must remain neutral* in regard to ultimate truth"⁹⁵³ such as this.

Equally, what may seem ludicrous today may be only awaiting one discovery tomorrow to make it mainstream and accepted fact. An example of a very flexible academic discipline might be the science of biology, which has to continually re-write itself, with new varieties of plants and animals being discovered almost every week. If we still have so much to learn about the inhabitants of our *home* planet, Grant's adherents might argue that no one can unequivocally say that in (for example) two hundred years time there will not be contact with technologically advanced entities from an outer solar-system planet, who resemble the entities Grant claims to have trafficked with.

It would be better still, for Grant's adherents, if these entities have in their own history of what we call the 20th Century some detailed records of their attempts to telepathically contact beings on any planets closer to our sun. Such a discovery would largely vindicate some of Grant's wilder claims. If that eventuality, however unlikely, does not arise over time, Grant's work in the preservation of, and expansion on Crowley, Spare etc will still be seen by his supporters as vital to help germinate a seed which they believe will ultimately represent a new phase of growth in human consciousness⁹⁵⁴.

953 Heelas, *The New Age Movement*, p 6, Emphasis original

954 Stephen Sennitt and Gareth Hewitson-May, preface to *Dark Doctrines. The Nox Anthology*. New World. Doncaster. 1997. p 2

“Kenneth Grant is one hell of a meanass occultist”⁹⁵⁵

Despite a tendency to write profusely while revealing little of his actual methods, Grant has consistently excited considerable interest among occult writers and practitioners, however two Crowley biographers (Colin Wilson and Roger Hutchinson⁹⁵⁶) inexcusably fail to mention Grant *at all*. However Wilson has subsequently written, briefly, about Grant and says that he was aware of him 20 years before his Crowley biography was published⁹⁵⁷, while other Crowley biographers (Booth for example⁹⁵⁸) only mention him in passing, as a *post mortem* editor of Crowley's works.

Perhaps surprisingly, there has as yet been no published biography (or autobiography) of Grant either written by an occultist or academic, and it is only very recently that Dr. Henrik Bogdan's brief bibliography of Grant⁹⁵⁹ was published. This may relate to him being, according to Colin Wilson, apparently “obsessively secretive about his personal life, refusing to release biographical details ... (he) prefers to live the life of a scholar and recluse”⁹⁶⁰. A rare published interview provides a rather stilted glance at the man, being conducted by an anonymous interviewer, for a magazine friendly to Grant (being run by his publisher at the time) and only gives what appears to be a truncated discussion⁹⁶¹.

A clue to his reasons for secrecy might be gleaned from his own writings about Crowley, who “sedulously fostered the legends that grew around his name. First a mist, then a fog of vilification, calumny and spite enveloped him... (which act) did have but a single aim: that of weeding out the magically competent from the inept”⁹⁶², in other words, if this applies

955 Herman Skelder, “Laughing stock” danger of worshipping strange entities, *Kaos* 14, p 35-37, p 36

956 Colin Wilson *Aleister Crowley*, & Roger Hutchinson, *Aleister Crowley*

957 Wilson, *Tentacles across time*, *Skoob Esoterica Anthology*, 1, p 13- 15, p 13

958 Booth, *Magick Life*,

959 Bogdan, *Kenneth Grant A bibliography*, p 11

960 Wilson, *Tentacles across time*, *Skoob Esoterica Anthology*, 1, p 13- 15, p 14

961 Anon, Interview with Kenneth Grant, *Skoob Occult Review*, 3, 1990, p 5-7

962 Kenneth Grant, *Aleister Crowley and the Hidden God*. London. Muller, 1972. p 68

equally to Grant, it is a kind of ‘magical Darwinism’, those who ‘survive’ reading one or two of his books and come back for more are worthy to continue to study the subject, the rest fall by the wayside.

Few photographs exist of him in the public domain, adding to the air of mystery, and there are some magically attractive but probably spurious biographical details that have been deliberately released, such as his various claims of relation to Crowley and ancient witches. His habit of citing arcane and (for the general reader) often unobtainable magical documents merely adds spice to the overall picture. Although these methods may appear very dubious on a historically verifiable level their appeal, as attractive myth-making tools cannot be denied, in much the same way that the mythology surrounding Amado Crowley, discussed previously, has developed.

This air of privacy might also equally be a pragmatic, earthly and sensible tactic to avoid unwanted attention from those sensationalists in the media who would probably accuse a left-hand path magical order such as the Typhonian OTO, which uses sexual practices, of being Satanists, with the likely appended charge of child abuse from a rabid tabloid press in need of a new front-cover story. The reader is referred back to my earlier chapters for learned background titles on the spurious tabloid-fodder links made between Satanism, magic and child abuse.

There is some early justification for such a wary approach to open-ness. In March 1956 there was a press stunt involving a journalist researching a news story about ‘black magic’ trying (unsuccessfully) to gain any information from Austin Spare about Grant's *New Isis* magical group⁹⁶³, possibly acting on a tip-off of some kind. Reporters also visited the Grant's house in the same period, and were only removed from the doorstep by dint of the police being called⁹⁶⁴. Perhaps ironically in light of this, Grant's *Aleister Crowley and the Hidden God* is actually cited by a fundamentalist Christian group as an authoritative reference book for detecting secret ‘Satanic’ architecture in Mormon churches⁹⁶⁵.

Grant's output, while not monstrous in terms of sheer page count, accrued over more than 50 years, seems to be scattered widely - books,

963 Grant, *Zos Speaks!*, p 148

964 *Ibid*, p 285, fn 137

965 Symbols of the Occult website www.helningmormons.org/occult_symbols.htm

monographs, translations of his work into several languages, art exhibition catalogues, some very sale-enhancing 'guest introductions' to the books of lesser-known writers, encyclopaedia entries and journal articles; many of which were for decades unobtainable, such as a series of pieces on Eastern thought in journals published in India in the early 1950s⁹⁶⁶. In the late 1960s he wrote some populist magazine articles including calls for magickal discipline and Will in the use of drugs, not as hippy 'kicks'⁹⁶⁷ and promoted the magical use of Tantric sex⁹⁶⁸. As with many magicians, his work has inspired a distinctly novel Tarot Card deck⁹⁶⁹.

Opinions remain polarised: Gerald Suster summarised Grant's writing as, "mystified, one tries to read ... concluding that if he wishes to conceal, he should keep silent; and if he wishes to reveal, he should learn how to write"⁹⁷⁰, however Martin Starr exhorts hard work from the reader as a prerequisite: "if we don't apply ourselves to understand his work, we have only ourselves to blame if we cannot perceive his vision"⁹⁷¹, which again implies a Darwinian approach to the readership. Understanding Grant is far from simple, however it appears that the necessary work to comprehend is worthwhile for occultists, as the magician Stephen Sennitt wrote in 1986: "Grant's images impart a wisdom or an experience not found in more easily accessible models"⁹⁷², and an anonymous editorial in an American magical journal in 1983 said that his writings are of "inestimable value" and "transaemonic"⁹⁷³, the latter comment meaning that they are of use and appeal to a wide range of occultists who might otherwise have major 'doctrinal differences' in their reading matter.

A convenient, if crude, metaphor might be that 'if Crowley was a Pope, then Grant was his Cardinal, and yet Grant's published works have been appreciated by Protestants, Mormons, Muslims and Jews'.

966 Bogdan, *Kenneth Grant A bibliography*, p 11. The 'Indian papers' have been very recently republished as Kenneth Grant, *At the Feet of the Guru*, London, Starfire, 2006

967 Kenneth Grant, The Golden Dawn, *International Times*, 33, June 14-27 1968, no page numbering

968 _____, Love Under Will, *International Times*, 49, January 31-February 13, 1969, p 18

969 Linda Falorio & Fred Fowler, Shadow Tarot, *Cincinnati Journal of Magick*, 7, 1989, p 48-9

970 Suster, *Legacy of the Beast*, p 215

971 Martin Starr, Foreword to Bogdan, *Kenneth Grant A bibliography*, p vii

972 Stephen Sennitt, Editorial, *Nox*, 2, 1986, p 3

973 Anon. Foreword to *Cincinnati Journal of Ceremonial Magick*. 1. 5. 1982. p 6

Grant's apparent command of a broad range of magickal methods and fine use of language seems to goad his critics to either attempt to emulate his wordiness, or failing that to descend to base crudities; for example his later books are seen by Alan Moore as "an information soup, an overwhelming and hallucinatory bouillon of arcane fact, mystic speculation and apparent outright fantasy"⁹⁷⁴, while the late Gerald Suster simply called some of it 'shit', as mentioned above. The modern magician Dave Lee perhaps provides a middle view: "Grant explores the refuse left behind by the Great Man of solar religion. Whilst such a pastime is not to every magician's taste, the importance of this work is that it adds to our conception of totality"⁹⁷⁵. Another reasoned view comes from the modern magician and author Stephen Sennitt, who attacks some criticism of Grant which is "misplaced; he has been accused of everything from over-glamourising the occult to being anti-evolutionary"⁹⁷⁶.

Grant is, according to Alan Moore "as fascinating and ultimately mystifying as a giant squid in a cocktail dress"⁹⁷⁷, a troubling enigma, the last surviving writer and practitioner to have known and worked with Britain's 20th Century's 'great triumvirate' of influential occultists: Aleister Crowley, Austin Spare and Gerald Gardner (and being the secretary and/or archivist of the former two). His place in occult history would be assured, simply for that, regardless of the *caveats* discussed above such as the numerous potential and actual problems inherent in Grant's interpretation of the works of the enigmatic, dyslexic, slippery, multi-faceted and absent-minded Austin Spare, his seeming leading role in the creation or transmission of an expanding fable around 'Mrs. Pa(t)erson the great witch mother', (regardless of how her surname is spelt), and his cryptic comments on the equally unfathomable Aleister Crowley.

To this should also be added the interpretation problems added by Grant's own idiosyncrasies of cabbalistic method, his historical re-interpretation and the worrying (to the academic) width of what he considers to be valid and authoritative source materials and the withholding of a great deal of detail about his actual practical methods. However, quite how Grant will be eventually assessed is a moot point; anywhere between Magus and maniac, depending upon each viewers' perspective,

974 Moore, *Kaos*, 14, p 155

975 Dave Lee, What is magick for? *Nox*, 5 p 11-16, p 13, 'Great Man' being Crowley

976 Stephen Sennitt, Editorial, *Nox*, 2, 1986, p 3

977 Moore, *Kaos*, 14, p 155

and the clarifying or revelatory effect of any texts which might emerge after his death.

To a large extent, the question of sanity or sanctity is not an area that can be approached academically- as Paul Heelas remarks, "if people say they are Enlightened... the academic simply does not have the tools to assess the claim"⁹⁷⁸. Regardless of what Grant may or may not be, his influence has been immense, and his magickal systems are in use across a broad range of occult disciplines.

Although now an old man, his story is far from over. Grant has his two rare volumes of poetry due for republication in the near future, plus a new third volume of poems on the way. His earlier magical works are also being revised and reprinted in the near future. In view of the 'quasi-auto-biographical' label he applies to one of his earlier novels, one wonders how much, and which elements, of any future novels and poetry might be actually based on Grant's life. Hopefully these forthcoming writings will provide some clarification in this matter, in the same way his earlier novels have been commented on in his subsequent factual works. His books are initially written using the same kind of manual typewriter he has been using for 50 years⁹⁷⁹, which must slow down the writing process considerably, compared to using a computer; which some occultists will regret, and his critics no doubt celebrate as it limits his output. There is also an element of the writing process being protracted as, in the possibly apocryphal words of one initiate, who once asked Kenneth how the writing of one of his early titles was progressing, received the reply "slowly, it needs to get some more slime into it"⁹⁸⁰, this being a reference to the Tunnels of Set- Lovecraftian angle of much of his text.

Despite heated discussion and divided opinions about his veracity and methods, Grant continues to consistently provide highly stimulating, contentious and unusual fare for magicians to both read and work with. His *corpus* remains a convoluted and multidisciplinary challenge to academics, covering as it does, Cabbala, Hebrew, Sanskrit, history, magic(k), voodoo, mediumship, astronomy, astrology, Tantra, Eastern and Western philosophies, literature (including what was once published as 'pulp fiction'), linguistics, etymology, Egyptology, folklore, zoology, 'Ufology,

978 Heelas, *New Age Movement*, p 6

979 Mogg Morgan, personal communication, Autumn 2002

980 Lionel Snell, conversation, 17-10-2003, reporting the words of Vivianne Jones.

alchemy, religious studies and conspiracy theory to name but some. To further add to the task of interpretation, much of this is provided in a far from straightforward, and often seemingly counterfactual manner, with tidbits of sometimes paradoxical information about various events being spread often across several books; requiring painstaking reconstruction to gain a clear (er) picture.

In summary, regardless of any 'truth' in his works, Grant, like Amado Crowley, might be seen to be providing a vital service. In a post-modern society where comparative 'truths' compete with each other and there is perhaps no absolute truth, with a social situation where people *need* magic - just as some need to believe in a God, or conversely that there is no God, or that friendly aliens orbit the planet in spaceships, *that 'fictional' characters are somehow 'real'*, or a thousand other viewpoints.

Now that my purely academic thesis is being converted into a more mainstream book I can add some of my personal take here, and that is that **I am in the small crowd that believe Mr Grant probably saved magic from disappearing into obscurity after Crowley died**, and that Grant's works are magical in and of themselves. So far as academic research is concerned Grant is very difficult, but on a personal level I have the deepest of respect for what he has achieved. When I recently had to make a painful economic choice of selling 99% of my extremely valuable magical library it was the full set of Grant books that hurt the most to say goodbye to.

As Malcolm Gaskill points out: "it will never be proven that God and the Devil are scholastic fictions... sheer *desire* to imagine an enchanted universe would inevitably be indulged in, and the idea would catch on"⁹⁸¹. Grant, in writing about magic, *provides* magic in huge doses for those who wish to believe, and gives any number of detailed jumping-off points for those occultists with the will to experiment.

One of those jumping-off points is examined in the next chapter; how Grant's work with the creatures described in the novelist HP Lovecraft's books has led to some fascinating magical developments.

981 Gaskill, *Hellish Nell*, p 264

A Dialect of Dreamers

Grant, Lovecraft and 'fiction' in magic

This section will examine the influence of the novelist HP Lovecraft on modern magic, including his promotion by Kenneth Grant, who was discussed earlier. The writings of the American novelist Lovecraft have become very important and influential in some areas of modern magic.

As the magician Stephen Sennitt wrote: "the Lovecraftian Cthulhu Mythos entities are masks of chaos, abstractions indicating that the mind which conceived of them was struggling to form equations which would describe the experiences he was undergoing. Lovecraft's dreams were haunted by cosmic scenarios he found personally difficult to relate to so much so that unlike Blavatsky, Von Liebenfels and many other cosmological literalists, he presented his ideas in fictional form...although his conceptions had a strange validity for the times in which he lived... they were not acceptable as 'realities' to his rational, sceptical mind"⁹⁸².

In these, and literary spheres, Lovecraft's name is often abbreviated for convenience to his initials, HPL. In order to appreciate and understand his influence on magic it is first necessary to describe Lovecraft's life and work.

Brief biography of HP Lovecraft

Howard Phillips Lovecraft (1890-1937) was the only child of an American couple of British ancestry. His father was a travelling salesman who died when Howard was young, and the boy was brought up subsequently in an almost entirely female household (his mother and two aunts), with his main male role model being his grandfather, and a major topic of interest being his grandfather's extensive library. HPL was a child prodigy (and in his teenage years he wrote a precocious astronomy column for his local newspaper⁹⁸³) with an impressive knowledge of classical deities, was particularly erudite about ancient Egypt and he loved the paintings of the Russian artist, explorer, archaeologist and antiquarian Nicholas Roerich (1874-1947), who had travelled extensively in the kind of excit-

982 Sennitt, *Liber Koth*, p 12

983 Frank Bellknap Long, *Howard Phillips Lovecraft: Dreamer on the Night Side*, Sauk City, Arkham House, 1975, p 26, 27, 29

ing foreign lands of which HPL could only read about⁹⁸⁴. He married in 1924 and moved to New York City, but could not abide the hustle and bustle of the city, and returned to his quiet hermitry and childhood home town of Providence, Rhode Island in 1926, at which point his marriage was also effectively over, a divorce following rapidly on the grounds of his desertion. Lovecraft spent the rest of his life eking out a small living as a ghostwriter for other authors and from producing his own stories, the income from this work being supplemented by a dwindling small inheritance⁹⁸⁵.

The American magazine *Weird Tales* was the first to publish work by HPL, they also produced writings by Tennessee Williams (1911-1983)⁹⁸⁶, perhaps one of the finest playwrights, poets and all-round writers ever produced by America, and were not alone in the US magazine world of that period in publishing an eclectic mixture of authors, from 'pulp' to the (later) highly respectable⁹⁸⁷; including Robert Bloch (1917-1994), who subsequently wrote the novel *Psycho*⁹⁸⁸ (filmed in 1960 by Alfred Hitchcock, which became one of the earliest and most influential psychological horror films), Robert E Howard (1906-1936), inventor of the 'Conan the Barbarian' character, and Ray Bradbury (1920-)⁹⁸⁹, a leading science-fiction writer. HPL wrote prolifically for *Weird Tales* for 15 years, almost exclusively⁹⁹⁰, while also earning money from writing revisions for the works of other authors, and a ghostwriting project for the famous Illusionist and escapologist Harry Houdini⁹⁹¹ (1874-1926). In literary circles HPL met a young L Ron Hubbard (1911- 1986), whose fiction was also published in *Weird Tales*, and Lovecraft regarded Hubbard as "most extraordinary" in a positive way⁹⁹². Hubbard was later involved with Crowleyan ritual work in partnership with the scientist and magician Jack Parsons (who is mentioned in several places in this book), and he eventually founded the controversial cult, *The Church of Scientology*.

984 *Ibid*, p 99-100. For further information on Roerich see the Roerich Museum Website www.roerich.org/ and John McCannon, Shamanic motifs in Fin-de-Siecle Russian Art, the case of Nicholas Roerich, *J. Academic Study of Magic*, 2, p 300-332

985 Long, *Dreamer on the Night Side*, p 14-18

986 *Ibid*, p 127

987 *Ibid*, p 136

988 Robert Bloch, *Psycho*, New York, Simon & Schuster, 1959

989 Long, *Dreamer on the Night Side*, p 128

990 *Ibid*, p 139

991 *Ibid*, p 114-5

992 *Ibid*, p 100-1

See Carter, *Sex and Rockets*, and Scientology website www.scientology.org for further information. It should be pointed out that Scientology now strenuously denies the Crowley link and can be most litigious on the matter.

By the standards of his day (and ours) HPL was pretty eccentric. In company he loved to play roles, including that of 'ancient Roman', 'old Gentleman', 'loyal British subject' and 'rustic farmer'. He had the conviction that he was 'born old' and addressed his contemporaries as 'his grandchildren'. One of his habits was to engage in long treks purely to look at various pieces of exterior architecture that interested him, including private houses, *at night*, presumably to avoid having to talk to strangers. He referred to himself in third person a lot, and once methodically tried out over 50 fountain pens in a shop to find one that was exactly right. On the occasion of applying for a job he submitted a highly unusual and negative résumé, and in any case so far as any prospective employer was concerned HPL was an appalling timekeeper, and was very poor at such simple practical tasks as crossing the road⁹⁹³.

HPL showed obvious delight in having an 'allergic reaction' (actually a swollen hand) from accidentally bumping into an Egyptian artefact in a museum⁹⁹⁴, which he saw as a doom-laden recognition of him by some inherent antiquated supernatural entity residing in the object (a piece of tomb stone) of "a kinship... instantly recognised and resented. If I had lingered longer... the slumbering malignancy activated by my presence might not have been content with merely an attack on my hand"⁹⁹⁵. A more pragmatic view might be that since HPL was rather fragile in general health, for example being completely immobilised by cold weather⁹⁹⁶, this was merely a bruise, which had it been caused by impact with a mundane object such as kitchen sink or street lamp pole would have merited no further mention.

Despite the pantheon of cosmic-sized terror and dark occult forces that he created in his books, Lovecraft thought occultism was nonsense when used other than as a plot device. He saw ghosts and spirits as "an absolute absurdity", and was at heart a rationalist materialist, not a mystic; he much

993 Long, *Dreamer on the Night Side*, p 84, 46, 31, 38, 163, 67, 77, 70, 42

994 *Ibid*, p 73-4

995 *Ibid*, p 74

996 *Ibid*, p 71

preferred the hard science of Einstein and Darwin to even the pseudo-science of Freud⁹⁹⁷. In a letter to his local newspaper about popular misconceptions of his writings (in this case his astronomy column) he remarked,

"it is an unfortunate fact that every man who seeks to disseminate knowledge must contend not only against ignorance itself, but against false instruction as well. No sooner do we deem ourselves free from a particularly gross superstition, than we are confronted by some enemy to learning who would set aside all the intellectual progress of years, and plunge us back into the darkness of mediaeval disbelief"⁹⁹⁸.

Lovecraft knew of Crowley, and regarded him in the negative: in a letter to the poet Emil Petaja of 6th March 1935, Lovecraft wrote:

"in the 1890's the fashionable decadents liked to pretend that they belonged to all sorts of diabolic Black Mass cults, & possessed all sorts of frightful occult information. The only specimen of this group still active is the rather over-advertised Aleister Crowley"⁹⁹⁹.

Although some elements of HPL's works and remarks appear racist in the 21st Century, comparatively, and of *his time* he was probably not especially racist, having married a Jewish woman and being anti-Hitler, even before the advent of World War Two, which occurred after HPL had died¹⁰⁰⁰. His close friend James Morton (1870-1941) was a pioneer of the early Negro Rights movement in the 1920s, long before such rights became enshrined in US Law some decades later¹⁰⁰¹. However the modern academic and HPL *aficionado* Justin Woodman recently wrote in this context that 'of their time racists' especially when they publish and such work is influential, can still be highly damaging to the cause of racial equality in the present day¹⁰⁰².

997 *Ibid*, p 62, 196, 95, 209-11

998 HP Lovecraft, letter to *The Providence Evening News*, 5 September 1914, reproduced at the HP Lovecraft Archive Website

999 _____, *Selected Letters Volume V*, (August Derleth, Ed.), Sauk City, Wisconsin, Arkham House, 1976, p 120

1000 Long, *Dreamer on the Night Side*, p 227-231

1001 *Ibid*, p 52

1002 Justin Woodman, letter to *Fortean Times*, 101, 2004, p 76

HPL died in 1937 from cancer and kidney disease. From this brief biography of an unusual, and in many ways feeble and unimpressive person, who was certainly 'out of his time' in many ways, it might appear odd that he has such a significance anywhere, let alone in magic ¹⁰⁰³. However his works have been hugely influential, as will now be discussed.

The literary legacy of Lovecraft

The *Arkham House* publishing company was formed after HPL died to promote his work, and that of several other important horror and fantasy authors ¹⁰⁰⁴. HPL became a source of great fascination and fan-worship among American college students ¹⁰⁰⁵ and commencing shortly after World War Two his output was the topic of considerable literary discussion in French academic circles ¹⁰⁰⁶. This has been speculated as being due to US troops leaving behind copies of *Weird Tales* as they advanced across Europe in 1944-5, feeding the literary interest of a French nation that had been occupied by the Nazis for several years and which might have been suffering a dearth of new literature, whatever the perceived quality.

A rumour I have heard independently from several magicians, but have been unable to substantiate. It is a Meme. Equally, the explosion of cheap paperbacks published in the 1950s onwards might have fuelled HPL's popularity. In terms of his influence measured by circulation, the leading Lovecraft scholar Joshi notes that by the 1970s around 1 million paperback editions of HPL's works had been printed ¹⁰⁰⁷.

It is HPL's creation of the collective work now known as *Cthulhu Mythos* which sets him apart from other horror writers of his (or any other) time so far as magic is concerned. Lovecraft created a detailed and largely coherent pantheon of 'Elder Gods' who were excluded from earth, and a unique cosmology; with these Old Ones banished to beyond the stars, but waiting to return. The terrible god *Cthulhu* was high in the pantheon, and was usually depicted as an amorphous creature with many tentacles,

¹⁰⁰³ For an authoritative recent biography see S T Joshi, *A Dreamer and A Visionary: H. P. Lovecraft in His Time*, Liverpool, Liverpool University Press, 2001

¹⁰⁰⁴ Long, *Dreamer on the Night Side*, p 149-50

¹⁰⁰⁵ *Ibid*, p 4

¹⁰⁰⁶ *Ibid*, p 5-7

¹⁰⁰⁷ S. T. Joshi, Introduction to H.P. Lovecraft & W. Conover, *Lovecraft at Last*, New York, Copper Square Press, 2002, p xi-xvi

resembling an octopus or squid in some respects, and he-she-it was trapped below the ocean. Occasionally, 'when the stars were right' (a reference to both astronomy and astrology), the Old Ones were able to gain some temporary ingress to this world, often with the aid of earth-bound sorcerers and devotees, using secret or hidden magical lore to evoke these Elder Gods.

As the modern academic and magician Justin Woodman writes:

"such knowledge - a body of 'forbidden' or 'blasphemous' lore detailing both the monstrous antediluvian world of the Old Ones, and their eventual, apocalyptic return - forms a thematic cornerstone of the Cthulhu mythos: one which undermines anthropocentric assumptions that 'man is either the oldest or the last of earth's masters, or that the common bulk of life and substance walks alone'" ¹⁰⁰⁸.

This ingress was usually one with hugely unpleasant results for humanity, since HPL was not often one to write a reassuring or otherwise formulaic 'happy ending', with the forces of good being ultimately victorious. HPL's Mythos became rapidly popular, with a small coterie of authors surrounding HPL, and adding to the *Mythos* with stories of their own. These included Robert Bloch (mentioned above), Clark Ashton Smith (1883-1961) and Frank Bellknap Long (1901- 1994) ¹⁰⁰⁹. Since Lovecraft's death dozens of other writers have also taken on the *Mythos* style and it is estimated that nearly a thousand *Mythos* tales have been published (many of them quite execrable) ¹⁰¹⁰ so the *Mythos* has long outlived its creator, and has expanded to almost 'biblical' proportions so far as the number of words in print is concerned.

Magicians and Lovecraft

The modern American magician Bill Siebert (aka 'Alobar' among other pseudonyms, and who was discussed with regard to Kenneth Grant in the previous chapter) wrote in 1989 that "fiction seems to be the most

¹⁰⁰⁸ Justin Woodman, *Alien Selves: Modernity and the Social Diagnostics of the Demonic in "Lovecraftian Magick"*, *J. Academic Study of Magic*, 2, 2004, p 16, quoting H.P. Lovecraft, 'The Dunwich Horror' in H. P. Lovecraft, *The Dunwich Horror and Others*, Wisconsin, Arkham House, 1984, p 170, original 1928

¹⁰⁰⁹ Long, *Dreamer on the Nightside*, p23-4

¹⁰¹⁰ HP Lovecraft Archive (Online)

universal dialect amongst dreamers”¹⁰¹¹, within which he includes magicians, since much of his magical work is carried out in dream-, or astral planes. In common with many ‘real life’ magicians who have, or claim to possess ‘a special magical book’, such as Amado Crowley’s *Book of Desolation*, Kenneth Grant’s family *Grimoire* etc, Lovecraft’s stories contained references to a dread magical tome, *The Necronomicon*, which was said to have such powers as to send the reader insane, and to allow ingress of the Old Gods back to earth if one actually worked the rituals described therein.

It was HPL’s friend Frank Bellknap Long who claimed to have invented the notion of an English translation of the *Necronomicon*, allegedly made by John Dee in the 17th Century, in the original version of Long’s story *The Space Eaters*¹⁰¹², published in 1928. This ‘dread book’ became the focus of considerable interest and speculation in the occult community, and dozens of alleged print versions have emerged in recent decades.

The Dread Necronomicon

Kenneth Grant claims that many of his magical discoveries and early comparative work on Crowley’s *Liber AL* and Lovecraftian entities were actually the catalyst for the appearance of contemporary published versions of what was claimed to be the infamous *Necronomicon*¹⁰¹³. These include the ‘Hay’¹⁰¹⁴ and ‘Simon’¹⁰¹⁵ versions, both of which Grant cites, although in various places he mentions the ‘actual’ *Necronomicon*, meaning the original ancient tome, as a fiction. When I had the chance to put some written questions to him he declined to comment on the seeming discrepancy, although he did remark that to answer any of my questions would require him to write several more books, which as he was then approaching 80 years old and still writing a considerable quantity, was too much of an effort¹⁰¹⁶.

¹⁰¹¹ Bill Siebert, Quartz crystals and sex magick techniques, *Cincinnati Journal of Ceremonial Magick*, 7, 1989, p 52-57, p 54 fn. Siebert, mentioned in a previous chapter, has also been known as Alobar Greywalker and Frater PVN

¹⁰¹² Long, *Dreamer on the Night Side*, p 24

¹⁰¹³ Grant, *Hecate’s Fountain*, p iii

¹⁰¹⁴ The ‘Hay’ *Necronomicon*, London, Skoob, 1992, Original 1978

¹⁰¹⁵ The ‘Simon’ *Necronomicon*, New York, Avon, 1978

¹⁰¹⁶ Kenneth Grant, personal communication, 17-7-2002

However this would seem to be at least a partially tautological argument, since if Grant’s printed magical output really did to some extent inspire the content of modern books claiming to be *The Necronomicon*, then he can hardly also claim these same modern books as external and objective supporting evidence of his own beliefs and experiences. This is much the same kind of tautology that arose with his tales of Mrs. Patterson, which were returned to him in a ‘Chinese Whisper’, as discussed in the previous chapter.

In the late 1970s, Herman Slater, the owner of the influential New York occult supplies and bookshop *Magickal Child*, and the motivating force behind the fake ‘Simon’ *Necronomicon* was, according to an associate, Alan Cabal,

“savvy enough to sell leftover chicken bones as human finger bones to wannabe necromancers, so he surely knew that the market for a ‘genuine’ *Necronomicon* could be huge—with the right packaging... the *Necronomicon* was a team effort... the design and layout were the work of Jim Wasserman of the OTO... the text was modeled on the *Wiccan Book of Shadows* and the *Goetia*, a grimoire of doubtful authenticity itself, dating from the late Middle Ages”¹⁰¹⁷.

In 1980, the Avon publishing house released the paperback version of the *Necronomicon*, which remains in print and has been selling very steadily ever since¹⁰¹⁸, a feat that few ‘real’ magic books have ever managed, LaVey’s *Satanic Bible* being one of the few other exceptions. Alan Cabal, writing of the nominal ‘author’ of the Avon book said that on occasions; “Simon refused to attend a book signing... (I was recruited to) impersonate him and forge his signature”¹⁰¹⁹, thus with some delicious irony, some owners of the ‘fake’ signed grimoire also do not have the ‘real’ signature of the author.

The magician and author Joel Biroco comments on some aspects of the ‘Simon’ version of the *Necronomicon*, discussing how it is quite likely that perceived magical results of a dark and disturbing nature may occur when using the spells in the book, as he believes that many of the spells are stolen piecemeal from ‘real’ and extant ancient curses in ancient Sumerian magic,

¹⁰¹⁷ Alan Cabal, *The doom that came to Chelsea*, New York Press, Vol. 16, 23 (Online)

¹⁰¹⁸ *Ibid*

¹⁰¹⁹ *Ibid*

but gives no primary sources for this belief¹⁰²⁰.

Since space here does not permit coverage of the many claimed *Necronomicons*, the reader is advised to consult the excellent piece of investigation by Harms and Gonce, cited below. On the modern published versions of *The Necronomicon*, Phil Hine wrote, "what price this forbidden knowledge? About £4.50 in paperback actually. Ridiculous!"¹⁰²¹. He subsequently published a version of his own Lovecraftian magical grimoire in which he wrote "there are several *published* necronomicons, but none of them for me do justice to that sense of an 'utterly blasphemous tome' which sends you insane after a thorough reading"¹⁰²².

The -nomicon suffix appears to have gained popularity in artistic and magical circles to denote something dark, weird and interesting for example the Imagonomocon website, which is a collective of artists depicting "monstrous creatures and infernal sorcerers"¹⁰²³. The influential Swiss artist HR Giger (1940-) has produced art books and a tarot deck bearing the *Necronomicon* name¹⁰²⁴.

However two American researchers, Daniel Harms and John Wisdom Gonce recently produced a lengthy examination of these alleged *Necronomicons*, concluding that the book itself is simply a literary fiction, and the diverse and numerous more recently published versions claiming to be such a book are without exception fraudulent¹⁰²⁵. In this respect, fraudulent means that they are not the centuries-old writings of *Abdul Alhazred*, the purported Arabic author as named in the *Cthulhu Mythos*, (but which was also a childhood name HPL used in play) but more recent creations. From talking to various magicians who employ Lovecraftian magic, some of the books apparently have magical value, however, despite being 'fakes'.

As has been a major point of this book, belief over fact is a major magical factor, and if the magician believes in a concept strongly enough, it can be

1020 Joel Biroco, *Kaos* 14, p 67-74, p 82-85

1021 Hine, *Nox*, 6, p 41

1022 Phil Hine, *The Pseudonomicon*, Irvine, California, Dagon Productions, 1997, p 6. Original 1994, emphasis original

1023 Imagonomicon Website www.imagonomicon.com/e_index.html

1024 HR Giger website www.hrgiger.com/bio.htm

1025 Daniel Harms & John Wisdom Gonce, *The Necronomicon Files*, revised edition, York Beach. Weiser. 2003 (original 1998).

employed as a magical tool. The magician Kenneth Grant, discussed in the previous chapter highlighted the fictional writings of Lovecraft in the late 1950s or early 60s as of "quite exceptional interest"¹⁰²⁶ to the magician, in their description of unearthly entities, the Old Gods, inimical to humanity, who would one day return to rule earth. Grant seems to have been the first occultist to directly address, and work with, the Lovecraftian element in magic, although one of Lovecraft's clients for ghostwriting, one William Lumley, told HPL in the 1930s that he felt the creatures in the *Mythos* were real. This is addressed briefly in one of Lovecraft's letter to his friend Clark Ashton Smith, dated 3rd October 1933:

"He is surely an unique survival from the earth's mystical childhood ...I've told you about his claims of extensive travel in China, Nepal, and all sorts of mysterious and forbidden places, and his air of familiarity with such works as the arcana of Paracelsus, Hermes Trismegistus, Albertus Magnus, Appolonius of Tyana, Eibon, von Juntz, and Abdul Alhazred. He says he has witnessed monstrous rites in deserted cities...has written and collaborated on powerful dramas, has conversed with incredibly wise and monstrously ancient wizards in remote Asiatic fastnesses... including the donning of a white robe!... his own sorceries, I judge, are of a somewhat modest kind; though he has had very strange and marvellous results from clay images and from certain cryptical incantations... We may think we're writing fiction, and may even (absurd thought!) disbelieve what we write, but at bottom we are telling the truth in spite of ourselves - serving unwittingly as mouthpieces of... Cthulhu and other pleasant Outside gentry"¹⁰²⁷.

The late Andrew Chumbley (an academic researcher and member of Grant's magical group the Typhonian OTO from 1993-1999) told me that Grant saw the Lovecraftian squid-like entity *Cthulhu*, who waits under the sea, and which is, in the words of HPL's novels 'not dead but dreaming' as a metaphor for the human subconscious mind¹⁰²⁸, and Michael Staley, Grant's colleague in the Typhonian OTO has written

1026 Grant, *Hidden Lore*, 1989, original 1959-1963. No page numbering,

1027 Lovecraft, *Selected Letters Volume IV*, p 270-271. William Lumley was one of HPL's revision clients. Lovecraft's revised version of Lumley's tale 'The Diary of Alonzo Typer' appears in H.P. Lovecraft, *The Horror in the Museum*, Sauk City, Wisconsin, Arkham House, 1989. My gratitude goes to Justin Woodman for pointing out this letter and associated details to me, and for very usefully commenting on a draft of my HPL chapters.

1028 Andrew Chumbley conversation, December 2002.

that in his opinion by 'extra-terrestrial' Grant means, as did Lovecraft simply 'beyond human consciousness'¹⁰²⁹. As mentioned in the previous chapter, Grant is, in some quarters of the occult world, highly respected, for example *Nema*, an American occultist writing in 1995 said, "unlike HPL, Mr. Grant is a *conscious* adept and priest of the eldritch dark"¹⁰³⁰.

In some respects Grant can be seen as a Lovecraftian figure in his public image - that of a reclusive and hermit-like learned scholar, spending much of his time writing in solitude and dealing with very difficult occult concepts. Grant expanded hugely upon the relevance of HPL to magic in his subsequent books, and continues to do so; despite being met with mockery and great skepticism from some quarters. For example the author Colin Wilson (1931-), who had himself previously written some Lovecraftian fiction, and had been involved in the creation of a fake *Necronomicon*¹⁰³¹ remarked: "I was inclined to suspect that Grant had invented his idea (the Lovecraft connection) as a gimmick to appeal to a new audience"¹⁰³². It seems not to have merely been a cynical piece of marketing, judging by the detailed magical analyses and anecdotes of Lovecraftian contacts that Grant provides, at length, in his many books. Grant at least appears to take the matter very seriously indeed.

He is not alone, however. The modern magician Phil Hine wrote in 1994, of the attraction of HPL to occultists, "there is something very romantic about HP Lovecraft. The same romance that brings people towards magic by reading Dennis Wheatley"¹⁰³³.

The founder of the Church of Satan, Anton LaVey's, *The Satanic Rituals* published in 1972 comprises instructions for rituals employing a pantheon of dark god-forms from around the world, and it draws considerably on HPL's entities, including three specific and detailed 'Lovecraftian' rituals, although at least two of these were not actually written by LaVey,

1029 Michael Staley, *The Mysteries of Lam*, in *Thelemic Magick XC*, p 53-71, p 54

1030 'Nema', *Maat Magick: a guide to self-initiation*, York Beach, Weiser, 1995, p 209, Emphasis added.

1031 Wilson's Lovecraftian fiction is 'The Return of the Lloigor', in *Tales of the Cthulhu Mythos*, (August Derleth, Ed.), Sauk City, Wisconsin, Arkham House, 1969, and his collaboration in producing the fake 'Hay' *Necronomicon* of 1978 is discussed in Gonce and Harms, *Necronomicon Files*, p 51

1032 Wilson, *Tentacles across time*, *Skoob Esoterica Anthology*, 1, p 13- 15, p 13

1033 Hine, *Pseudonomicon*, p 6

but by his assistant Michael Aquino¹⁰³⁴. However LaVey regarded Lovecraft as a "convincing and thoroughly terrifying" author¹⁰³⁵, with the hints at ritual content given in HPL's work being "often identical to actual ceremonies and nomenclature" of the occult, (but LaVey gives no examples to justify this belief¹⁰³⁶).

The American LaVey, born in 1930 had once been a friend of *Mythos* author Clark Ashton Smith, and his favoured reading from a very young age had been *Weird Tales*, the magazine in which Lovecraft's work was almost a permanent fixture, as mentioned above; so it is possible that HPL had greatly influenced LaVey from childhood.

In any case the Satan-HPL link is one that is still promoted for fiscal purposes. The influential Leeds-based magical supplies shop *Sorcerers Apprentice* sent me a book-advertising flyer in 2004, promoting books by and about La Vey, and a version of the *Necronomicon* (which they called the underpinning of Satanic philosophy) which said "get your hands on the books they're trying to ban... politicians and members of the Establishment want information on Satanism banned... act now... (and buy the books) before they become forbidden!"¹⁰³⁷. Despite the tone of urgency and warning, in my researches for the Blasphemy chapter I found no mention of specific impending legal action to ban either any of LaVey's books or any modern edition of *The Necronomicon*.

On querying the SA they told me that the flyer was one that was a little old (being sent among a larger package of advertisements, since I have been on their mailing list for some years) and although the threat was not imminent, they considered it likely at some point, based on the continuing fundamentalist Christian attitudes shown by some activists, as exemplified by the late Geoffrey Dickens MP¹⁰³⁸ (who had also been instrumental in the early moralising attacks on Genesis P Orridge and his fellow "Wreckers of Civilisation", as mentioned in a previous chapter).

In any case the Lovecraftian idea has taken hold within occultism, and to an extent greatly changed the form in which modern occultism

1034 See LaVey, *Satanic Rituals*, and Erik Davis, *Calling Cthulhu*, *Lovecraft's Magick Realism*, Techgnosis website www.techgnosis.com/lovecraft.html

1035 LaVey, *Satanic Rituals*, p 175

1036 *Ibid*, p 177

1037 *Sorcerers Apprentice Sale Flyer*, received October 2004, emphasis original.

1038 John Dennis, of *Sorcerers Apprentice*, personal communication. 10-11-2004

manifests. The modern author and occultist Alan Moore believes that “without Grant’s insistence that the works of HP Lovecraft represented valid channels of magical information, much of the furniture and landscape of our modern magic systems, Chaos magic for example, would be utterly unrecognisable”¹⁰³⁹. This latter point is examined below.

However the matter is not totally one of approval of Grant. One of the founders (of one form, at least) of Chaos Magic, Peter Carroll disagreed, instead mocking Grant’s “wacky mixture of Lovecraftian adolescent nightmare and sex souped up with demonic naughtiness”¹⁰⁴⁰, and advising that the magician should “NOT wake the Elder Gods”¹⁰⁴¹, this despite Carroll allowing some HPL-like imagery in his own work, the illustrations (by Andrew David) accompanying his *Liber Null* being particularly Lovecraftian, showing an apparently ‘tentacled’ magician. Another chaos magician Phil Hine, subsequently the author of a Lovecraftian magical manual himself, advised in 1986 that “prior to attempting ... (a particular Lovecraftian-type ritual) it is helpful to steep oneself in the Cthulhu mythos tales and the ramblings of K. Grant”¹⁰⁴².

The occultist Peter Sanderson contended in 2002 that although rituals of a Lovecraftian flavour may well attract magical responses from an apparent non-human entity, it is unlikely that ‘real’, truly Lovecraftian entities are contacted by magicians, since to do so, given their totally anti-human and pathological nature (as described in gruesome and lengthy detail by HPL in his novels) would entail instant insanity or death for the magician who successfully evoked them. As Sanderson sarcastically remarks: “that vibrating sound isn’t the arrival of a wandering evil from beyond the stars... it’s Howard Philip (...Lovecraft) spinning in his Rhode Island grave”¹⁰⁴³. Phil Hine echoes the cynicism of Sanderson to some extent when he writes: “the Great Old Ones are not particularly interested in humanity... what use is something that thinks humans are at best, useful insects?”¹⁰⁴⁴, however despite this caveat Hine does consider the practice of ‘Lovecraftian’ magic to be a useful one for the development of the

¹⁰³⁹ Moore, *Beyond our Ken*, *Kaos* 14, p 159

¹⁰⁴⁰ Peter Carroll, *Letters*, *Nox*, 6, 1988, p 19

¹⁰⁴¹ _____, Advice we would have given ourselves at the start of our magical work, Templum website www.templum.demon.co.uk/doc%2520files/A%2520Word%2520to%2520the%2520Wise%2520.html&e=7413

¹⁰⁴² Phil Hine, *Experiments in dark lore*, *Nox* 3, 1986, 29-30, Emphasis added

¹⁰⁴³ Peter J Sanderson, *The call of the Cthulhu “mythos”*, *Kaos* 14, p 46

¹⁰⁴⁴ Hine. *Pseudonimicon*, n.o

individual magician in that although it may stretch credulity, there are significant magical effects to be had given the right application: namely that while “you may consider the names of the Great Old Ones to be ‘false’. Everything else ... (in this book, his Lovecraftian manual, the *Pseudonimicon*) is as real as you want it to be”¹⁰⁴⁵.

In describing the supposedly ‘Lovecraftian’ visions of *Mira*, a priestess who was officiating during one of his rituals in the 1950s, Kenneth Grant pushes the bounds of objectivity and credulity, even for his own convoluted methods of linkage and association: “the fact that Lovecraft’s book of this name is a collection of poems bearing no direct relationship to *Mira*’s visions is no argument against such a suggestion (that Egyptian dynasties had been in contact with the ‘transplutonic’ entities encountered in Lovecraft’s works)”¹⁰⁴⁶. In other words, if an *intuitive* link is made, it doesn’t matter if there are contrary *factual* matters or complete absence of evidence; this being the complete opposite of the Western Scientific-Logical philosophical approach, and one that makes methodological academic examinations of magic more difficult, as was discussed earlier. However this outlook should not be too surprising, as Religious Studies scholar Paul Heelas reminds us “the spiritual realm...lies beyond the compass of intellectual enquiry”¹⁰⁴⁷.

Accounts by Grant, published in 1992, of various 1950s rituals perhaps stretch credence even further. In one, a tentacled entity materialised and engulfed one of Grant’s *Nu Isis* group, from which they survived in body, but were allegedly insane until they died in 1958¹⁰⁴⁸. In all such references to ‘successful’ evocations of those Lovecraftian entities with tentacles, there is a consistent neo-Freudian imagery of the tentacles being in some way phallic, and where female priestesses are involved, sexual penetration by tentacles (in some cases all eight) often occurs¹⁰⁴⁹.

Science and Grant

More recently some slight scientific credence for Grant’s apparent neo-Freudian vision of tentacles being phallic symbols was found by American

¹⁰⁴⁵ *Ibid*, p 3

¹⁰⁴⁶ Grant, *Hecate’s Fountain*, p 3, fn 3

¹⁰⁴⁷ Heelas, *New Age Movement*, p 6

¹⁰⁴⁸ Grant, *Hecate’s Fountain*, p 154-8

¹⁰⁴⁹ For example *Ibid* p 18

zoologists, when they observed a male octopus with a swollen tentacle, which under closer examination was found to contain structures identical to erectile tissue found in the mammalian penis, and was presumed to serve the same purpose in mating¹⁰⁵⁰, although it should be noted that this on one 'arm' only, and not a case of the octopus having 8 penis-tentacles, as could be surmised from the Grant tale, but it is interesting that his account predates the scientific discovery by over a decade.

As was mentioned at the close of a previous chapter about Mr. Grant, regarding the reality of the 'transplutonic' entities and their home world, a purported tenth planet in the solar system, beyond the orbit of Pluto and four billion miles from the Sun, was discovered in 2002. However the definition of what constitutes a "planet" is still disputed, since this body, called *Quaoar* is only half the size of Pluto, which is itself considered rather small to fit the scientific criteria for being a planet¹⁰⁵¹. Since the universe is theoretically infinite, it is most likely that further planets will be discovered as our technology improves. What is perhaps surprising, given his enthusiasm for extra-terrestrial explanations, is that to some extent Grant is dismissed by UFO enthusiasts; one modern UFO researcher, Ian Blake, writing of Grant: "do we... need to invoke the concept of 'trans-plutonian entities', or are we dealing instead with archetypes dredged up from the collective unconscious?"¹⁰⁵².

1050 Joseph Thompson, & Janet Voight, Erectile tissue in an invertebrate animal: the Octopus copulatory organ. *Journal of Zoology*, 261, 2003, 101 – 108

1051 Space website www.space.com/scienceastronomy/quaoar_discovery_021007.html

1052 Ian Blake, Aleister Crowley and the LAM statement, Excluded Middle magazine, (Online) 1006 www.elfis.net/rem/LAMstatement.html

Lovecraft-related magic after Grant

Many modern magicians have taken Grant's Lovecraftian ideas and developed them, including a group called the *Esoteric Order of Dagon* (EOD, initially a separate group, but now loosely affiliated with Grant's Typhonian OTO - The EOD and Typhonian OTO are now closely linked, the initial point of contact for both organisations presently being Mr. Michael Staley, the second-in-command of the Typhonian OTO and who is intimately involved with publishing Kenneth Grant's work through the T-OTO's own press, Starfire). Their rituals are derived from Lovecraft's fiction, which describes suitable sacred sites and some rites in enough detail for those magicians with creative initiative to reconstruct coherent workings based on this¹⁰⁵³, providing workings that are, as described in 1991 by a modern magician DM Mitchell "replete with zoomorphic symbols and totems of a direct and primeval sort"¹⁰⁵⁴, which is a phrase worthy of Kenneth Grant's elegant prose.

The very un-individuated nature of the entities in Lovecraft is an intrinsic part of their subjective horror to the individual¹⁰⁵⁵, and this lack of individuation might allow the magical practice, as the Religious Studies scholar Paul Heelas writes, to "express beliefs and values which exemplify deep-seated cultural trajectories"¹⁰⁵⁶. Similarly to the negative connotations of the Left Hand Path, discussed above, this perceived 'evil' may be one of the reasons why some occultists have shunned the notion of using it. However this notion of subjective evil is neatly philosophically assessed by two modern American magicians, Christopher Hyatt (who is also a psychologist) and Lon Milo DuQuette:

"Evil is an 'externalization' and 'objectification' of something fearful, horrifying, or different. Evil can be a label for something as simple as a person or an object that frustrates us. Evil is pain... the enemy... the Gods of other men... the night terrors... the overwhelming feeling of falling apart. Yet all these images are non-sense. Evil like other ideas exists because we as humans exist. Nature knows not

1053 Phil Hine, The physics of evocation- a Mythos perspective, *Dark Doctrines. The Nox anthology*, New World, Doncaster, 1991, p 45-59, p 45

1054 D.M Mitchell, the nature of the beast, *Dark Doctrines*, p 35- 42, p 41

1055 Lee, 'Memories of a sorcerer', *J. Academic Study of Magic*, 1, p 112-3

1056 Heelas, *New Age Movement*, p 4

Evil, neither Good, nor for that matter Law. These are creations of the human mind, 'explanations' which help us quiet the 'terrors in the night.' The human mind requires the belief in 'its' idea of 'order' for the sole purpose of the human mind. Thus, the nature of evil is the human mind" ¹⁰⁵⁷.

Another magician, Frank Ripel, claimed in the mid-1980s to not only be descended of a direct hereditary lineage from the Magician-Priests of Atlantis, but to have published the text of a grimoire called *The Sauthenerom*, a book which he says is 4,000 years old, and the original source from which the *Necronomicon* was written. This marvellous magical piece of one-upmanship over Kenneth Grant appears to come to nothing however when examining the text, which seems little more than slightly rehashed extant OTO-related rituals, with some yoga and Enochian magic thrown in, plus numerous clumsily-paraphrased passages which appear to be plagiarisms from Crowley's *Book of the Law* ¹⁰⁵⁸. Mr. Ripel has subsequently claimed to be the antichrist ¹⁰⁵⁹, which seems extremely odd for someone whose previously claimed lineage massively predates the emergence of Christianity. Since his own website ¹⁰⁶⁰ is in Italian, which I do not speak, I was unable to find any clarification of his *Necronomical* beliefs.

By contrast, Phil Hine's *Pseudonomicon* from 1994 (republished by New Falcon Press in 2005) is a short booklet examining the *Mythos*, and providing some practical suggestions for magically working with it, rather than making grandiose claims. Hine writes that "it is generally accepted by experienced magicians that working with the Cthulhu Mythos is dangerous" ¹⁰⁶¹ but "each God brings its own madness ... madness is something that we still fear- the great taboo" ¹⁰⁶² and "states of fear, neurosis and borderline paranoia can occur regularly" ¹⁰⁶³ but this must be dealt with, since "real magic is wild" ¹⁰⁶⁴.

¹⁰⁵⁷ Lon Milo DuQuette & Christopher Hyatt, *Crowley's Illustrated Goetia*, Las Vegas, New Falcon, p 10-11

¹⁰⁵⁸ Frank G Ripel, *The Magic of Atlantis. Sauthenerom; the real source of the Necronomicon*, Pance, Ljubljana, Amalietti Press, 1985

¹⁰⁵⁹ Chaser Website www.chaser.com.au/shite/wm9.htm+ripel+antichrist&hl=en

¹⁰⁶⁰ Frank G Ripel website www.frankripel.org/

¹⁰⁶¹ Hine, *Pseudonomicon*, disclaimer on flyleaf

¹⁰⁶² *Ibid*, p 4

¹⁰⁶³ *Ibid*, p 15

¹⁰⁶⁴ *Ibid*, p 7

An experimental Lovecraftian ritual group called the *Haunters of the Dark (HOD)* ¹⁰⁶⁵ was created in London in 1999, one of whose members was an academic anthropology PhD student and magician, Justin Woodman (who is discussed in my introduction as one of the modern academics working in the field of researching magic). He writes "the focus of the HOD was not... upon *worship* of the Old Ones, but *identification* with them as avatars of a 'post-human' metamorphosis" ¹⁰⁶⁶. This would appear to be totally in accord with the beliefs expressed by Kenneth Grant as to the magical rationale behind contact with such entities, whom Grant describes as "beings of intelligence and power of a far higher quality than anything we can conceive of as human... the one and only chance for mankind to advance as a whole is for individuals to make contact with such beings" ¹⁰⁶⁷.

Although subjectively dangerous and demonic entities were being addressed in HOD rituals, Woodman writes "the ambivalent character of the demonic... did not represent a source of absolute ontological evil, but was constituted as a form of 'alien otherness'" ¹⁰⁶⁸, and this somewhat ambivalent attitude to the transcending of good and evil provides a useful echo of the attitudes expressed by some of my questionnaire respondents in the Left Hand path chapter. It also follows a sentiment given in the anonymous editorial of the internal Order newsletter of the Typhonians in 1989, which said:

"in recent times the psychological, sociological and political aspects of magick... have received a great deal of attention. These aspects, though of interest on their own levels, are very limiting, however, in that they are restricted to the sphere of the solely human... the essence of magik (sic) is way beyond such limitations" ¹⁰⁶⁹.

As to whether it is conventionally 'evil'; the modern British Satanist Gavin Baddeley sees Grant's work with HPL's concepts as "partly traditional grimoire, partly *disturbing* self-psychoanalytic tract, partly surreal

¹⁰⁶⁵ This is a pseudonym that, like the group's real name, makes reference to a term used in Lovecraft's Cthulhu mythos (in this case, the title of a story).

¹⁰⁶⁶ Woodman, 'Modernity, Selfhood, and the Demonic,' unpublished thesis extract, emphasis added to Worship.

¹⁰⁶⁷ Kenneth Grant, introducing *The Ninth Arch*, *Watkins Review*, 5, 2003, p 49

¹⁰⁶⁸ Woodman, *Alien Selves*, *J. Academic Study of Magic*, 2, 2004, p 14

¹⁰⁶⁹ Khabs. III. 2. Winter Solstice 1980. 02

nightmare fiction”¹⁰⁷⁰. On this point of ‘are they evil-or-just-alien’ in 1992 the magician and author Stephen Sennitt likened the images conjured by Grant-ian ritual to those images encountered in psychedelic drug use, in that they are so alien to ‘normal’ human consciousness as to automatically cause xenophobic, if not overtly fearful, reactions. Sennitt believes this to be based on centuries of repression of this aspect of human experience by organised religion, so the images dealt with in Lovecraftian magic thus appear demonic purely by social conditioning; when in Sennitt’s worldview they are a more accurately a primeval aspect of natural and normal human psychic evolution¹⁰⁷¹. ‘Rob’ (a pseudonym), a member of the HOD seemed to distil this outlook into personal terms: “the negative emotional responses seem to occur because of our own conditioned fear of stepping beyond the construct we *mistake* for empirical ‘reality’”¹⁰⁷².

Messages from the Elder Gods?

When researching this, and my earlier chapters on Kenneth Grant I had in quick succession to re-read all nine books in the three *Typhonian Trilogies*, plus his novels, and some of Austin Spare’s works. Trying to rapidly read such overtly magical material in an ‘academic’ frame of mind, such as taking notes and identifying useful quotes is intensive work, but I made some progress and had a considerable quantity of notes typed up when I realised that I had not been outside for some days and apart from having largely run out of things to cook, I dearly needed to get some fresh air. On leaving the building I saw that three paces away from my front door, lying in the middle of the road, was a dead squid.

I laughed out loud at the sky, in very much the maniacal fashion of a doomed hero in a Lovecraftian novel who, despite his best efforts to save himself and his colleagues, is about to be consumed or torn to pieces by demonic entities from beyond the stars. The rational explanation for the presence of this symbolic representative of the tentacled god *Cthulhu* is that I lived at the time within 300 yards of the sea, at a place that was popular with night-fishermen, and the squid had probably just fallen from someone’s bait box on their way to or from the fishing grounds.

¹⁰⁷⁰ Gavin Baddeley, *Lucifer Rising: sin, devil worship and rock’n’roll*, London, Plexus, 1999, p 107, Emphasis added

¹⁰⁷¹ Stephen Sennitt, *Monstrous cults: a study of the primordial Gnosis*, Doncaster, New World, 1992, p 78-80

¹⁰⁷² Woodman, *Alien Selves*, p 21, emphasis added

However it is extremely odd that it had fallen out right outside my front door and not someone else’s (I lived part-way down a long street) and that it had remained there long enough for me to see it, without being whisked away as a free meal by the voracious flocks of seagulls who lived on the local rooftops. When I returned from a brief shopping trip the squid had gone, either snapped up by a hungry gull, or dematerialised by agents of *Cthulhu*, having done its work by impinging on my consciousness.

A magician such as Kenneth Grant would probably treat the reality of the keyboard, textbook and pen and the reality of a magically materialising symbolic squid equally. As an academic I cannot, however as a magician I hugely enjoyed the ‘cosmic exclamation mark’ that I was given. Postmodern philosophy stresses the “metaphoric and slippery nature of language over the modernist, objective, factual.... (where) meaning is not possessed by a word, an action or an object as much as it is the product of a series of relationships”¹⁰⁷³, and it is perhaps in this spirit that the phenomenon should be appreciated, neither ignored nor completely accepted, but that series of relationships be explored.

Lovecraft readers are not all magicians

As mentioned above, many more people read and collect books on magic than are actually practicing magicians. Similarly, although HPL’s work has certainly been of great influence to some modern magicians, his continual high book sale figures must not be interpreted as indicative of a 1-1 ratio of those occultists using his methods, since Lovecraft is a very popular author among armchair horror aficionados. There are also HPL fans, often the younger ones, that read and use the books as a template for the characters and settings of diverting ‘role-playing games’ (often abbreviated to RPG) such as *The Call of Cthulhu*¹⁰⁷⁴. However there may be occasional crossover: the horror and fantasy author Neil Gaiman tells of a Literature convention in England in 1983 where a panel was convened to field audience questions about Lovecraft. Most of these were factual, historical or general literary style queries, but Gaiman writes that “a thin, elderly gentleman... asked the panel whether they had given much thought to his own theory: that the Great Old Ones... had simply used poor HPL to talk to the world, to foster belief in themselves, prior

¹⁰⁷³ McCurcheon, The insider-outsider problem, p 9, in Letcher, *Role of the Bard*, p 13

¹⁰⁷⁴ Davis, *Calling Cthulhu*. (Online) www.techgnosis.com/lovecraft.html

to their ultimate return”¹⁰⁷⁵. If that ‘elderly gentleman’ were not Kenneth Grant, many occultists would be of the view that perhaps he *should* have been.

Having discussed the role of Kenneth Grant in bringing a notionally fictional *Mythos* ‘to life,’ magically speaking, I will now discuss a related ‘offspring,’ Chaos Magic, in which the nature of belief, fact and fiction is stretched even further.

¹⁰⁷⁵ Neil Gaiman, Introduction to HP Lovecraft, *The Dream Cycle of HP Lovecraft*, (Neil Gaiman, Ed.) New York. Del Rev. 2005. p viii

‘In the Irrational and Unknown Direction’

Problems in historical researches in Chaos Magics

*“There is a race of gnomes, so the story goes, who believe that nothing is possible, and there is a sect of magicians who believe that everything is”*¹⁰⁷⁶

An overall academic history of Chaos Magic has yet to be written, and this may not yet be possible, for several reasons that are discussed below. I am doubtless opening myself up to numerous criticisms for even attempting it, to be honest. The main problems for the researcher in this very new area is that due to the novel subject and the disparate and often contradictory strands within it there are no truly authoritative books, either academic or practical-magical on this subject, so research must be of a micro-historical and often individual nature, the findings of which may not be truly (or in some cases, even remotely) generalisable to the larger population of chaos magicians. Due to this factor there may *never* be any authoritative books, and an entire PhD thesis could be expended in dealing with just a few groups, individuals and publications.

In addition, by their very nature Chaos magicians (or Chaotes) are fond of deception, playing with words and demolishing the nature of beliefs, which means that the information they themselves sometimes provide is open to academic suspicion. There is an added factor, as mentioned in an earlier chapter of the assumption of one or more pseudonyms by chaos writers, so it is not always obvious if different authors are expressing true philosophical or practical accord, or it is simply the same author paraphrasing him/herself under two or more pen names.

Crucially, the practices described also change rapidly over time and are influenced by post-Modernism, as described by the modern chaos magician Phil Hine, Chaos Magic “breaks with the modernist idea of

¹⁰⁷⁶ Hine *Touched by Fire* p.c

progress and historical continuity and ... ransacks all available cultures and timezones" ¹⁰⁷⁷ and the techniques used are often highly eclectic, if not sometimes completely contradictory. In addition, chaos magic addresses (and creates) modern concepts within the use of magic, for example as Hine writes: "many magical books are dated... in the *Lesser Key of Solomon* ... there are demons who specialize in divining the fate of Kings... but you won't find any demons whose provenance relates to debugging a COBOL program or finding lost contact lenses" ¹⁰⁷⁸.

As Snell wrote, and as was reproduced earlier:

"... it is desirable to elect beliefs which offer greater scope for Magical results. The belief that our world is but a shadow play of mighty cosmic forces, which can be ... manipulated by human wisdom- that is a pretty good Magical belief.... That the world was made by one God who forbids the use of Magic is less useful... one of the worst possible Magical beliefs is that our world is made of solid matter shaped only by chance, within which human consciousness ... is mere epiphenomena. Magic-wise it's utter useless crap, and yet it is a belief heavily endorsed by our Scientific culture." ¹⁰⁷⁹

"I don't care if you break the rules... but you've got to know 'em cold if you're going to break them to good effect." ¹⁰⁸⁰

"The individual should experiment with as many techniques as he can find *or invent* in order to immediately discard those which are obviously not suitable, for whatever reason. He can then concentrate his attention on the mastery of the remaining techniques." ¹⁰⁸¹

This is in part a recapitulation of Crowley's ideas. Once the apprentice magician has convinced himself or herself that what they are doing has an effect, Hine remarks that this reinforces one's self-confidence in the performance of magic and this in turn creates a positive feedback loop, which encourages further confident experimentation and both self-belief

¹⁰⁷⁷ Hine, *Prime Chaos*, p 65

¹⁰⁷⁸ Hine, *PerMutations*, p 10

¹⁰⁷⁹ Johnstone, *SSOTBME*, p 103

¹⁰⁸⁰ Hawkins, *Understanding Chaos Magic*, p 109

¹⁰⁸¹ Ray Sherwin, *Book of Results*, Ebook, no page numbering, Chapter One, emphasis added.

and belief in magic ¹⁰⁸², with correspondingly better results over time. This gradually develops into a fully-fledged psychocosm- (which Hine defines in terms of game theory), and as Fries says: "If the visions you receive are exactly like those of Castaneda (or of me, or anybody else) you are probably fooling yourself. Can you dare to be original?" ¹⁰⁸³. Hine writes "don't take my word that such-and-such is the case, check it out for yourself. Magick has suffered extensively from 'armchair theorists' who have perpetuated myths and out-of-date information purely due to laziness of one kind or another." ¹⁰⁸⁴. An accumulation of un-tested or otherwise inaccessible 'facts' can become a hindrance, especially when they are contradictory- the Sufi proverb that "a donkey loaded down with books is not an intellectual" ¹⁰⁸⁵ may be a clue that too much 'book knowledge' can be counter-productive.

It is also important in chaos that this magic is in some way measurable. Snell bemoans the nebulous aims and poorly-defined targets of some magical aims and practices, i.e. to 'improve the world' or 'become wiser', which cannot fail, since there are no ways to measure success, whereas: "Chaos magic has ... reacted against the wishy-washy tendency in New Age magic and reminded us that the impulse to make things happen is not childish, but should be respected and restored to its place in magic" ¹⁰⁸⁶.

If the experimenter can be original then this psychocosm becomes a personal magical reality, a belief system, complete with known parameters of reality and belief, all eventually based on experience, rather than purely derivative from what one has read, or been told by a convincing 'authority figure': "if you simply imitate (me) you are doing yourself no good at all... you'll perhaps acquire a few technical skills, and this is where it all ends." ¹⁰⁸⁷. The magician Ray Sherwin writes, "recent attempts to popularize the subject have had several shattering effects ... a wealth of literature ... has become readily available. The opportunity to learn through another's mistakes speeds up one's own progress. A wide choice of material also affords the ability to choose working methods appropriate to one's own proclivities without necessarily experimenting with every method one

¹⁰⁸² Hine, *Prime Chaos*, p 20-21

¹⁰⁸³ Fries, *Visual Magick*, p 135

¹⁰⁸⁴ Hine, *Oven Ready Chaos*, p 14

¹⁰⁸⁵ Idries Shah, *The Sufis*, New York Anchor, 1971

¹⁰⁸⁶ Ramsey Dukes, *Blast!*, p 287

¹⁰⁸⁷ Fries, *Visual Magick*, p 135

comes across.”¹⁰⁸⁸. However Jan Fries also discusses the binding limitations which can be acquired by reading too many seemingly authoritative books; those which proscribe and limit magical horizons, rather than encouraging experimentation, since “far too many budding mages frustrate themselves trying to have the same visions that the authorities describe”¹⁰⁸⁹.

I hope it can be seen that historicising this process, even with an individual practitioner, is thus fraught with difficulty.

Without this innovation and individuality, Chaos magick can become “just a pretty name for organised nonconformism”¹⁰⁹⁰. Thus any historical report of chaos magic written in the early 21st Century will be possibly be out-dated by the time it is printed, and this chapter is “a view ‘up to a point’ and from a few perspectives, and not ‘the definitive’ history of all chaos magic.

Chaos History

Chaos magic derives in part from the work of Aleister Crowley and Austin Spare, who have been discussed earlier. Other than that it appears to be largely ahistorical and acultural, since practitioners delve into a multiplicity of (often contradictory, and sometimes fictional) sources, and common ground between practitioners is sometimes rather scarce. Philosophically the work of Lionel Snell, under his various pseudonyms, provides a great deal of underpinning for the method, as is discussed below. The magician and author Jaq Hawkins’ creditable attempt at both a brief history of chaos and an explanation of the methods¹⁰⁹¹ gives a probably accurate approximate date, the mid-late 1970s) for when chaos magic started, and an outline of the history of perhaps the most important chaos magic group the Illuminates of Thanateros (IOT), who are discussed below, and general chaos magic, but of necessity her short book omits large areas that were influential, for example the individual work of Phil Hine (mentioned in many places herein), Stephen Sennitt (who has worked extensively with Lovecraftian magic and general Left Hand Path matters, as discussed in previous chapters) and Joel Biroco (who

¹⁰⁸⁸ Sherwin, *Book of Results*, Chapter 2

¹⁰⁸⁹ Fries, *Visual Magick*, p 135

¹⁰⁹⁰ *Ibid*, p 43

----- *Hawkins, The Chaos Magick Handbook* -----

has been involved with several areas of both ritual magic and oriental meditative disciplines).

What is striking about chaos is the individual role, however. Aside from a number of small and often transient groups, the practices of chaos magic allow, and indeed encourage, solo work; and it is likely that there are many chaos magicians who have never been members of a group, or published any of their work at all (or if they have, it has been in one of the small circulation and short-lived chaos magazines, or on transient websites or newsgroups). As an anonymous writer for L.O.O.N (*Lincoln Order of Neuromancers*) and Lionel Snell write “forget everything you have been told about the world, assume nothing and develop your own path”¹⁰⁹², committing yourself fully to no specialism: “the uncommitted all-rounder...has saved the vital freedom for the future... (and is) still brimming with the power to adapt”¹⁰⁹³. Snell also writes that being able to switch magical systems at will allows for a more rounded system, and individual: “in our present age of increasing specialisation it is becoming less and less easy for people to talk a common language without misunderstanding and confusion. In comparison can you conceive of how great a unifying force must have been the one Latin language that linked the whole chain of command of the Christian empire?”¹⁰⁹⁴. “Specialisation is to sacrifice yourself for ‘what you are best at’ whilst refusing to admit that you might in fact be best at being *yourself*. This specialisation is a process of falling for a label, the temptation to become ‘someone’ or ‘something’”¹⁰⁹⁵.

Thus is it often purely luck for the academic researcher to discover anything about the numbers, or the work of many chaos magicians, let alone meet up, since these magicians are or were working quietly alone, and it is likely that it is only with the passage of time and release of privately-held archives that more coherent and useful information will ever come to light. Again this is an area where case study techniques would bear more fruit than purely historical textual methods. Hawkins points to London in the late 1970s as the place where a loose collective of occultists known as the *Stoke Newington Sorcerers* were in operation, and where the very influential magician Peter Carroll first made his name.

¹⁰⁹² L.O.O.N. *Apikorsus*. (On-Line). 1986, p 9

¹⁰⁹³ Angerford & Lea, *Thundersqueak*, p 59

¹⁰⁹⁴ *Ibid*, p 49-50

¹⁰⁹⁵ *Ibid* p 48, emphasis added

Carroll was already a contributor to the *New Equinox* occult magazine¹⁰⁹⁶, edited by Ray Sherwin, and both were involved in, but disillusioned by 'traditional' practical magic. They attempted to form a non-hierarchical order, the *Pact of the Illuminates of Thanateros*, often simply known as *The Pact*, or the IOT. Despite the Order having grand titles for members and a hierarchy per se, this was explained in the Order's own handbook as existing to

"utilize the positive pressure for personal development generated by such structures, and merely reflects technical magical competence... those in higher grades should refrain from criticizing... other members, and the office of Insubordinate exists to generate a constant stream of negative feedback from the lower grades to the higher"¹⁰⁹⁷.

Carroll's *Liber Null*¹⁰⁹⁸, arguably the first 'how to do chaos magic' book, was published in a small print run in 1978, with Sherwin's *Book of Results*¹⁰⁹⁹ following soon after. *Liber Null* later attracted the attention of a mainstream occult publisher, Weiser in 1987. Carroll travelled widely in the late 1970s, forming the short-lived *Church of Chaos* in Australia in 1980¹¹⁰⁰. On his return to the UK, the first IOT group was formed in Yorkshire, ceasing operation in 1982, but casting off several splinter groups. The Leeds area is significant as a focus of chaos magic, probably at least in part due to the proximity of the *Sorcerers Apprentice* occult shop and publishing house, who were early champions of chaos. Carroll's methods and imagery also seem to be influenced by a fictional writer, Michael Moorcock (1939-)¹¹⁰¹. Moorcock's numerous science-fiction/fantasy Tolkienesque novels have as their common thread a multi-dimensional battle of order against chaos, including all manner of magical events.

The forces of chaos are signified by an 8-pointed star, which is now almost a ubiquitous logo of chaos magicians, as in figure 3, below. Similarly to

1096 *The New Equinox* (Sherwin, R., Ed.) ran from 1976-1979.

1097 IOT, *First contact leaflet to newcomers*, London, IOT, 2001.

1098 Carroll, *Liber Null & Psychonaut*, 1987. The Morton Press, run by Ray Sherwin, originally published *Liber Null* in 1978.

1099 Sherwin, *Book of Results*, Ch 2. Web version has no page numbering.

1100 IOT, *The Book*, (E-Book), IOT, 2002, p 6

1101 Considerable biographical and bibliographical information about Moorcock can be found at the Terminal Café website www.novvmir.com.au/terminalcafe/index.html

Lovecraft, Moorcock's prose has inspired role-playing games¹¹⁰², he is a popular author among sci-fi aficionados plus fans of the psychedelic rock band Hawkwind who have often used his stories in lyrics (and who occasionally have Moorcock perform with them on stage), and so as with Lovecraft his book sales should again not be used as a 1:1 indication of how many chaos magicians might be in existence.

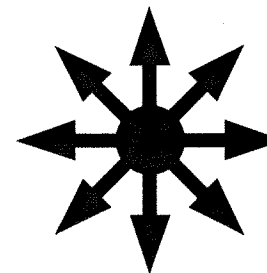


Figure 3: the Chaos star symbol used by magicians, derived from the fiction of Michael Moorcock

Chaos is characterised by many transient small groups which form, splinter and reform, often spawning short-lived small magazines (rather than books) of their practices. The fledgling IOT at this stage was described by Carroll as "rarely more than a loose correspondence network and a few people meeting for rituals"¹¹⁰³, and in the more modern form of a somewhat larger and international order it has been more recently criticised by the chaos magician and author Joel Biroco as attracting "lots of people with little occult insight (by being) shallow rubbish peddled as something deep"¹¹⁰⁴, which remark emphasises how chaos tends to bring out a great deal of internecine squabbling.

Carroll then ran the *Cabal Heraclitus*, or Bristol C.H.A.O.S. Temple from 1982-1991, when he entered alleged magical retirement¹¹⁰⁵. This was broken by his publishing *Liber Kaos* in 1992 and *PsyberMagick*¹¹⁰⁶ in 1995, and as discussed below he is still producing books, magazine

1102 See Chaosium website www.chaosium.com

1103 Peter Carroll in Dave Lee, Notes towards a brief history of IOT, unpublished mss (see above), 2001, p 1

1104 KAOS 14, p 45

1105 Lee, Notes towards, p 2

1106 Peter Carroll, *PsyberMagick*, New Falcon, Tempe, Arizona, 1997. Original 1995, and *Liber Kaos* York Beach, Maine, Weiser, 2002

articles and compact discs on the subject, as well as running a website¹¹⁰⁷ dealing in part with the magical application of physics.

Chaos Magic Groups

Although many of the practices of chaos are perhaps best-suited to individual use, there have been several notable chaos magic groups, for example *The Circle of Chaos*, mentioned in 'Paula Pagani's' book described below¹¹⁰⁸ was formed in 1984 by Dave Lee¹¹⁰⁹ and others, lasting approximately 3 years¹¹¹⁰, during which time the journal of the Pact of the IOT (and associated magicians), *Chaos International*¹¹¹¹ (CI) was founded, and is still published intermittently. The Pact itself was formally launched at a magical workshop held in Germany¹¹¹². The early development of the IOT was also hugely influenced by a large contingent of German magicians, and many current IOT members are German. However despite some intriguing research possibilities with a German contact this is outside the scope of a book about British magic. Subsequent Annual General Meetings were held in Europe, the UK and the USA, with the 2003 event in Austria and a British event in Northampton in Summer 2004. The IOT has expanded to have groups all over Europe, the USA, Japan and South America¹¹¹³.

Among other chaos groups, *Thee Temple Ov Pschick Youth* (TOPY)¹¹¹⁴ are a 'fusion' organisation, creating a crossover of punk/experimental music with chaos magical thinking and practice (heavily using techniques of sigilisation derived from Austin Spare, who was discussed above), without it being anywhere close to 'traditional ritual magic'. As discussed in the blasphemy sections much earlier, the police raided their premises in the late 1980s under a misguided suspicion of child abuse and TOPY leader Genesis P. Orridge was compelled to leave the UK during the consequent publicity storm. TOPY continues, very loosely, online without the leadership of Orridge, who had no wish to ever be head of a magical order in any case.

1107 _____, Specularium website www.specularium.org/

1108 Paula Pagani, *The Cardinal Rites of Chaos*, 1984, (E-book)

1109 Lee, *Notes towards*, p 1

1110 IOT, *The Book*, p 7

1111 Lee, *Notes towards*, p 1: CI was published from 1986 to present, although often sporadically

1112 IOT, *The Book*, p 7

1113 Dave Lee, personal communication, 25-7-2001

1114 Thee Temple Ov Pschick Youth (Website) www.topy.net

Another loose collective from the 1980s, the *Lincoln Order of Neuromancers* (L.O.O.N)¹¹¹⁵ borrowed the 'Neuromancer' in their title from William Gibson's prescient science-fiction book¹¹¹⁶ about information, cybernetics and chaos. Apart from the 'cutting edge' associations of new technology, it can also be seen as a near pun on an old term for a magician, 'necromancer'; thus the word magically implies both past and future. The term is also used by L.O.O.N. to signify the concentration of "all occult ability and potentia within the human brain"¹¹¹⁷ rather than investing it in external entities, deities or spirits. The acronym of the group also has multiple meanings, including a type of trousers fashionable in the early 1970s, but most notably 'Loon' is a colloquialism for someone with a mental illness¹¹¹⁸, namely a lunatic. The kind of situationist chaos working which they favoured was certainly outside the realms of what 'society' would have considered 'normal', for example, a L.O.O.N. banishing ritual is simply shouting "FUCK OFF YOU BASTARDS!"¹¹¹⁹, which although it has nothing of 'traditional' magical methods (involving ritual passes, special words often appealing to some nebulous deity to magically clear the ritual space, and often the ceremonial application of salt, water or incense) it would most likely have a striking effect of banishment, and be extremely amusing as a method of transgression of 'traditional' magical technique.

As mentioned in the earlier morality chapters, laughter is also an important factor in carnival and misrule, and it is probably not coincidental that 'banishing with laughter' has become an accepted chaos magical transgression technique in rituals of the Illuminates of Thanateros and other groups.

The claim by the *Lincoln Order of Neuromancers* that "Chaos Magick is already dead, and the only living debate is between the vultures over who gets to gnaw the biggest bones"¹¹²⁰ was perhaps premature (coming from the mid-1980s), but if and when the rapid diffusion and evolution of the 'Chaos Current' slows or stops, perhaps in 50 years' time, then this writing of 'approaching a definitive history of...' may be possible. However it is probable it will instead comprise an intersecting meta-study of numerous

1115 L.O.O.N., *Apikorsus*, (undated E-book), original 1986.

1116 William Gibson, *Neuromancer*, London, Gollancz, 1984.

1117 L.O.O.N. *Apikorsus*, p 16

1118 Definition: Loon: 'crazy, eccentric, silly, anarchic': *Bloomsbury Dictionary*, p 321

1119 L.O.O.N. *Apikorsus*, p 18

1120 *Ibid.* v 10

competing micro-histories of individuals and small groups within a generic collection of chaos magic. It should be seen as an umbrella term for a series of generic, fluid and still evolving numerous magical techniques and modes of thought, in much the same way that 'science' is not a subject itself, but a generic term for many sub-disciplines that have common factors and some crossover of technique.

Philosophies of Chaos

Although a relatively new movement, Chaos has a strong philosophical underpinning. The rationale behind the movement can perhaps best be summarised by Lionel Snell, one of the main occult philosophers in this area, as:

"if you are thinking of adopting a belief you can choose a famous one, or a cranky one, or you can make your own. A big famous belief from a reliable source can be convincing ... a cranky belief is more ... 'throwaway' ... to suit one's mood... most effective of all, and yet most seductive, is to invent your own system of beliefs. There are of course no rules for this" ¹¹²¹.

The *Lincoln Order of Neuromancers* (L.O.O.N) ¹¹²² provided a humorous but equally effective view of chaos: "some people feel that an age of Aquarius – truth, justice... peaceful pagan frolicking is just ... around the corner... maan. On the other hand, the possibility of the New Aeon being ruled by cannibal radioactive zombies cannot be entirely ruled out either" ¹¹²³.

On a technical point that would have many 'traditional magicians' up in arms: "in constructing a sigil involving the idea of strength it would be 'traditional' to draw the main body of the glyph in orange or red ... if the kind of strength you're looking for is perceived as blue, use blue. It is not second class magick to fly in the face of tradition but it is first class magick to use colours which have the most striking effect on you." ¹¹²⁴
Anything is possible.

¹¹²¹ Angerford & Lea, *Thundersqueak*, p142

¹¹²² L.O.O.N. *Apikorsus*. (On-Line). 1986.

¹¹²³ *Ibid*, p 6

¹¹²⁴ Sherwin. *Book of Results*. Chapter 2. no page numbering

Since there are no rules in chaos magic, the orthodox academic study of it, being rule-driven so far as methodology and disciplinary considerations are concerned, is hugely handicapped.

As Phil Hine writes, in the sphere of occult history it is almost a given that occultists will trawl backwards in time "selectively editing, and sometimes fabricating evidence to support particular models and propositions" ¹¹²⁵. However much an assumed lineage of hundreds or thousands of years might fit any particular chaos paradigm, as Peter Carroll, founder of the Illuminates of Thanateros (IOT) wrote: "the IOT continues a tradition perhaps seven thousand years old, yet the Order in the outer has no history" ¹¹²⁶. That comment was written in the late 1970s, but in 2002 a very brief history of the IOT appeared, which typically opens with the question: "Do you know that there may be no ultimate truth?" ¹¹²⁷ which continues the mind games in a book written by, and claiming to be the truth about, the IOT, when to a large extent it largely adds more fuel to the smokescreen.

Such semantic-play and/or disingenuity is not uncommon among magicians. For example as mentioned earlier, Aleister Crowley's *Book of Lies* is a selection of mystical aphorisms, which was subtitled "also falsely called breaks..." ¹¹²⁸, implying that the title of 'Lies' is itself a lie, and therefore the book instead must reveal various truths. More recently, in 2002 Peter Carroll, the original IOT founder (and supposedly by then 'retired' from magic) warned me: "don't waste your life and your academic talents on this muck (Chaos magic). It's all a total fraud, and I should know by now!" ¹¹²⁹.

However, Carroll's own chaos website ¹¹³⁰ was updated with an article by him less than 2 months before this comment was made. Less than a month after his letter to me, a Chaos Magic Compact Disc, including lectures and a guided magical working was released under his name ¹¹³¹, so as he seems to be still intimately involved with chaos magic his

¹¹²⁵ Hine, *Prime Chaos*, p 60

¹¹²⁶ Carroll, *Liber Null & Psychonaut*, p 9

¹¹²⁷ IOT, *The Book*, p 1

¹¹²⁸ Crowley, *The Book of Lies*, flyleaf, emphasis added

¹¹²⁹ Peter Carroll, Personal communication. 2-7-2002.

¹¹³⁰ _____, *Specularium*

¹¹³¹ *New Falcon Publications*, Email Press Release, New Falcon, Tempe, Arizona, 27-

remarks are best appreciated as Zen or Sufi-like humour.

The IOT information for newcomers leaflet states that its members "represent the organized side of what is usually called Chaos Magic"¹¹³², however the very notion of a '*Chaos*' Magical '*Order*', i.e. an organisation, may appear to be an oxymoron. Some groups, such as the *Lincoln Order Of Neuromancers* (a now defunct 1980s group) have evaded this semantic problem by claiming "we are not an 'order' in the accepted sense"¹¹³³. Many Chaotes do not belong to any kind of group or order, and develop their own individual methods, making the academic study and contextualising of their activities difficult, which I will now discuss.

¹¹³² IOT, *First contact*

¹¹³³ L.O.O.N. *Avikorsus*. p 10

Academic Methodology in Chaos

In studying the development of chaos magic there are several intrinsic problems for the historian. One of which is, as already remarked above, that, as Phil Hine writes "there are no definitive books on the chaos approach. No ... 'tradition'"¹¹³⁴. All other magical and mystical approaches found in Britain rely on some form of 'traditional' underpinning to give the notion of authority, often derived from an 'appeal to the power of antiquity' that is inferred by any practice being called 'traditional'. The original appeal of Wicca, for example, relied heavily on the works of Margaret Murray, which (falsely, as discussed earlier) implied a historical continuity of practice and belief for many centuries.

The manufacture of tradition and suchlike often requires the conflation of tales across cultures and time periods, creating or assuming links between these periods or cultures which are not supported (and often thoroughly refuted) by academic disciplines such as history, anthropology or archaeology. As the religious studies specialist Andy Letcher wrote in 2001,

"invented traditions should appear to be ancient and invariant... (while) 'ancient' refers to 'once upon a time' rather than any particular historical period"¹¹³⁵, and "what passes for tradition is actually a new formation... ironically the very indeterminacy of the past means that we are able to shape it to provide succour for our need for stability and continuity"

and that in any case we are often "using an imagined past to create an expressive neo tribal identity"¹¹³⁶. Although he is writing about Druidism, Letcher also refers to a notional magical past which can be applied to all strands of occultism in Britain, which lacks "any unbroken continuity through time (thus) each generation has been free to imagine, or construct...afresh" their magical heritage and influences, and to "appeal to the past, one in which convention and *invention* are interwoven"¹¹³⁷.

¹¹³⁴ Hine, *Oven Ready Chaos*, p 47

¹¹³⁵ Letcher, *Role of the Bard*, p 123

¹¹³⁶ *Ibid*, p 130, 127

¹¹³⁷ *Ibid*. p 21. emphasis added

One liberating bonus of chaos magic (for the participant) is the freedom from the influence of such dogmatic texts and atmospheres. Phil Hine discusses the binding limitations imposed on the apprentice magician which can be acquired by reading too many 'authoritative books'; ones which proscribe and limit magical horizons, rather than encouraging experimentation, such as Chaos, and he cites Timothy Leary's remark that "dangerous, habit-forming books should be locked away"¹¹³⁸, and Peter Carroll's remark that "the most powerful minds cling to the fewest fixed principles"¹¹³⁹.

This stance is academically known as *Kathenotheism*, and derives from the German-born Comparative Religion scholar and philosopher Max Muller (1823-1900)¹¹⁴⁰ whose work on Asiatic religions popularised the Buddhist notions of non-attachment in the West, which in turn influenced Aleister Crowley's ideas of philosophical scepticism, and from which the ultimate 'believe nothing, doubt-everything' view of chaos magic arguably sprang.

Another academic analytical problem is that of direction of influence: many new magical techniques seem to have become popular at around the same time as chaos magic appeared, but the question is did the broadening appeal of Chaos magic create an environment where other techniques could arise (or be rediscovered) more freely, or did these techniques (such as modern shamanism and western Tantra) blend into Chaos, having been revived by chaos magicians who were in search of new techniques? Or is the apparent correlation simply that, a coincidence, and acausal in either direction? It is perhaps likely that chaos allowed an environment in which experimentation was encouraged, and among modern occultists it is more often the Chaotes who demonstrate the greater ability to be free thinkers, to be willing to try anything and to adapt to fluid, challenging and non-linear modes of thinking. As Snell wrote:

"a sorcerer... chooses his own maps to suit his own desires. When faced with an insoluble dilemma he will not be daunted by belief of man's finite capacity, but will opt to believe in the Tarot, astrology, I Ching or whatever system... and will accept its advice without fear. In practical work he ... he will choose to believe in whatever system

¹¹³⁸ Hine, *Prime Chaos*, p 16

¹¹³⁹ ———, *Pseudonomicon*, p 29 citing Carroll in *Liber Null*

¹¹⁴⁰ Wikipedia website en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Friedrich_Max_Muller

that will allow the effect he wants to take place"¹¹⁴¹.

In common with many 'new movements' (in any field) chaotes are often seen by their contemporaries, both in the occult (or secular materialist) world, as anarchists, dangerous and/or worrying revolutionaries. The modern occult philosopher Snell described the 'continuum of perceived evil' as discussed in an earlier chapter, and chaos magicians were seen to be very far towards the 'evil' end of the spectrum. Snell also wrote "a materialist world is not flexible. It is brittle, and would shatter rather than stretch to make room for magic"¹¹⁴², and it is probable that within that view the wider magical world itself is not flexible enough to completely accept chaos magic, in a similarly brittle fashion.

A parallel has been identified between the philosophies and effects of early Chaos magic and the 'Punk Rock' movement in fashion, music and the general societal disaffection of youth (and some older people too...)¹¹⁴³. All of these appeared at around the same time, in the late 1970s, and revolted against the perceived complacency inherent in the current order or 'the system' (be that magical or musical), and in the process to cause dismay, as Snell wrote "to pursue chaos magic is to ride the comet's tail-and it is great fun. Having such a shameless, wicked reputation is even greater fun"¹¹⁴⁴, since shock is one means to magically dismantle a staid, lethargic mindset.

The seemingly amoral, nihilistic motto of Chaotes, 'nothing is true, everything is permitted' (which was discussed in my morality chapters) was also disturbing to reflexive onlookers, since as Hine pointed out "the implied criticism was that 'chaos magicians' would become immoral monsters capable of just about *anything*"¹¹⁴⁵, and "say to some people you're into Chaos Magick - they look at you as if you ate babies or something"¹¹⁴⁶

As Lionel Snell wrote "a truly free spirit would be able to say *anything*

¹¹⁴¹ Angerford & Lea, *Thundersqueak*, p 129-130

¹¹⁴² *Ibid*, p 115

¹¹⁴³ Hawkins, *Understanding Chaos*, p 31

¹¹⁴⁴ Johnstone, *SSOTBME*, p 18

¹¹⁴⁵ Hine, *PerMutations*, p 12

¹¹⁴⁶ Phil Hine. Endless Rest Inscrutable Suspense. *Chaos International*. 1. 0 18

to a lie detector, for its function is to detect anxiety, i.e. bondage¹¹⁴⁷. So a truly free spirit will create his own truth as he goes along¹¹⁴⁸, and Ray Sherwin added, "beliefs are not permanent concepts but changeable commodities which can be managed by the magician (and others) and manipulated to his benefit. When asked 'What do you believe?' the magician, speaking from the central stillness of himself, should be able to reply, in all honesty, 'I believe nothing'. With such a blank slate at his disposal the magician can then adopt and discard beliefs as he sees fit"¹¹⁴⁹. This stance, of course, makes the job of the academic incredibly hard...

Therefore it is the Chaotes who put the most strain both on a secular materialist world-view and the attitudes of more doctrinaire and inflexible occultists, who rely on tradition and history both as inspiration and an anchor. The magician and author Phil Hine believes that: "a great deal of occult memes ... were spawned in the heyday of the Theosophical Society"¹¹⁵⁰. As mentioned above, the Theosophical Society was most active, or at least most influential in the latter half of the nineteenth century, however chaos aims to sweep much of this aside, as a modern occult writer Nadine Gerkowska wrote: "approaches of the 19th Century... are not just restrictive, but obsolete... simply because the language and conceptual frames of reference from much of the second millennium have evolved so much, that they are now far removed from gestalts of the last few decades"¹¹⁵¹. This is an excellent point, since much else from the 19th Century, such as the science, medicine, politics and morality of the time has moved on considerably today.

As the magician and occult philosopher Lionel Snell wrote, Austin Spare's principle of magically acting 'as if...' is one

"correct approach to a Magical theory ... not to seek to disprove it as one would with a Scientific theory¹¹⁵², but to see if you can convince yourself that it is true by acting as if it were true. If this results in the theory 'working', then you rejoice in it as a practical tool. What you

1147 'Bondage' for example, here being a cognitive or emotional attachment to a 'relative truth'

1148 Angerford & Lea, *Thundersqueak*, p 169

1149 Sherwin, *Book of Results*, Chapter One, no page numbering

1150 Hine, *Breeding Devils*,

1151 Nadine Gerkowska, *The Latent Self*, *Kaos Magick Journal*, 2,1, (E-book), p 2

1152 Karl Popper, *The Logic of Scientific Discovery*, London, Routledge, 1983, Original 1934, first English edition 1950.

do not do is assume... it must be 'true' in any significant sense"¹¹⁵³.

The philosopher Karl Popper (1902-1994) derived the Falsification method of philosophical and scientific enquiry after he realised that one cannot 'prove' anything absolutely. All one can do is support a notion by being unable to find contrary evidence, or fail to support a notion by falsifying the logic or assumptions behind it. Thus 'truth' is always conditional, and subject to later falsification. A real world, if probably mythologised example might illustrate this: a friend's father told me that he was educated many years ago and in a physics lesson they were told that 'the atom is absolutely the smallest particle in the universe'. That evening on the radio news it was announced that scientists had split the atom. Thus all truth is conditional upon being falsified.

This may seem at first glance to be a convenient sidestepping of difficult or insoluble philosophical questions by those perhaps insane or intellectually unable to deal with the matters raised. However, many of the initial players in the IOT and chaos magic in general were university graduates; in 'hard science' subjects such as chemistry, psychology, geology etc, and those requiring significant grasp of complex philosophies, such as theology¹¹⁵⁴. They included Snell, a Cambridge graduate and one-time Eron mathematics tutor (whose insightful and influential philosophical perspectives are to be found scattered throughout this book), in their number¹¹⁵⁵, so any simplistic labelling of leading Chaotes as naïve or in some way stupid, 'mad', ill-educated, or irrational (as the anthropologist Tanya Lurhmann appeared to conclude in advance of *all* magicians, as mentioned earlier¹¹⁵⁶) would be erroneous and insulting.

It would be more accurate to infer that they have developed a philosophical system that works, for them, rather than simply chosen to remain within the confines of one of the more (in their perspective) 'limited' magical systems. As Lionel Snell writes:

"By spelling out so clearly the 'as if' process, and wrapping it in semi-Scientific terms such as ... 'paradigms of choice', chaos magic provides almost bomb-proof defence against the sort of delusions

1153 Johnstone, *SSOTBME.*, p 17

1154 Hawkins, *Understanding Chaos*, p 33

1155 Lionel Snell, Personal communication, 21-2-2002

1156 Lurhmann, *Persuasions*, ch 23

which used to befall inexperienced dabblers in Magic... Paradoxically... it has gained a red-hot reputation for being the most dangerous, sinister and crazed form of Magical madness extant¹¹⁵⁷. What happens when you force motorcyclists to wear helmets? ... they go faster... when cars are provided with seat belts, crumple zones... air bags- people drive even faster... It is precisely the bomb-proof intellectual basis of chaos magic which makes it so secure and ... tempts its practitioners to rush in where angels fear to tread- invoking every weird and awesome entity... and inventing even weirder ones to feed the need for speed!"¹¹⁵⁸.

This is one reason why it is not for beginners. Snell continues:

"the Magical method is to act 'as if' a theory is correct until it has done its job, and only then to replace it with another theory... as long as this approach is carried out properly- with a Magician's understanding that the theory is being accepted only because it is 'working' not because it is 'true' - then there is little danger of delusion"¹¹⁵⁹.

The notion that chaos magicians might in some way be unintelligent or deranged by definition is perhaps derived in part, as one anonymous magician told me in 2003, from their odd behaviour as viewed by the outsider "the problem with chaos magicos is that we're really rather mercurial, we're always swapping styles, attitudes, beliefs... and T-shirts! Normal folk tend to be much more habitual and middle-of-the-road- so to them we appear to be rapidly-changing raving schizophrenics!"¹¹⁶⁰.

This chaos approach may also be seen as a restatement of the quote widely attributed to Voltaire (1694-1778) that "if God did not exist it would be necessary to invent him"¹¹⁶¹; however in Chaos this is just another device to be used as a transient belief. The paradigm shift technique is also used with magical techniques where one assumes the existence of non-human entities such as 'gods' and 'demons': "If you intend to work with god forms, invoke several of them. Monotheism tends to produce very unbalanced magicians. Each god we contact will be linked

¹¹⁵⁷ Johnstone, *SSOTBME.*, p 18

¹¹⁵⁸ *Ibid*

¹¹⁵⁹ *Ibid*, p 34

¹¹⁶⁰ Anonymous magician, conversation, July 2003.

¹¹⁶¹ *Quotations Online*, Voltaire Quotes, adding 'Her', or 'It', or 'They' in the case of Chaos

to another, hitherto subconscious, aspect of our being"¹¹⁶². Such acts are a modern version of Crowley's methods of serial devotional exercises; where complete belief in deity 'A' is used during rituals to them, until contact is made, then the intention to contact deity A is immediately dropped and deity 'B' is chosen (being from a different cultural pantheon from deity 'A'), until contact with them is established, and then all efforts are expended to contact deity 'C', who again comes from a different pantheon, and so on, in order to bolster belief in personal ability to contact entities, but not propagating any one deity-centric belief over any other.

As mentioned in my discussion of the operational definition of magic in the introduction, in some chaos circles the ultimate reality of any 'higher beings' is often denied, and is highlighted by the magician Phil Hine:

"In attempting to disentangle contemporary magick from the trappings of religiosity ... advocates of the Chaos Current have taken up a pretty hard line... on ... Mysticism... while it is permissible to applaud Crowley's practical magick, a hard-line 'Carrollian' chaoist is likely to deplore (Crowley's) mystical writing"¹¹⁶³.

What matters to most Chaotes is simply belief, any belief, which gives impetus to their magical work, which is described by Lionel Snell, an influential philosopher in this area:

"a statement such as 'Beyond the realm of the senses there exist dark forces which govern this world, mighty powers mastered by a Priestly caste before the Fall using secret knowledge ... (is) terrific stuff, and damn good Magic for those ... able to swallow all that. Unfortunately for Magic... our Scientific education has ... constricted the throat..."

Snell remarked to me that although he greatly admires the scholarship involved in the recent great academic advances in studying the history of the occult, such published advances do make honest belief assumptions (of immemorial Priestly castes still holding power, for example) for magical purposes much harder for the modern mind to take, however "chaos magic allows for such modern sensibilities by putting the dogma through a blender... (such as) 'let us adopt a belief system in which...'

¹¹⁶² Fries, *Visual Magick*, p 75

¹¹⁶³ Hine, *De-Magickation*, p 33

and then follows the above crap about dark forces. The word 'paradigm' makes a useful blender for over-Scientific sensibilities."¹¹⁶⁴

As the modern American chaos magician Jerome Plotkin wrote: "whatever you choose as a dogma, you must *believe* it in order to utilize it"¹¹⁶⁵.

Q: Who goes there? A: Who asks 'who goes there?'

In studying any other religious belief or practice, the adherents of each can be more or less easily identified by particular behaviours they undertake or beliefs they hold, which will be different to other groups, in the same way that Strict Muslims can be differentiated from Orthodox Jews by such factors as appearance, diet, holy days, holy books etc. In chaos this is not the case, the sheer eclecticism makes it difficult to confidently label anyone as a chaos magician, since as the modern magician and author Jaq Hawkins points out "chaos magic leaves the practitioner free to establish his/her own ideas of method, ethics and appropriate uses of magic ... it ... transcends tradition and dogma" and "any and all methods are allowed and encouraged, the only requirement is that it works"¹¹⁶⁶. It has been mentioned earlier that, 'if you ask any two magicians a procedural question you may well get three answers.' These answers would, though, be vaguely similar, or at least traceable back to some common factors or principles. However, as Hine writes, "if you approach two *chaos* magicians and ask 'em what they're doing ... you're rarely likely to find much ... consensus. This makes chaos difficult to pin down ... which again tends to worry those who need approaches ... to be neatly labeled and clear"¹¹⁶⁷.

Apart from a general tendency to draw at times from the works of Aleister Crowley and/or Austin Osman Spare, if there is anything else in which Chaotes are in accord (which itself is debatable) it is that 'anything goes' so far as method and belief is concerned. This can mean a death for organised (and thus more likely to be recorded) and researchable spiritual practices. To the observer a Chaote may appear to be practicing Wiccan rites, Shamanism, Ceremonial Magic, Voodoo, Buddhism

¹¹⁶⁴ Johnstone, *SSOTBME.*, p 17, and Lionel Snell, conversation, April 2002.

¹¹⁶⁵ Plotkin, *Anti-Illuminati*, p 57, emphasis original

¹¹⁶⁶ Hawkins, *Understanding Chaos*, p 5-6

¹¹⁶⁷ Hine, *Oven Ready Chaos*, p 16, emphasis added

and Druidism (for example) on successive days, and doing all manner of other practices in-between, as Hawkins again writes: "the Chaos Magician may choose to direct his/her belief appropriately to the religion in connection with the ritual, but this still is not the same as *belonging* to the religion"¹¹⁶⁸, but this should not be seen as some off-hand or casual, faddish alignment.

As Phil Hine writes, regardless of one's personal background, it is complete involvement, immersion and relevant behaviour *in the process* of whatever religious practice that is essential: "you can selectively believe that a particular theory or model of magical action is true *only* for the duration of a particular ritual or phase of work"¹¹⁶⁹. These techniques to widen reality, and sample different realities are called paradigm shifts¹¹⁷⁰. Transcendence of this labeling is a liberating aspect of life, and takes the magician beyond normal social spheres, in which they may become something of an outsider to society, and as Lionel Snell wrote: "Government cannot handle humans...it can only handle labels"¹¹⁷¹.

Multiple Maps

A prime entry criterion for the IOT, given in their own introductory manual is that "the candidate has proven to be open-minded and ... independent and free of dogmatic beliefs"¹¹⁷², and on initiation he/she must assert that "there may be no ultimate truth"¹¹⁷³. That this might *itself* be considered a dogmatic belief is not philosophically addressed in their text. As remarked earlier, the ultimate state of mind for the Chaote was held, in the early 1980s by chaos pioneer Ray Sherwin, to be that

"beliefs are ... changeable commodities ... managed by the magician ... and manipulated to his benefit. When asked 'What do you believe?' the magician ... should be able to reply, in all honesty, 'I believe nothing.' With such a blank slate at his disposal the magician can then adopt and discard beliefs as he sees fit."¹¹⁷⁴.

¹¹⁶⁸ Hawkins, *Understanding Chaos*, p 99, emphasis added

¹¹⁶⁹ Hine, *Prime Chaos*, p 27, emphasis added.

¹¹⁷⁰ *Ibid*, p 47

¹¹⁷¹ Angerford & Lea, *Thundersqueak*, p 58

¹¹⁷² IOT, *The Book*, p 15

¹¹⁷³ *Ibid*, p 24

¹¹⁷⁴ Sherwin, *Book of Results*, Ch 1. Ebook version has no page numbering.

This causes obvious problems for the historian, as something a chaos magician tells the researcher on one day 'in all honesty' may be comprehensively refuted or contradicted in a subsequent meeting, which may give some insight to my letter from Peter Carroll, discussed above, where he called chaos magic rubbish and a waste of time, while still being involved in the process.

Lionel Snell highlights the interpretative danger of literalism and of reversion of meaning to the erroneous 'man in the street' tabloid perception of chaos as being akin to anarchy: "oh what fun to smash the world up. Kill tyrants, tear up maps, rearrange tables! That's what anarchy is all about, or so the papers tell us" ¹¹⁷⁵. As well as the literalist notion, the older and more 'traditional' branches of occultism (here meaning those who were in existence before around 1975!) have raised various 'theological' objections to Chaos Magic. These are based on the breadth of often seemingly contradictory material that can be, and is, employed and the 'heretical' application of god forms that 'aren't real'. However, pragmatic Chaotes such as Phil Hine hold that: "what matters is the results ... not the 'authenticity' of the system used" ¹¹⁷⁶, and often deny the 'reality' of any system (including their own), as discussed by Lionel Snell: "we have grown so used to seeing through other people's visions of our world, should we not extend our cynicism towards reality itself?" ¹¹⁷⁷.

As discussed in the magic and morality chapters, 'traditional' occultists also object to what is seen as an overt 'dark' or somewhat 'evil' side to Chaos, approaching 'black magic', and a glamorous appeal to occult newcomers, which seemed threatening. When it was first published in the mainstream occult book world, Carroll's *Psychonaut* was cautiously reviewed by one pagan magazine as being potentially very dangerous for the novice practitioner ¹¹⁷⁸, and his *Liber Null* as being ethically dubious ¹¹⁷⁹. Chaos is acknowledged by its practitioners as being 'not for beginners'. This is in one respect on experimental moral philosophical grounds, and in another respect that as chaos is so challenging to established practical methods the beginner in chaos magic should already know and respect these other methods to an extent first both in order to be able to either use them well, and to effectively transgress them in a meaningful

¹¹⁷⁵ Angerford & Lea, *Thundersqueak*, p 142

¹¹⁷⁶ Hine, *Oven Ready Chaos*, p 10

¹¹⁷⁷ Angerford & Lea, *Thundersqueak*, p 115

¹¹⁷⁸ *Aquarian Arrow*, 16 (1983), p 33

¹¹⁷⁹ *Aquarian Arrow*, 18 (1984), p 27

way, as Ray Sherwin wrote in 1982: "there is no virtue in incorporating traditional ideas ... if the operator considers them to be glib or ineffective" ¹¹⁸⁰.

As was written of Oscar Wilde by the historian Michael Foldy, "an artist ... has no ethical sympathies at all. Virtue and wickedness are to him simply what the colours on his palette are to the painter" ¹¹⁸¹. It is in this vein that the transgressive method or philosophy of chaos often leads in to the popularising of such allegedly dark and evil areas (to the general public and tabloid media at least) as Satanism. While not all chaos magicians are by any means Satanists, and not all Satanists are chaos magicians, there is certainly some crossover, since tenets of individualism and individual agency are shared with both systems, and chaos magic encourages experiment with many techniques.

Of all the magical approaches it is perhaps Satanism that has historically received the 'worst press'. Academics and modern Satanists are in agreement on this, the Satanist Anton LaVey writing in 1969 "all of the books about the Devil have been written by the agents of God. It is, therefore, quite easy to understand how a certain breed of devil worshippers was created through the *inventions of theologians*" ¹¹⁸², and the modern historian Jean La Fontaine pointing out that "*any...* occult groups may be labelled Satanists by Christians" ¹¹⁸³.

¹¹⁸⁰ Sherwin, *Book of Results*, Ch 2

¹¹⁸¹ Wilde, in Foldy, *Oscar Wilde*, p 110 fn 59

¹¹⁸² LaVey, *Satanic Bible*, p 97, emphasis added

¹¹⁸³ La Fontaine, *Satanism, Athlone History of Witchcraft and Magic*, p 88. Emphasis added

The Church of Satan

As mentioned, due to their shared individualistic approach, Satanism is often popular as a paradigm among chaos magicians. The *Church of Satan* (COS) was formed in the spring of 1966 in San Francisco, and English and European branches soon appeared. The founder, Anton LaVey said “calling it a Church enabled me to follow the magic formula of nine parts outrage to one part social respectability that is needed for success”¹¹⁸⁴.

LaVey died in 1997, and many smaller offshoot Satanic groups have appeared, including the *Temple of Set* and the *Order of the Nine Angles*, both of which are worthy of an entire PhD thesis rather than this tiny overview, the length of which will disappoint my contacts in the COS, for which I apologise. Over one third of LaVey’s *Satanic Bible* was (in terms of page count) comprised of the Enochian Keys or Calls derived from the work of the Elizabethan court magician Dr John Dee and then employed by the *Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn* and Aleister Crowley in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The book is dedicated to 49 people, including Aleister Crowley, HP Lovecraft and Friederich Nietzsche¹¹⁸⁵, however LaVey’s version has a slight ‘Satanisation’ in that some of the Enochian entity names are replaced with the name of Satan and various Satanic concepts (replacing any mention of Heaven with that of Hell, for example), which LaVey considers to be the true, ‘restored’ version¹¹⁸⁶. The calls are given by LaVey as being for specific magical purposes, and not, as in Crowley’s version, as a sequence of rituals to be performed in a numerical order¹¹⁸⁷.

Perhaps anticipating the ‘challenge all’ chaos magic approach, LaVey wrote in 1969:

“no creed must be accepted on authority of a ‘divine’ nature. Religions must be put to question. No moral dogma must be taken for granted...there is nothing inherently sacred about moral codes”¹¹⁸⁸.

1184 Burton H Wolfe, Introduction to LaVey, *Satanic Bible*, p 9-10, 13

1185 LaVey, *Satanic Bible*, dedication page

1186 *Ibid*, p 145

1187 Aleister Crowley, Vision and the Voice, in *Gems from the Equinox*, Phoenix, Falcon, 1986-1914, p 431-591, Original periodical 1909-1914

1188 LaVey, *Satanic Bible*, p 26

and “the great contribution to civilized thought made by the *Church of Satan* is its celebration of the complete human being instead of the spirit alone”¹¹⁸⁹.

Indeed many quotations from LaVey would go (and have gone) down perfectly as chaos magical principles, for example:

“fantasy plays an important part in any religious curriculum, for the subjective mind is less discriminating about the quality of its food than it is about the taste”¹¹⁹⁰, and “no standard can or should be deified, for under the proper conditions any standard can be changed”¹¹⁹¹, and “though empires can be destroyed, the most difficult of human creations to break is habit”¹¹⁹², and “we know one of the keys to success is an unflinching belief that there are no rules”¹¹⁹³, and “we live in a world of subliminals. If no one has an original thought, it’s understandable. External influences permeate our lives. For most its TV or other media”¹¹⁹⁴.

As with the sales of Lovecraft, discussed above, it should not be assumed from the healthy continuation of the *Satanic Bible* and LaVey’s similar such books in print for over 30 years (a feat which is very rare in occult titles, or indeed any minority interest titles), that there are huge numbers of practicing Satanic magicians who are members of organised groups such as the COS. Many readers will have been attracted by the individualist approach, and as such they will be ‘philosophical satanists’ (with no capital ‘S’) rather than magical practitioners as such. As the historian Jean La Fontaine wrote: modern “Satanists could ... be described as both hedonist and individualist, although they themselves might refer instead to anti-puritanism and anti-authoritarianism, all authority being perceived as equally evil”¹¹⁹⁵. LaVey himself wrote “I like to think of the *Church of Satan* as an organisation for non-joiners. Affiliation need not negate independence”¹¹⁹⁶.

1189 Wolfe, Introduction to LaVey, *Satanic Bible*, p 14

1190 LaVey, *Satanic Rituals*, p 15

1191 *Ibid*, p 16

1192 LaVey, *Satan Speaks!*, p 95

1193 *Ibid*, p 61

1194 *Ibid*, p 79

1195 La Fontaine, *Satanism, Athlone History of Witchcraft and Magic*, p 89

1196 LaVey, *Satan Speaks!*, p 163

Chaos Magical Pedigree

Aside from any who have been involved to whatever level in Satanism, of the well-known Chaotes all seem to have a background or experience in other magical fields, for example Phil Hine has published on shamanism, Tantra and ceremonial magic, Dave Lee is very knowledgeable in incense manufacture (the use of which tends to accompany more ceremonial forms of magic) and is a Neuro Linguistic Programming and Breathwork practitioner, Steve Wilson is involved in Wiccan and Druidic practices, as is Julian Vayne (who works with Afro-Caribbean and Tantric magic too). After his rather neo-pagan Kibbo Kift related upbringing (discussed earlier) Lionel Snell became a member of both the IOT and the more 'traditional' Crowleyan OTO (and he performed the *Abramelin Operation* in the 1970s; a very lengthy piece of 'mediaeval' ceremonial magic). Thus a previous 'traditional' occult pedigree of some kind seems common before entering this field.

As well as to satisfy the needs of knowledge of traditional methods before they are transgressed (as discussed above) this is perhaps because, as Phil Hine wrote "chaos magic is not an overall belief-system in quite the same way (as) other magical belief-systems... a colleague who played a key role in the formation of the IOT ... is ... *primarily* a Runemaster"¹¹⁹⁷.

The insoluble paradox remains as to whether individuals in the chaos field are true believers in one or other strand of magic, but are wearing the mask of chaos, or they are being truly eclectic and convincing 'as if...'. Chaotes, seeming to be true believers in a particular strand of occultism only for the duration of their need to hold that belief as a tool. This remains a central problem for the historian who attempts to research chaos magicians.

Another factor decried by traditionalists was that contrary to previously 'accepted wisdom' in occultism, encyclopaedic knowledge and book-learning in a subject or a mythology before performing a chaos ritual were unnecessary, instead what was required was a willingness to experiment, and apprehend the overall view, results, and taking on a new philosophy, for example as Lionel Snell wrote: "instead of probing ... for an 'explanation' ... just accept it with a non-explanation... if you see a ghost, call it

1197 Hine, *Prime Chaos*, p 52-53, emphasis added.

a ghost... do not set out to shatter the accepted world view, instead... ignore some of the rules"¹¹⁹⁸. In much the same way, it is not necessary to understand every last mechanical, chemical and electrical nuance of how a motor-car functions in order to get in and travel from A to B.

One reason mentioned earlier for the absence of an overall authoritative book on chaos is that it is very much a practical approach rather than relying on creation and expansion of textual dogma. As Phil Hine points out the IOT was founded on the notions of 'doing' magic, rather than just reading (or writing) about it: "magick has become obfuscated under a weight of words... technical terms which exclude the uninitiated and serve those who are eager for a 'scientific' jargon"¹¹⁹⁹. LaVey contended that all books of magic (prior to his own attempts, of course) were "sanctimonious fraud - guilt-ridden ramblings and esoteric gibberish"¹²⁰⁰ and "if the shortest distance between two points is a straight line, then established occultists would do well as maze-makers"¹²⁰¹. Such books, and suffocating attitudes, prosper perhaps because, as the magician and artist Jan Fries wrote, "most magicians... have a fatal tendency to prefer all sorts of traditional formulae... to the simple act of asking the deep self"¹²⁰² how to make things work"¹²⁰³. Since the initial formation of the IOT and the early heroic support of chaos by the *Sorcerer's Apprentice Press* based in Leeds (which was a regional hotbed of chaos magicians in the 1980s)¹²⁰⁴, there has been both a great popularisation of the occult as a book subject and the advent of rapid publishing on the Internet.

Both of the latter, while allowing speedy dispersion of new ideas also compounds this problem of obfuscation, as the same spurious occult theory, unlikely anecdote or wrong quote can rapidly travel across dizzying numbers of websites and online newsgroups, or pass from book to book without any intervening verification or analysis, in the way that for example Amado Crowley's fabricated tale of his involvement in the Montauk incident, discussed earlier, has spread. This gain of apparent authority *via* repetition often leads to the easy creation and dispersal of skewed notions, or dogma, however erroneous they may be.

1198 Angerford & Lea, *Thundersqueak*, p 132-3

1199 Hine, *Oven Ready Chaos*, p 5-6

1200 LaVey, *Satanic Bible*, p 17

1201 *Ibid*, p100

1202 Here Fries means 'the unconscious'

1203 Fries, *Visual Magick*, p 45

1204 *Via their League of Their Magicians*

As a counter to one aspect of this 'automatic authority *via print*' aspect, more recently, the IOT has introduced the suffix '*untested*' on their newly designed rituals to indicate a practice that is entirely experimental; and they give detailed comments on those rituals that have actually been used. The IOT leans towards the uncomplicated, largely eschewing long rituals that have to be written down to be performed ¹²⁰⁵, manifesting the desire of an earlier American magician and pupil of Crowley, Jack Parsons (1914-1952), who wrote: "there is too much claptrap in the present method of presentation... (of magic) the modern spirit requires an austere simplicity of approach" ¹²⁰⁶.

Phil Hine points out that each individual's practices will change over time, often rapidly: "you weave your own path of development, rather than following someone else's - and how you weave that path is largely left up to you" ¹²⁰⁷. This absence of a set, and thus accessible, definable schema behind chaos magic, both across and within individuals, and the often rapid changes over time, again cause problems in studying Chaos as an academic subject, even at a micro-historical level, since in the process of magic the Chaote changes immeasurably, and if, as Peter Carroll wrote: "you cannot be said to possess a personality until you are able to manipulate it or discard it at will" ¹²⁰⁸, it is unlikely that much accurate personal history will be preserved unscathed during such a process.

As might be expected, the magicians themselves often have little concern for this resultant scholarly problem, which is trivial compared to their own rapid evolution. As Lionel Snell wrote "it is usually unnecessary to study history ... (it) is just a junk room for muddled thinkers" ¹²⁰⁹. Perhaps as an illustration of how a chaos magician can adapt to any necessary need, long after writing that remark Lionel has been of immense and kind voluntary help to me in preparing this book, in the discipline of History.

Although the two never met nor knew of each other, Jack Parsons' occult world-view was similar to Austin Osman Spare's. Parsons also showed a splendid precognition of the Chaos magic methods that would arise (to a large extent from the work of Spare), over 20 years after both he and

¹²⁰⁵ IOT, *The Book*, p 28

¹²⁰⁶ Parsons, *Correspondence...*, letter of 27-1-1950.

¹²⁰⁷ Hine, *Oven Ready Chaos*, p 47

¹²⁰⁸ Carroll, *Liber Null & Psychonaut*, p 48

¹²⁰⁹ Anwerford & Lea. *Thundersaeak*. p 12

Spare had died, if at the same time showing a poor historical grasp and demonstrating a 'golden-age' mentality regarding the past:

"we live a symbol of what we know it (Life) is, and, finally transcending the symbol, become one with it. This is the wisdom of the cave-men that we have lost. It was their sanity; the lack of it is our madness. We no longer know how to *act*, and having lost the symbol we have lost the reality... not by logic, nor by intellect, nor by reason can we regain it - but by wild dances, solemn rites and chants in unknown tongues. Only in the irrational and unknown direction can we come to it again" ¹²¹⁰.

However this is not entirely a quaint reversion to, and reliance on simple, older times. Unlike magical strands which rely on a notional and selective past, Chaos is not bound by rules or subject boundaries, so can plunder ideas from any source or method from tribal shamanism to pop culture to modern physics to 'high church' neo-paganism to extant religions. Aleister Crowley's pupil Jack Parsons was a 'hard' scientist, being an expert in rocket propulsion, his work arguably being the foundation of the US space programme as well as magician. He wrote "it is in the application of ingenious scientific method to transcendental ends that success lies... this is the way of any great artist" ¹²¹¹, for example; the oft-cited 'Butterfly Effect' in Chaos mathematics theory ¹²¹² derives from sciences such as meteorology. In brief, although there are averages and means in the weather, accurate and precise forecasting is made most difficult due to seemingly random, small variations, which accumulate and influence the future development of a weather system. From this comes the comment to the effect that 'a butterfly flapping its wings in Africa can be the start of a hurricane in America', as every hurricane has to start with a tiny increase in velocity of the air ¹²¹³. It is precisely this issue of 'small beginnings' that chaos magicians such as Peter Carroll regard as easier to influence with magic, in order to have larger ultimate effects in the world: "it is sometimes possible to bring about the required coincidence by the direct intervention of the will provided that this does not put too great a strain on the universe" ¹²¹⁴.

¹²¹⁰ Parsons, *Correspondence...*, letter of 8-2-1950.

¹²¹¹ *Ibid*

¹²¹² James Gleick, *Chaos, making a New Science*, London, Sphere, 1987, p 21-23

¹²¹³ Hawkins, *Understanding Chaos*, p 41-3

¹²¹⁴ Carroll. *Liber Null & Psychonaut*. p 20

Chaos Parallels

Looking at chaos in the larger view of historical change it may be useful to parallel scientific and magical views in different periods of the last one hundred years or so. Freud's psychoanalysis¹²¹⁵ (based on sexuality) was the dominant paradigm while the sex magick of Aleister Crowley was in the vanguard of occultism. Later, Jungian psychology¹²¹⁶ was in the forefront of psychology at roughly the same time as his theories of archetypes were adopted by the 1960s-1970s pagan revival, discussed above. The 'new broom' of Chaos magic has arisen at the same time as post-modernism is deconstructing history, culture, art, philosophy and science at every level. Simultaneously the 'new physics' of quantum indeterminacy¹²¹⁷ causes real doubts as to the nature of the physical universe and the 'magical' power of words is being exploited by the psychological techniques of Neuro-Linguistic Programming (NLP)¹²¹⁸, (a scientific-psychological and rapid means of hypnotic behaviour modification) to sweep aside many old models of our world.

This apparent correlation, which is certainly over-simplified and stated too baldly, requires considerable further interdisciplinary research and discussion, which is beyond the scope of this book, but I suspect that it would bring forth most interesting fruit.

Masks and Façades

Another problem in historical research in this area is the identification and veracity of sources. For example *The Cardinal Rites of Chaos*¹²¹⁹ a book released in the 1980s that claims a 1960's genesis of some techniques that figure in current Chaos magic.

The four rituals described in the short book are calendrically Wiccan or Druidic (occurring on four of the eight 'traditional' Pagan festival dates, being the two solstices and two equinoxes). Many strands of Paganism observed an annual cycle of festivals and ceremonies that struc-

1215 Sigmund Freud, *The Freud reader*, (P. Gay, ed), London, Random House, 1995.

1216 Carl Jung, *Man and his symbols*, London, Aldus, 1979.

1217 Richard Feynman, *QED*, London, Penguin, 1990.

1218 Joseph O'Connor, & John Seymour, *Introducing neuro-linguistic programming*, London, HarperCollins, 1990.

1219 Paula Pagani, *The Cardinal Rites of Chaos*. original 108a. (F-book)

ture their religious year. These are often based on astronomical events, such as the solstices and equinoxes, plus sundry intervening holy days. Some of these seem to survive in the Christian calendar, such as the Pagan Imbolc, which coincides both calendrically and contextually with Candlemass, and these festivals are in use by many neo-Pagan groups today¹²²⁰.

The Cardinal Rites are however rather eclectic, including a high quotient of Crowley-isms (including worship of the god-forms *Baphomet*, *Pan* and *Babalon*¹²²¹) and appearances of magicians in the masked guise of the terrible demon *Choronzon*, who is associated with both Crowley and John Dee. The chaos term *Thanateros* also occurs, as does a Goddess of Chaos, *Eris*, all of this combined in a heady and poetic mix of dance, music and imbibing of Herculean quantities of wine and strange drugs.

However, the author 'Paula Pagani' is a pseudonym of the chaos pioneer Ray Sherwin, who, when writing as Sherwin, not surprisingly reviewed 'Pagani's' book very favourably in an issue of *Chaos International*¹²²². The claimed 1960s commencement of the movement was a spoof, perhaps playing to a perceived need for 'tradition' to give authority, although the rituals described were apparently serious and sincere¹²²³. In addition, one very influential chaos author, Lionel Snell, has published under at least 6 pseudonyms as well as his 'real' name - aka Ramsey Dukes, aka Lemuel Johnstone, aka Liz Angerford, aka Ambrose Lea, aka Hugo L'Estrange, aka Adamai Philotinus. Thus it is not always easily ascertainable who is who, and even how many there are in the field, let alone when Chaos Magic started, as the label seems to have followed on some time after the practice commenced.

It is the 'non-traditional' elements of these groups, and of chaos in general that often offends more mainstream occultists. However, it is all arguably magic, as Lionel Snell contends:

1220 For example see Janet & Stewart Farrar, *A Witches' Bible*, Washington, Phoenix, 1996.

1221 Babalon is a specifically Crowleyn Goddess name, occurring nowhere else, according to: MC Medusa, BABALON Invocation, in *Thelemic Magick* XC, p 77. However recent research has shown close variants, to occur in the writings of John Dee, from the 16th Century. As discussed by 'Saryr', in *Kaos* 14, p 16

1222 Ray Sherwin, review of Pagani, Cardinal Rites of Chaos, *Chaos International*, 1, 48-9

1223 'Northern Gnome', Book Reviews, *Lamp of Thoth*, Vol. 4, No. 1, p 14. Or as 'serious and sincere' as anyone in the Chaos field can be, that is

"if you dismiss, say, Jungian psychological approaches to magic because you insists that 'real' magic is about robes, incense, barbaric conjurations and ritual sacrifice, then you are doing no better than someone who insists that scientists are not 'real' unless they have hair like Einstein... and white lab coats; or that 'real' artists must be penniless; or that 'true' religious believers must be dogmatic fundamentalists" ¹²²⁴.

The challenging perspective that there may be no 'core self' behind the many masks relates back to the chaos magic maxim that 'nothing is true', and this can be devastating to the self (and any attempt at historicising the subject). Or it can be inspiring - Phil Hine believes that experimentation with multiple selves can be the focus of actively making life magical ¹²²⁵, for spiritual evolution is seen as being a function of experiencing an expanded number of world-views, and fuller awareness of the sense of self. As the magician and artist Jan Fries wrote "there are an infinite number of personalities one will discover, explore and apply in the doing of one's true will. 'Truth wears a thousand faces' ... 'and every single one of them false'" ¹²²⁶. Cultivation of these fragmentary selves allow for their examination and full expression before they are discarded. As Peter Carroll put it: "even a slight ability to change oneself is more valuable than any power over the external universe" ¹²²⁷. Again, Aleister Crowley used this technique over fifty years before, assuming a succession of pseudonyms, honorary titles and travelling identities to achieve various effects during his life.

This multiplicity of self is not simply a recent magical proposal either. The (late) magical author Gerald Suster pointed out the similarities between the wider philosophies of Hume and Buddhism (both of which heavily influenced Aleister Crowley, whose ideas in turn were taken on by many chaotes); which both regard the concept of a central 'self' as absurdity ¹²²⁸. However, as one might expect in such an eclectic field as chaos, there are many disparate voices. Ray Sherwin refuted the model over 20 years ago: "my own meditations and ... practices ... indicate that this (many selves) is a dangerous

¹²²⁴ Johnstone, *SSOTBME*, p vi

¹²²⁵ Hine, *Prime Chaos*, p 54

¹²²⁶ Fries, *Visual Magick*, p 178

¹²²⁷ Carroll, *Liber Null & Psychonaut*, p 16

¹²²⁸ Suster, *Crowley's Apprentice*, p 15

and unproductive point of view. Self has many different functions but it is a constant unchanging source... self is self and self is the source of self" ¹²²⁹.

Cult Fiction

Cultural and personal beliefs are a large part in shaping reality - for example early-modern Catholic Spanish prophets experienced sights of Saints and the Virgin Mary, while at the same time Lutheran Protestant seers received Angelic visions. The nature of the experience followed the dominant religious paradigm during times of conflict and fluid boundaries, so when a territory changed hands the styles of visions changed in parallel with incoming beliefs ¹²³⁰, which beliefs, as Phil Hine writes "structure reality. If you believe in faeries it's much more likely that you're going to be able to see them" ¹²³¹. Following on from the work of Kenneth Grant with Lovecraftian entities discussed in the previous chapter, chaotes such as Hine have excelled at this extension and suspension of belief:

"working with images culled from non-historical sources, such as invoking H.P. Lovecraft's *Cthulhu Mythos* beings, mapping the *Rocky Horror Show* ¹²³² onto the Tree of Life, slamming through the astral void in an X-Wing fighter ¹²³³, and 'channelling' communications from gods that didn't exist five minutes ago" ¹²³⁴,

which often upsets 'traditionalists' even more. However this too is underpinned with a convincing philosophical argument, phrased here by Stephen Sennitt, writing here in 1997 about Lovecraft's work as it is used by magicians, but applicable to all use of 'fiction' in magic:

"that a ... 'fictional' mythos can be utilised with such magickal

¹²²⁹ Sherwin, *Book of Results*, Ch 4.

¹²³⁰ J. A Beyer, Lubeck prophets in local & Lutheran context, in R Scribner & T Johnson, *Popular religion in Germany & central Europe, 1400-1800*, Basingstoke, Macmillan, 1996.

¹²³¹ Hine, *Prime Chaos*, p 45

¹²³² *The Rocky Horror Show* - a very popular 'cult' film and musical stage show

¹²³³ X-Wing Fighter - a space vehicle from the popular 'Star Wars' science-fiction film series

¹²³⁴ Hine, *Oven Ready Chaos*, p 25

expediency is ... surprising ... to some sceptics... (but) remember ... that even accepted 'facts' have no other purpose than to model reality... accepted 'fiction' can also model reality if it is understood that, like all human-created paradigms, these things have *no ultimate meaning in themselves*"¹²³⁵. Phil Hine adds, "some people might argue that the older a Mythic cycle is, the more powerful it is. This isn't necessarily true though... old myths have very often been messed about with. Much depends on who's writing them down, and from what angle, myths can be bent by politics,"¹²³⁶ and following the globalisation of the information held in different world cultures, and accelerating information transfer due to the internet etc., we are "no longer psychically bound to our cultural landscape, we can choose from myriad shards of belief, from the wisdom based on historical traditions, to the myths of rehashed/recovered knowledge"¹²³⁷.

The point being made is that a 'more traditional' magician who is working with a deity taken from (for example) the Egyptian pantheon that is perhaps 3000 years old may be upset by another 'less traditional' chaos magician who uses a deity from a fictional novel, published within the last ten, fifty or a hundred years, and who achieves similarly successful 'magical' results. There is ultimately no empirical proof for the existence of either god form; it is merely a matter of perceived antiquity and cultural hegemony that makes the older deity seem more 'real' and 'valid'.

In any case, the chaos magicians such as Hine are often of the accord that "we spend too much time searching for a connection with the past, whilst doing our best to ignore that we are hurtling at break-neck speed into the future"¹²³⁸. The cultural melting pot of myth is two-way: "shamans in surviving tribal cultures are beginning to translate the icons and activities of is 'civilised' westerners in to the mythic pools of their cultures, so that their communities can accumulate all the better to the reality shock of contact with technology"¹²³⁹.

¹²³⁵ Sennitt, *Liber Koth*, p 11

¹²³⁶ Phil Hine, *Two worlds and inbetween*, (Electronic Book) 1989, p 25

¹²³⁷ Hine, *Touched by Fire*, p 7

¹²³⁸ Hine, *Touched by Fire*, p 12

¹²³⁹ *Ibid.* 0 24-5

Hine remarks that there is also an illusion in the novelty, since "much of what we see served up on the silver screen is powerful mythic images and situations, repackaged for modern tastes"¹²⁴⁰ for example "more people are familiar with the universe of Star Trek¹²⁴¹ than with any of the mystery religions"¹²⁴². Thus it makes perfect sense for the Chaote to tap into those cultural motifs which are historically (for the modern period) more well-known, most accessible and with which people are perhaps more comfortable, than distant and often unfamiliar god-forms. It is arguable that many of the plots in Star Trek are simply restatements of the themes in Greek Myths in any case. Academia has realised this, with one PhD student performing comparative analysis of Star Trek plots with extant mythology¹²⁴³. This is far from a new situation, an English minister in 1606 complained that his parishioners "knew more about Robin Hood than they did about the stories in the Bible"¹²⁴⁴.

Amado Crowley, by no means a Chaote, points out that "the most popular religion in the world is nameless... Each (member) makes unto himself a bedside altar and there he doth set up his holiest icons. These may be pop stars, film stars, or stars from television"¹²⁴⁵. Phil Hine can see the Egyptian goddess Isis in the "frosty regality (of) 1930s Hollywood movie queens"¹²⁴⁶, and he adds "any belief system can be seen as a matrix of information into which we can pour emotional energy - we do as much, when we become so engrossed in watching a play, film or TV programme that for a moment it becomes real for us, and invokes appropriate emotions."¹²⁴⁷ Hine also wrote "the Mythic world ... is the realm of metaphor and symbol; the larger-than life world of theatre, fantasy, legend and television culture... our ancestors had the deeds of heroes and goddesses, while we have the daily diet of film and television soaps"¹²⁴⁸.

¹²⁴⁰ Hine, *Prime Chaos*, p 32

¹²⁴¹ One of the most popular and long-running science-fiction TV/Movie series to date, see www.startrek.com

¹²⁴² Hine, *Oven Ready Chaos*, p 38

¹²⁴³ *Fortean Times*, 215, Oct 2006, editorial, p 2, reported on an Australian PhD student working in this area.

¹²⁴⁴ Nicholas Bownd, *Sabbathum Veteris*, 1606, p 339, in Thomas, *Religion & Decline*, p 195

¹²⁴⁵ Amado Crowley, *Lewd Ghosts*, p 108

¹²⁴⁶ Hine, *Prime Chaos*, p 130

¹²⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p 32

¹²⁴⁸ Hine, *Two worlds and inbetween*, 0 5

Thus, under the motto of 'nothing is true, everything is permitted'¹²⁴⁹ Chaotes have plundered the vaults of modern media and cultural memory, devising magical rituals using the motion picture comedians The Marx Brothers¹²⁵⁰, characters from the children's TV programmes *The Teletubbies*¹²⁵¹ and *The Magic Roundabout*¹²⁵² and themes from many Science-Fiction films, among others. As Lionel Snell wrote "having ritually invoked not just the great gods of our elders but also Dracula, Mickey Mouse, Hannibal Lecter, Batman (no archetype too vile, trivial or outlandish) I am capable of enjoying almost anything - even Life itself - once I have set my mind to it"¹²⁵³. Such 'irreverence' is nothing new, however. Aleister Crowley had experimented similarly with reading profound spiritual messages into common nursery rhymes, such as '*Hickory, Dickory, Dock*'¹²⁵⁴ in the 1920s.

The Harpo Marx ritual also has some 'serious' occult underpinning, however: as the magician Kenneth Grant writes "Choronzon ... is Chaos in the sense of No-Word... the formula of Choronzon therefore has specific reference to the Wordless or Silent Aeon represented ... by the speechless babe or *Khart*¹²⁵⁵, Harpocrates"¹²⁵⁶, from which the name Harpo is apparently derived. In any case, as an anonymous magician in the L.O.O.N group wrote, referring to an on-screen mimed skit by the actor "Harpo Marx was the greatest Hollywood shaman. Could you blow up a rubber glove and then milk it?"¹²⁵⁷.

The above quote "nothing is true?" seems to derive in part from Akron Darual, who is not regarded as a 'safe' reliable academic source (and may well be Idries Shah writing under a pen name), but who is someone who

¹²⁴⁹ Believed to be the motto of Hasan Ibn Sabah, head of the Order of Assassins in the 11th Century Middle-East (Arkon Darual, *Secret Societies*, London, Tandem 1965, p 14) this cry was appropriated by chaos magicians, probably first by Peter Carroll, as a short methodological statement.

¹²⁵⁰ Hine, *Prime Chaos*, p 119

¹²⁵¹ Steve Wilson, personal communication, 21-5-2002

¹²⁵² Ramsey Dukes, conversation, 20-4-2002

¹²⁵³ _____, Theatre Review: His Dark Materials at the National Theatre (Online). The fictional serial killer and psychiatrist Hannibal Lecter was the subject of three novels by Thomas Harris in the late 20th century. www.occultebooks.com/resources/reviews/darkmaterials.htm

¹²⁵⁴ Aleister Crowley, *Magick in Theory and Practice*, p 83

¹²⁵⁵ Def: *Khart*: Egyptian word, meaning 'dwarf, crippled or speechless god'; from Grant, *Nightside of Eden*, p 146, footnote 13

¹²⁵⁶ Grant, *Nightside of Eden*, p 145-6

¹²⁵⁷ L.O.O.N. *Avikorsus*, p 5

has been widely read, thus the meme has spread. Students in Hasan Ibn Sabah's Assassin Sect "had to pass through nine degrees of initiation. In the first, the teachers threw their pupils into a state of doubt about all conventional ideas, religious and political. They used false analogy and every ... argument to make the aspirant believe ... what he had been taught ... was prejudiced" ... "to qualify for the eighth degree, the aspirant had to believe that all religion, philosophy and the like were fraudulent. All that mattered was the individual" ... "the ninth and last degree brought the revelation ... that there was no such thing as belief: all that mattered was action"¹²⁵⁸ It is perhaps from this that the famous modern quote, 'nothing is true, everything is permitted' attributed to Sabah, has arisen.

Chaos Spirals (out of control?)

Ironically, as Phil Hine points out, it is the very freedom, eclecticism and 'anything goes' nature of Chaos that may be its eventual stagnation and undoing: "Chaos Culture lacks an overall vision of progression into a shared future... (it) does not have any stated goal to strive for"¹²⁵⁹, and the IOT have recently been criticised by the magician Joel Biroco for their "moribund fiddling around"¹²⁶⁰. The post-modern catch-all technique of chaos magic may result in a system that has so much choice available that no progress is made in any direction, as Biroco again criticises: "being ahistorical ... means they are doomed to run on the spot, never swelling in progress"¹²⁶¹. Ironically for a postmodernist, progressive movement, the methods of numerous chaos magicS may have to revert to more consistent older techniques in order to survive, once - or if - all other avenues have been exhausted. Biroco's take on Kaos (his spelling) is both a reversion to, and an evolution of, 'traditional', magical methods, and he wrote in 2002: 'I didn't kill the Chaos current, actually I saved it for the future'¹²⁶².

It may be that his discovery-initiation of what he called the Babalon Current¹²⁶³ as a successor to Crowley's 93 Current (aka Thelema, the cabbala for Thelema adding up to 93) is 'what happens next' in chaos magic, as he hoped in 2002. However there seem to be a multiplicity of claimants to such a prestigious position, and in true contradictory 'chaos magic tradition', Biroco has paradoxically since claimed to have retired from magic in any case¹²⁶⁴. This may be 'true' retirement, a chaotic take on his stance at the present moment, or simply a convenient fiction (as seems to be the case with Peter Carroll). In the meantime, as the magician and author Jaq Hawkins wrote in 1996, "magicians continue to ... influence ... their own lives through magical practices which are unprovable at present, but continue to work anyway"¹²⁶⁵.

¹²⁵⁹ Hine, *PerMutations*, p 31

¹²⁶⁰ Biroco, *KAOS* 14, p 11

¹²⁶¹ *Ibid*, p 11

¹²⁶² *Ibid*

¹²⁶³ *Ibid*, p 8-9

¹²⁶⁴ 'Joel Biroco', personal communication, 17-8-2004

¹²⁶⁵ Hawkins. *Understanding Chaos*. p 74

Chaos Academica

As has been seen, Chaos MagicS are a complex, generic subject, open to multiple interpretations and internal divisions. The eclecticism and post-modern approach offers much to practitioners, but equally the notion of a 'multiplicity of truths' hugely limits the usefulness of many orthodox methods of historical study and recording due to the breadth of subject area. This is further strained by the often deliberate muddying of the waters by the use of pseudonyms. The core philosophy of 'nothing is true...' also throws up problems when trying to ascertain historical facts, as false claims of various kinds abound, often as a part of a temporary belief system (paradigm), and sometimes just for amusement and there is a climate of general disingenuity among some practitioners when asked factual questions.

Discussing the influence of Classical accounts of pagans and the remarks of 19th Century authors on the self-perception of modern pagans, Letcher highlights how "these accounts must...be understood with reference to the literary conventions of the time, which included 'exaggeration, invented speeches...'"¹²⁶⁶, and it is with this in mind that any future historical study of chaos must proceed, since the invention and exaggeration aspects of the problem remain. Phil Hine writes that "the question of how much of it is 'True' on the absolute sense is irrelevant... since it is the investment of belief in a concept that makes it viable, rather than its coherence"¹²⁶⁷. The honest belief that the subject is worth studying, as evidenced by academic and publisher interest in recent years is also an investment, regardless of the manifold problems discussed above. 'Hyper-reality' is a term coined by the French social philosopher Jean Baudrillard (1929-) that describes a modern world in which the real and the imaginary are blurred, there are few or often no means to distinguish them¹²⁶⁸; of which the 'history' of chaos magic would be a good example.

Chaos magicS should thus be seen as an umbrella term for a series of generic, but often only very distantly related magickal techniques, which

¹²⁶⁶ Miranda Green, *Exploring the world of the Druids*, London, Thames & Hudson, 1997, p 41 in Letcher, *Role of the Bard*, p 21-2

¹²⁶⁷ Hine, *Pseudonomicon*, p 13

¹²⁶⁸ Wikipedia website: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hyperreality>

are in a state of constant flux, hyper-reality, evolution and dispersion.

This conclusion of major difficulty does not mean that Chaos cannot, or should not be studied, however. On the contrary, as a major, influential and fast-moving recent development in Western occultism it simply cannot be ignored, and offers an enticing if huge challenge to researchers in finding new, or at least improved methods, which will hopefully evolve in tandem with the developments in the magical practice itself.

**“What flows into you from
the myth...
...is not truth but reality”¹²⁶⁹**

This book has examined *some* aspects of the history of magic in Britain from 1947 to the tipping point of the 21st Century. Of necessity this has involved discussions of temporal areas that precede this, wider geography, and in subject areas that were not strictly historical, but I trust that I have done so in a way to produce a coherent and useful finished product that will be of use to both academic colleagues and interested lay readers.

In his seminal study of magic and folklore in 16th and 17th Century Britain: *Religion and the Decline of Magic*, published in 1971, Sir Keith Thomas began by describing the historian's role: “astrology, witchcraft, magical healing... are all now rightly disdained by intelligent persons, but they were taken seriously by equally intelligent persons in the past, and it is the Historian's business to explain why this was so”¹²⁷⁰.

I sincerely hope that this book has been able to re-phrase and improve that remark to some extent (and give such appallingly judgmental and unjustified commentary the very hefty and pejorative kicking it deserves), thus: “Magical matters are deserving of interest by intelligent persons, are taken seriously nowadays by intelligent persons, and it has been my business to begin to start to explain why this IS still so”. An approach which regards magic as deluded rubbish and not for intelligent consideration is not an approach that does academia any credit whatsoever, and so it should be cast aside into the same heap of out-of-date theories as Lamarckian evolution (which is basically the notion that a Blacksmith's children will all, and always be automatically big and strong from birth. Even the girls).

Harking back to the attitude of many of my peers, I trust that this work has performed several tasks, not least in that it shows the utility of investigating such a subject, which although a minority activity, informs many

¹²⁶⁹ CS Lewis, *Myth Became Fact*, in *God in the Dock: Essays in Theology and Ethics*, Grand Rapids, Eerdmans, 1970, p 66 in Veldman, *Fantasy, The Bomb*, p 47

¹²⁷⁰ Thomas, *Religion & Decline*. ix

wider beliefs and societal activities, such as interest in folklore, the urge to religious belief in general, superstition and in the realm of self-understanding, we live in a society and culture in Britain which is steeped in magical history, and to understand more about the nature of magic allows us to understand more about our own histories, our own culture, and to a large extent, our own selves.

The magic has always been there, just a blink away, and as the very perceptive Historian Alex Owens writes "it is historians who are off-beam, ignoring or sidelining a phenomenon"¹²⁷¹ such as magic, not the magicians themselves for believing in it.

The Internet is a boon and a curse to this kind of research. I have been able to find materials online, that are incredibly rare in print, and by contrast I have simply found too much material for a lifetime's work, plus there is the problem, mentioned earlier, of veracity. Just because it is on the web doesn't mean it is true, either in part, or in whole.

Similarly, using the net I have contacted people rapidly and easily, when by other means I may never have been able to find them, or even in some cases even know of their existence.

I have examined the methods and scope of the study of modern magic within academic departments other than history, the freelance research industry, the numbers of people involved in modern magic in Britain, the moral underpinnings of wider society, and transferred those assumptions to the nature, and study of modern magic, including the understanding of the Left Hand Path. The problems in using standard academic methods, especially within the modern history of this subject, have been discussed, and while largely being a text-based study this research has, of necessity, drawn on the findings, terminology, significant thinkers and methodology of other disciplines on occasions, and at times involved me in some kinds of face-to-face and observational research that would, in any other discipline, have been called *fieldwork*. That this 'mixing with the proles' should in any way be regarded as unusual behaviour on my part might give the reader a clue as to how some historians perform their research.

I hasten to add none of my direct colleagues think this way, and my superstar of a supervisor certainly does not since that is a technique he

uses extensively, but there are some academics, further away from me who do think that way, and there is one who positively *loathed* the fact that I was researching chaos magic at all, and had quite a spectacular tantrum about it.

As discussed, I rejected the notion that I have in any way 'gone native.'

Aleister Crowley, Austin Osman Spare, and, to a lesser extent Gerald Gardner have all been covered (Gardner to a lesser extent as he has already been extensively researched by others) as the more recent and immediate historical sources of, and influences on, this modern magic. Under the heading of these influences I have also examined two important and contrasting figures in British magic, the unbelievable 'Amado Crowley' who claims to be the son and star pupil of Aleister, and the fantastic (in every sense of the word) Kenneth Grant who was a pupil and the secretary of Aleister. In the case of Amado this is, to my knowledge, the first detailed academic investigation into his life and claims. Historians such as Ronald Hutton have very briefly touched on Kenneth Grant in the past, but to nowhere near this extent: so again my chapters examining Grant's life and work are a new contribution to the field (and a shorter version of that chapter appeared in the *Journal for the Academic Study of Magic*, 2). The multi-pseudonymous occult philosopher Lionel Snell (another person whose work has been pretty much left untouched by academic enquiry in the past) has on several occasions been used to illustrate a 'third way' between apparent polar opposites. This will in some ways amuse him, I trust.

The use of 'fictional' and imaginal authors such as HP Lovecraft was discussed; from the way that Kenneth Grant employed Lovecraft's *Cthulhu Mythos* to the wider use of belief modification, fiction, hyper-reality and paradigm-shifting in Chaos magic. Chaos was examined, in some ways as a 'methodology' chapter, where it was shown to be an especially difficult subject to study in an orthodox academic fashion, while attempting to outline some key factors and areas in which some study has been possible.

The novelist HP Lovecraft loathed the idea of magic. With his entirely materialistic outlook, actually trying to perform occult rituals would have been anathema to him, but his writing fiction about such matters was entirely different. As was shown, nowadays Lovecraft is held with

reverence in some parts of the magical community, for creating (or remembering, or re-contacting; depending on whose opinions you read) a pantheon of Old Gods with which effective magical work can be performed. As mentioned above, the magician Stephen Sennitt explains this eloquently:

“that an intrinsically ‘fictional’ mythos can be utilised with such magical expediency is a surprising fact to some sceptics. The point to remember is that even accepted ‘facts’ have no other purpose than to model reality... accepted ‘fiction’ can also model reality if it is understood that, like all human-created paradigms, these things have no ultimate meaning in themselves”¹²⁷².

Thus, under the motto of ‘nothing is true, everything is permitted’ modern chaos magicians have utilised Lovecraft’s ‘demons’ and a host of other ‘fictional’ entities in performing their ‘real’ magic. Kenneth Grant, on the other hand, portrays these Lovecraftian entities as entirely real, tangible creatures with whom magical contact is possible. In Grant’s factual books there are matters which seem pure fiction, and in his fictional books he himself appears, as does a fictional character, Phineas Marsh Black, who is also a claimed real relative of Grant’s and to whom one novel is dedicated by Grant.

‘Amado Crowley’, on yet another hand, appears to be a semi-mythical character with an almost entirely fictitious claimed past, but with whom contact is as simple as typing an email, and from one of whose pupils threats of legal action (but apparently vapid and empty ones) have been received when a very basic outline description of the content of the chapter about Amado was described to an online third-party, who was obviously a ‘troll’, this being a suspiciously friendly and innocent-seeming character sent to extract information¹²⁷³.

After an exchange of very terse emails, including a demand that the pupil see (at my expense) a pre-press copy of my text for ‘approval’ (which demand I treated with the necessary derision), I copied the emails to Amado, who was apparently unaware of the matter and he then stepped in and blanket emailed his pupils to refrain from any further harassment of me (in an email that appeared to have been translated into French as

¹²⁷² Sennitt, *Liber Koth*, p 11

¹²⁷³ Amado Crowley, a most kind personal communication, 9-10-2004, and Maxim Iavo. various terribly obnoxious personal communications. 4 to 7-10-2004.

well).

My counter-demand of his pupil for a list of successful legal suits by Amado in the past (which was part of the threat made against me, that I would just be ‘another irritant who had been sued successfully’) met with the expected limp silence. When I presented a short digest of my Amado researches at a pre-publicised talk to a pagan group in Bath, UK, in July 2005 the unpleasantness resurfaced two days later with several threatening emails from Amado, who appeared to have sent an observer to the talk and who had by then reported back to ‘the Boss’. Amado was particularly upset about my ‘underhand’ (but actually quite legitimate and legal) investigation of his publishing company accounts, which anyone with an Internet connection and a bank card to pay the Companies House fees for access to the records could repeat easily, in less than twenty minutes¹²⁷⁴. The website link for this is mentioned in my Amado chapters, and I would greatly encourage others to verify my findings by visiting the website - it only costs a few pounds to get the accountancy reports.

Across many areas of modern magic the shadow of ‘tradition’ and ‘heritage’ falls, often in entirely counterfactual ways, including but not limited to the presence of ‘the book’, whether it be a real book that is in print, a real book that is pretending to be a copy of an ancient and dread, but non-existent tome, such as the *Necronomicon*, or what is probably an entirely fictitious book, such as Amado Crowley’s *Book of Desolation*.

Modern magic can thus be said to be ‘mythic’ in that verifiable facts are often hard to find, or may be contradictory, but is still most important in a cultural history sense. The Christian proponent and novelist CS Lewis believed that fantasy writing was a tool whereby mythic tales and the inherent moralities could be easily spread among the lesser-educated working classes; since ‘popular literature’ was, by definition, the staple reading material of this class, rather than ‘higher literature’ such as Milton or Blake¹²⁷⁵, and that “any work which has produced intense and ecstatic delight in anyone” was thus good literature, i.e. effective at transmitting the desired meme.

¹²⁷⁴ Dave Evans, talk given to the Omphalos Group, Bath, UK, 9th July 2005

¹²⁷⁵ Veldman. *Fantasy. The Bomb*, p 62

Phil Hine writes "Social experience, Mythic experience and Personal experience... are ... not separate realms, but ... mesh together all the time. Separating them into three regions allows us to examine them, and in turn, to gain insights into how each contributes to the other"¹²⁷⁶, and "once we begin to explore the inner world... using a set of Mythic symbols and images, then we will begin to have experiences which are meaningful within those myths"¹²⁷⁷. "In modern western culture we are no longer bound by a dominant set of Mythic images. Instead, our culture abounds with myths, from those of magical reality to that of Marxism, and we may adopt many such Mythic maps of the world during our lives, knowing at any one time that the current one we hold is truer than the others"¹²⁷⁸. The mythic power of fiction is often undervalued because people persist in thinking that it 'isn't real'. Yet once we enter the Mythic world, historical validity is irrelevant. If a story moves us, and an give us a valid and powerful experience... then does it really matter if it is 'true' in the historical sense?"¹²⁷⁹.

In Lewis' case the meme was a Christian morality, with occasional elements of classical myth, as a counter to modern, materialist education. A major research project into schoolchildren's voluntary reading in 1970 showed a strong correlation between social class and type of reading material: as the cultural historian Meredith Veldman puts it "the British middle-class tends to read, and in the postwar period, a significant portion of it read Lewis and Tolkien"¹²⁸⁰, in other words, mythic, magical fiction. As of 1977 about 70 million copies of Lewis' books had been sold, and at least until 1991 (when these figures were calculated) his *Narnia* series consistently outsold just about any other children's book¹²⁸¹. It is likely that the more recent childrens' magical novel phenomena of *Harry Potter* will also enter this lofty company.

The *Narnia* tales became a set book in many British primary schools, meaning that not only was it a book chosen by some to read, but the magical themes within it became *compulsory study* for many British children at an early age¹²⁸². Such a high proportion of the British populace ultimately

¹²⁷⁶ Hine, *Two worlds and inbetween*, p 5

¹²⁷⁷ *Ibid*, p 8

¹²⁷⁸ *Ibid*

¹²⁷⁹ *Ibid*, p 8-9

¹²⁸⁰ Veldman, *Fantasy. The Bomb*, p 95

¹²⁸¹ *Ibid*, p 96

¹²⁸² *Ibid*. n 06-07

read JRR Tolkien's and Lewis' fantasies over a long period (which continues, especially with the more recent impetus to this which came from television and cinema versions of the tales, with spin-off reprints of the books) that Veldman contends they became an intrinsic part of British culture¹²⁸³. Tolkien's works sold steadily through the 1950s, but it was not until the nineteen-sixties that they truly became a cultural phenomenon: by the early nineteen-eighties over 8 million copies of *Lord of the Rings* had been sold, with sales averaging over 100,000 pa¹²⁸⁴.

Since the motion picture trilogy of the *Rings* story was produced in the early 21st Century this will have increased substantially, and even before the films were made Veldman produced figures which soundly support her argument that "Tolkien's fantasies... were read by a percentage of the British population so high as to ensure that the characters and concepts ... became part and parcel of British culture"¹²⁸⁵, thus magical belief is an intrinsic and perhaps even majoritarian part of our modern heritage, regardless of how many folk actually practice magic.

Despite the apparently obvious Christian undertones in the *Narnia* books, Lewis was dismayed that few reviewers and readers actually noticed this, while at the same time huge numbers of readers were being captivated by the mythic qualities of his stories¹²⁸⁶.

It could equally be argued from Lewis' stance that a piece of violent pornographic writing or a detailed piece of 'blasphemous' Satanic ritual could produce the same effect, of delight, in a true and dedicated connoisseur of that genre, but whether it was 'good literature' would perhaps be a subject for much philosophical debate¹²⁸⁷. In the case of the authors examined in this book the mythic meme transmitted is that of magic, and particular strands of magic, pertinent to each writer's own agenda, all of which have their aficionados.

In the same way, magical writings, whether they be produced by the historically-unconvincing fraud 'Amado Crowley'; the reclusive, gnomic and often impenetrable Kenneth Grant; a multi-pseudonymous chaos magician, Lionel Snell, who may well be joking in one, some, many or all

¹²⁸³ *Ibid*, p 100

¹²⁸⁴ *Ibid*, p 107, 98

¹²⁸⁵ *Ibid*, p 100

¹²⁸⁶ *Ibid*, p 104

¹²⁸⁷ *Ibid*. n 62. fn 25

cases; the use of writings designed to encourage the reader to transgress social norms or material based on a supposedly fictional pantheon of Gods (such as magical material derived from the works of Lovecraft) but which creates 'real' 'magical' effects in the rituals when performed, all have their charm, and being printed or online have historical reality in their very existence. They also all have their potential for having effects on the reader, which effects are also historical in nature, in that they can be recorded, even if they derive from neither 'good literature' on some problematically measurable scale, nor are themselves historically 'true', coherent and accurate, being instead hyper-real in nature.

Quite how academia can progress in studying magic is a moot point. The process of doing 'pure history' in this field, using and interpreting largely textual information is fraught with difficulty, as has been shown by some of the alternative methods used, of necessity, here in this research. From the evidence of the publications record and the numbers of academics working on magic in other disciplines I suspect that those branches of the academy which are already using techniques from a wider knowledge base, such as anthropology, sociology, psychology, archaeology, religious studies and suchlike are well ahead of the game in this respect, and it is necessary for us historians to learn from, and collaborate with them when dealing with subject areas which are this complex.

An interdisciplinary syncretic approach, such as is encouraged by the ethos of the *Journal for the Academic Study of Magic* would seem to be the more appropriate and effective way forward in order to increase understanding of the subject. I am tempted to call this method Chaos Academic, but the term will probably never be officially adopted, since chaos sounds far too noisy, scary and anarchistic to be allowed into the quiet and hallowed halls, as was discussed above. In any case, whatever we call this tactic of interdisciplinary collaboration, it should employ eclectic techniques from all and every academic field where necessary, and use them all *where this works* in each instance. Much like chaos magic does.

This implies, and actually *demand*s a more comprehensively experimental and experiential academic stance than might at present best 'fit' the linear structure of many British institutions, where disciplines may be administratively separated to some extent by fiscal and line-management matters rather than the demands of the research materials in use. I was warned on several occasions that, being funded by a history department, I must

produce a historical write-up, since I often tended to drift into areas that might best be labelled Cultural Anthropology-stroke-History, and that my doing so as a historian might upset the anthropology department.

If it did, I never heard about it.

A growing number of exceptionally gifted and keen young academics of various disciplines in this area is a sign of great encouragement, and I am delighted to include several of them among my friends.

In many ways this is a 'pioneer piece', since such in-depth historical research on very modern British magic has not to my knowledge been performed within academia; therefore my potential risks and rewards are both commensurately high. It HAS been rewarding already, in ways that are impossible to express.

It is likely that some of the findings presented here, being contingent on more discoveries as subsequent research widens, will be superseded in time by other academics, although hopefully not in the same damning way that Margaret Murray's work was falsified some decades ago. Equally the very existence of this work might create a baseline, or simply encourage just that future research to take place. I do hope so.

This is the dawning of the age of...

Aleister Crowley saw everything in history that was post-1904 (when he wrote his seminal *Book of the Law*) as being of 'the new Aeon', a third age following previous matriarchal and patriarchal societies, the new age of the 'crowned and conquering child', the infant form of the Egyptian God Horus. Or if the ladies and gentleman of L.O.O.N are right, then the cannibal radioactive zombies are just around the corner...

Although I have a multitude of people to profusely thank for their immense help, support, patience and kindness to me in this work (see my acknowledgements page) it is, in the triple-spirit of this new Aeon; to this growing child Horus, the mewling new child, my baby, that is the *Journal for the Academic Study of Magic* and the infant historical study of modern magic that I truly dedicate this book, which has been at various times great fun, great pain and just great.

May they all grow to happy, safe and healthy fruition, and I trust that my work here will be of use to the latter two categories, if not the first as well. I have taken great delight in walking among this mythic landscape, but I now go to 'do my pleasure amongst the living', as Crowley once wrote, having spent much of the last decade researching and writing academic material about Crowley and friends, it is high time to shake some library dust from my clothes and get completely practical for a while.

So.... The gentle reader may be wondering how much of this book is 'true' and 'accurate'. While I have stringently researched as much of it as I could, by definition a piece of work that involves the author must include some soul-searching as to what to write, what (if anything) to leave out, and how to write it. I can only say that I have been as honest as I can with my own reflexivity, and as accurate and complete as I can with reporting the factual matters described herein. A great deal of additional material has been left out (but nothing crucial, and there are one or two small hidden jokes left in for my own amusement) as otherwise I could have made this book so long as to deter anyone from physically lifting it off the bookshop shelf, let alone buy it. It is already over-long in places.

Historical 'facts' are always contingent on new discoveries, and those new findings are themselves contingent, in an eternal process, as we are always finding out new things, and things change. So, this book is as true as I could make it on the day it was written, but may not be 100% true by the time you read it. For example, one of the persons mentioned herein who was magically retired when I wrote about them has (in just the last few weeks as I do the final rewrites for publication) now re-emerged and is teaching magic again. *C'est la vie...*

I have been doubly blessed in my research to have had on the one hand one of the finest academic minds of his (or indeed any other) generation for advice and scholarly support of an astonishing level, and on the other hand access to one of the finest modern magicians and occult philosophers for magical advice and encouragement. I am grateful to them both for their friendship. I have flipped a coin between them and that result means I will quote the latter as an end point for the book. Sorry Ronald.

Lionel Snell, writing as Lemuel Johnstone regards the concept of truth being boring as "utterly ridiculous... whatever belief brings the most

inspiration and joy, that belief shall be called the most 'true'"¹²⁸⁸.

So, my wish for your own maximum inspiration and joy goes to all fellow travellers of good heart in these irrational, unknown and utterly wonderful directions, whether you be magician or academic, and especially if you be both.

Appendix A: Glossary

Since this book is based on a thesis originally written for the academic reader who may have little or no knowledge of some of the specialist technicalities in use, a very short glossary of some perhaps unfamiliar terms was provided below, explained in my own words unless mentioned otherwise. I leave it here for the benefit of any reader who is not *au fait* with the terms used, although experienced practical occultists reading this book will probably be able to happily skip this section, if not chuckle at the simplifications in it as they pass by.

Astral Plane: An open, weightless plane that connects with all other planes of existence and is used for transportation of the consciousness among them. Certain spells (such as astral projection) allow access to this plane. www.wizards.com/dnd/DND_PH_Glossary_Print.asp

Breathwork: Based on yogic methods. The thinking behind breathwork is that breath is the source of life and vitality, and many people fail to breathe correctly to their full potential. There are a variety of modalities that are available, which direct these breathing techniques for physical, mental or spiritual health. For example, calm, methodical breathing is used for relaxation and forceful breathing for emotional release. www.healersoftheworld.com/glossary/glossaryA-D.html

Channelling: a form of 'controlled spirit possession', somewhat like mediumship, where the channeller allows a spirit or entity to talk through them, or sometimes to use their hands to write messages.

Invocation: a magical technique involving a (usually verbalised) invitation to a non-human spirit or godform to make their presence known in some way, usually by 'entering' the person who is doing the invoking, and speaking or acting through them.

Karma: derived from Eastern philosophies, the notion that acts done in a past life are influencing one's life today, and that equally one's acts now will influence a future reincarnation. The 'harm none' principle of neo paganism can be seen to be related to this notion

Moot: any group meeting of a magical or neo pagan nature, often for

social or discussion purposes rather than ritual, for example moots held at public houses are common.

Neuro Linguistic Programming: a verbal technique akin to rapid hypnotism, but without the need for trance and lengthy preparation, relying instead on voice tone and semantics, for example the use of 'embedded commands' (technique for "planting" a thought (state, process, or experience) within the mind of another person beneath the person's conscious awareness. This is done through presuppositions, which are assumptions implied within verbal structures. In the English language, commands end with a down turn in tonality. Embedded commands mandate the use of a commanding tonality to be effective. The commands usually possess the word formation of a question, but the tonality of a command. For example, "What's it like when you feel irresistibly attracted to someone?" The purpose of using embedded commands is to move your listener's mind in the direction you want it to go without seeming to be intruding or ordering in any way. www.deeptrancenow.com/nlp_embedded_commands.htm). Much used in phobia therapy, chaos magic, business management training and advertising, all areas where fast results are often desired! A useful introduction is Joseph O'Connor & John Seymour, *Introducing neuro-linguistic programming*, London, HarperCollins, 1990.

Path Working: a magical technique of voice-led visualisation to follow a pre-written script, often performed as a group ritual with one person 'sitting out' to lead the working. For example a path-working may involve visualising that one is walking towards a lush forest, and the commentary continues to describe the animals and plants that one meets in the forest, until the person or persons doing the visualisation are allowed to 'wander' freely in the forest, to make their own discoveries, which are often hugely symbolic. Other pathworkings may involve entirely unearthly or purely mythic, symbolic landscapes.

Perichoresis: an "interpenetration of dimensions, across space and time. Whether caught in the echo of events, ages past, or passing through a series of related dreams, we traverse a web of inter-relationships, parts of a great and unfolding cosmic drama in which our roles are myriad" Starfire Publishing, *Advertising Flyer for The Other Child by Kenneth Grant*, December 2003

Rosicrucian: pertaining to a magical-Masonic style of thought and

action. There are numerous claimants to be the 'true' Rosicrucian Order today, including AMORC. The general term of Rosicrucianism refers to the grouping of ideas regarding magic, science, and religion formed from the combination of elements from Romanticism, the Enlightenment, Christian pietism, and Renaissance occultism. The main thrust of this melange is the individual's mission to obtain secret yet "undeniably scientific" knowledge. The Western genesis of Rosicrucianism is attributed to the legendary Christian Rosenkreuz, a German born in 1378 and introduced to occult mysteries during his travels in the Middle East. Source: University of Virginia Library

Website: <http://religiousmovements.lib.virginia.edu/nrms/amorc.html>

Rune Master: a skilled practitioner of magical techniques believed to derive from old Northern Europe, a nominally 'Viking' form of magic.

Sigils: a symbolic-artistic form of magic, where a magical desire is codified into a pictorial form before being ritually 'switched on', in other words a means of casting a spell using a symbol rather than the common prose form. This technique was very successfully developed further by Austin Osman Spare, who is discussed above.

Zen Buddhism: a Buddhist sect based on meditation rather than on adherence to a particular scriptural doctrine. Founded in China by Bodhidharma (5th century A.D.). Zen was made known in the West by the writings of D.T. Suzuki. www.spiritual.com.au/dictionary/dict_xyz.html

'Zen or Sufi-like humour': both Zen Buddhism and Sufism often use amusing tales and actions to impart a deeper message; for example: In one such story the Sufi Nasruddin is a magistrate who in his first case agrees with both the plaintiff and the defendant. When the court clerk objects that both cannot be right, Nasruddin says: "I believe you are right." Here we are able to see the paradox clearly. In our conditioning, we see things as right or wrong, black or white. Linear thinking does not allow one to think holistically. Our minds wrestle in the dark dens of logic and lose the gist of life. Nasruddin was blessed with an open mind to carry the message of freedom. He was chosen as a Sufi teacher because he could make people laugh, and his humour was sharp enough to crack even the most rigidly conditioned mind. www.lifepositive.com/Spirit/world-religions/sufism/nasruddin-mulla.asp

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Since this book deals primarily with occultists who were alive during the 20th century, and many of whom are still alive and publishing in the 21st Century, almost everything cited could arguably be regarded as a primary source. Hence no distinction is made here between primary and secondary sources, they are simply listed alphabetically, with the exclusion of personal correspondence and conversations (which are only mentioned in footnotes).

This book has drawn heavily on both original and republished material that appears on the Internet, the latter of which can be a volatile source. Those Internet references that appear below may not be in existence by the time this book is published, but the persistent 'Googler' should be able to locate websites with the same information, if necessary. Where a reference is cited as (E-book) this refers to an online or disk source where a manuscript has been rendered by the seller/provider (many e-books are provided free of charge, through philanthropy or piracy) into an 'Electronic Book' or 'Portable Data Format' file (PDF) which is suitable for reading on a computer screen, and/or for printing and home binding by the purchaser to create a more 'conventional' physical book if they so desire.

This home manufacture process on occasion allows for some variation in page layout and thus page numbers cited may differ in other home-printed versions of the same electronic sources. Indeed, some electronic books do not have page numbering at all, where this occurs it is mentioned.

'Original' refers to the first-known publication date, and this does not necessarily imply that publisher and location details given for the later edition were the same for the earlier date. Where a writer is published under one or more pseudonyms the citation is given here as printed in the publication, and the pseudonym will have been mentioned in the main text, if known.

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Aleister Crowley and the 20th Century synthesis of Magick

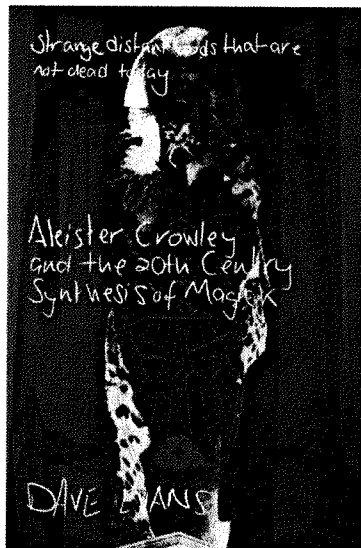
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Modern Chaos Cunning Craft

by Francis Breakspear

Mighty oaks from little acorns do grow... this book of practical 'Results Magick' sprang from a brief conversation about cunning folk, the European village sorcerers of old, and how they might do their work today.

The cunning man or woman of history would have travelled around their local area performing the craft with probably a bag full of herbs, some pins, a flint and tinder to make fire, some ready-made charms, a knife and a weighty book or two (about anything) with which to impress the illiterate. By comparison the modern chaos magician cunner would be likely to have a groovy backpack to carry various problem-solving tools in, like a cellphone, a cigarette lighter, a Swiss Army knife, a packet of some painkilling drug, a bag of a quite different herbs for ingestion in various ways, a disk of some computer software, various dark-looking sorcerous books and probably some weird and discordant spooky sounds on their mp3 player to impress the musically illiterate...

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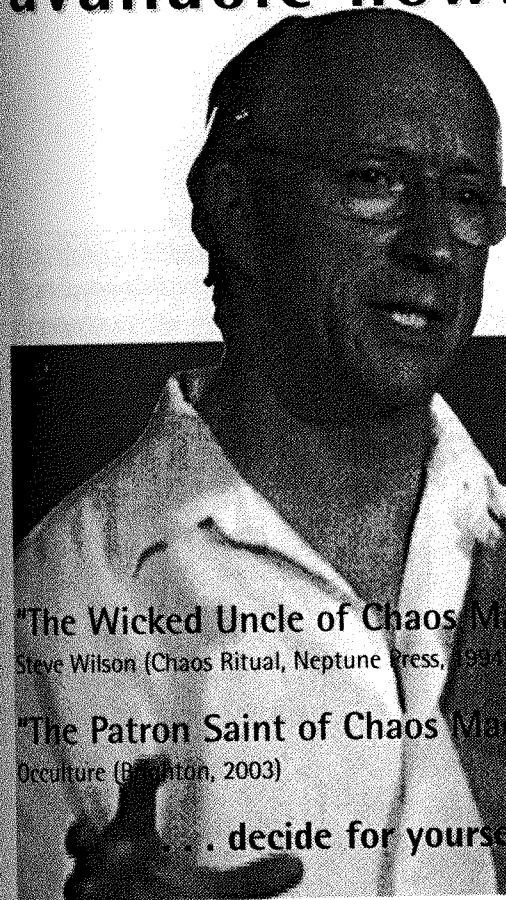
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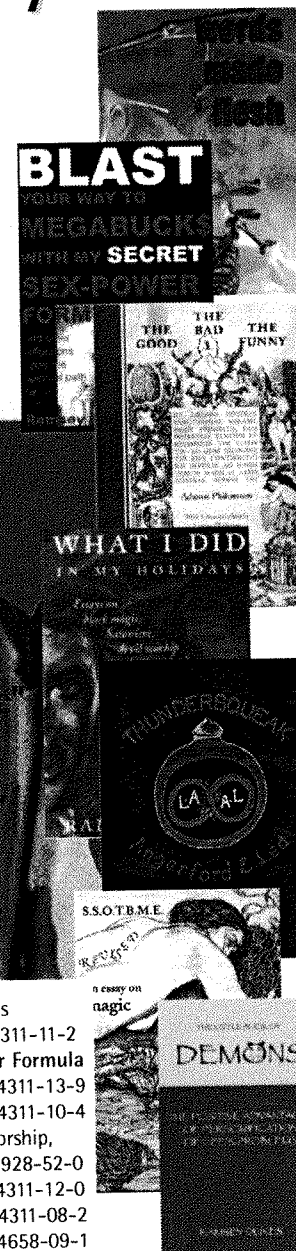
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THE HISTORY OF BRITISH MAGICK AFTER CROWLEY

DAVE EVANS



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