

XVI

SCARLET IMPRINT

MMX

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This need for *total* creation
has always been intimately associated
with the need to *play*
with architecture, time and space.

IVAN CHTCHEGLOV

Formulary for a New Urbanism

**FOR
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THE SYMBOL OF OUR CIVILISATION is the city, and the symbol of the city is the tower. Seven steps to divinity which began in Sumeria. But the tower is seen as malefic, under the influence of Mars. A setting above the ignorant masses, the few celebrating penthouse consummations with paid for priestesses, sheer sided watchtowers rising above the prison. Perhaps it has always been so, but this is the age in which the Tower has reached its apotheosis.

From the Tour d'Eiffel to the WTC, from Canary Wharf to perhaps the ultimate folly, the Burj Khalifa in Dubai rising above a city built almost at the behest of Ozymandius, this is the age of the Tower, and it's fall.

The Tower in our global culture is a symbol of domination rather than spiritual longing for closeness to the Divine. The call to prayer and union has been lost in translation and exegesis as surely as the Koran, the Bible and the Torah have been. Language decays into the repetition of catchphrases for brands whose deep structure is devoid of meaning.

We are, as Banksy has sprayed, *One Nation Under CCTV*, drones imprisoned in the perfected form of Bentham's panopticon. Our emails are read, our searches recorded, our phonecalls intercepted, our urine blood and saliva swabbed and sequenced by the latest incarnation of the witchhunters. The Devil, we are told, is long-bearded and swarthy, but his accomplices may look just like us. The message we are fed is trust no-one.

It is the corporation and the state that does what it will. Dystopia is here, not simply as Orwell's human face being stamped upon forever, but in a triumph of newspeak where freedom means consumption, democracy is a choice between Pepsi or Coca-Cola, and hard won liberties are willingly seceded under the abstract threat of terror. The Tower rises above a bland corporate landscape whilst we sit oblivious, hunchbacked over our laptops.

Yet this is a universe built on revolutionary change and man and his works are not exempt from tasting the lightning. The Tower speaks. The whole house of cards can come down. As magicians, we know that it spends its energy and falls. It is structurally doomed, built to be struck asunder. The martial law we can look forward to is not that of the militarised and jackbooted New World Order, it is the inescapable law that all towers and civilisations will fall.

As we confront ecological collapse, political control, wars of terror, wars on consciousness, and an extinction crisis which engulfs

our own species, we are in a state of emergency. A macrocosmic crisis looms darkly over our own microcosmic initiations. These attacks on our freedoms and our world can lead to freedom itself, the sudden enlightenment, the lightning path and the initiatory crisis that the Tower also represents. Some need the urgency of falling masonry to understand, to take action.

This book is a brave and prophetic attempt to show a magick that is engaged in the world, which understands Kether in Malkuth, that sees Eden around us as surely as Blake saw his angels. We are as awake as any all-seeing eye. Some may criticise and say that this is a political rather than a magical book. What then are we to make of the machinations of John Dee, Earl Bothwell, the manifesto of Jack Parsons, or the liberation theology of Thelema? How can magick exclude the world from the circle and then seek to create change in it? Magick and politics have always been intertwined serpents. Within this book we find rites and rituals alongside calls to arms, the individual struggle next to global visions, and this is how it should be. Magicians have long dreamt of new orders, hatched byzantine conspiracies and raised hell. We have been both inside and outside of the establishment, but our ideas are now clearly outside the palisades. The initiation of XVI is not going to make comforting reading for many. Yet, if we are to consider ourselves Gnostics, we must see through the concrete and solid seeming lies to the Sophia concealed. This collection seeks to raise intent and awareness of the unique times we find ourselves in, whilst being open to the resourcefulness and indomitable nature of the human spirit to find solutions and responses to it. We can do something. Magick has been a current of liberation and that is the only unifying creed in this anthology. This dream is concealed within and beneath the Tower.

Whether collapse is soft, hard, catastrophic or gradual, what is undeniable is that the charges have been primed at every level of the edifice of our civilisation. This has been done by the masons themselves, the first time they placed a brick on a brick. It is truly an inside job. The decision has been made to pull, the detonation plunger has been pressed. The Tower is swooning into freefall. As we are inside the Tower, we may not be aware of the significance of the dull thuds. It simply depends what floor you are standing on and if you see the snapshot of bodies falling past your windows. Here is the wake up call, it is coming down around us. Our currency has lost all its value. The crisis will not pass.

We dare to ask, what does it mean to practice magick in this age? The response has been sixteen and one essays from very different writers. Those that have taken up the challenge range from Chaos magicians to Druids to Typhonians and independents. Sexual and chemical adventurers are found alongside aeonic speculators and collapsetarians. This gathering of artificers is a sign of growing diversity, rather than a magick which is trapped in fundamentalist ghettos, divided and dwindling into cloddish entropy. It is the generosity of spirit in our writers which makes this possible, a choosing to act rather than simply talk. To engage with the past is safe, to dare to confront our times and to walk into the future is infinitely more dangerous.

In opposition to the Tower we raise the image of the maypole. A living symbol on a human scale. An image of resistance. Dancers weave around, attached to it by umbilical ribbons rather than isolated and alienated by insurmountable walls. We are diverse and yet intimately connected in community. May Day is a euphoric and revolutionary event. It is this artistic spirit which promises endless acts of creation coming out of destruction. Matter is re-energised and created anew. We do not have to sit mournfully in the ruins of consumerism. But May Day is not for the faint of heart, scores are settled when the existing order is turned on its head. Wrongs are righted as power shifts to the dancers and revellers rather than those who cannot, or will not move. The green spring rises from the red blood of a revolution in consciousness. The XVIth house is War, a warning to those who would wall themselves up in their towers that all the occult secrets we need to know are contained in the fluid plasma of lightning.

Kings cast down break their crowns on the cobblestones. We dip the hems of our robes in their blood and write fresh symbols which transcend the babel of mere words. You cannot stand outside this process, this revolution. May Day engulfs the spectators in misrule and mania and transforms them. By the mere possession of this book, you too are implicated.

PETER GREY

Vernal Equinox 2010

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WALKING THE PATH OF A MAGICIAN in today's world requires either a lively appreciation for irony or a complete blindness to it. The latter is far and away the more popular of the two, for good reason: irony is explosive stuff, especially when it weaves itself into the unquestioned assumptions of a culture or a subculture.

Nowadays the occult scene is awash in unrecognized irony. Many occultists today see themselves as innovators boldly taking magic where it has never gone before. Many others see themselves as defenders of some unchanging tradition from the past. Both sides claim to be rebels against the existing order of things. The irony begins here, as it's hard to think of a theme more hardwired into the existing order of things than the hackneyed pseudo-debate between a supposedly innovative present and a supposedly static past.

In all its many manifestations – and few corners of contemporary culture lack them – this nonquarrel conceals, behind a conventional facade of rebellious originality, an unquestioning allegiance to the basic presuppositions of modern thought. The most important of those presuppositions concern what we may as well call the shape of time.

Philosophers have suggested that deep-ocean fish have no awareness of the water in which they live, since they have nothing with which to contrast it. Whether or not they are right about the fish, this is certainly true about the way most human beings relate to the way time is defined for them by their culture.

In traditional China, for example, time had a circular shape; every rise was followed by a fall, and every fall by a rise; at every moment, the cycles of time lined up like the cylinders in a combination lock, and the combination might be deduced and the lock picked by someone learned in the *I Ching*, the primary Chinese text of time theory. For thousands of years this way of thinking was so deeply ingrained in Chinese society that it rarely had to be mentioned, and it was only when Europeans arrived and imposed their own very different vision of time by force that time lost its shape.

Pass from traditional China to aboriginal Australia and time changes shape completely; Chinese time moves in circles, but aboriginal time doesn't move at all. The time that matters is the Dreamtime, when everything real happened, or happens, or will happen – the Dreamtime exists equally in the past, the present and the future. Aboriginal bands performed their increase ceremonies

to tap into the always-existing Dreamtime for their own benefit and that of the land. According to archeologists, the aboriginal shape of time remained firmly in place for thousands of years, until European ships arrived with a new kind of time and the firepower to make it the only time that mattered.

The same thing happened to shapes of time around the world as Europeans surged out of their crowded peninsula on the west end of Asia and spread themselves at gunpoint around the world. Of all the dubious imports they brought with them – gunpowder, venereal diseases, Christianity – their shape of time may well have caused the most destruction. The shape of time may seem like sheer abstraction, but then water probably seems that way to fish. Flip the fish out of water and the concrete nature of that seeming abstraction becomes brutally apparent. For millions of people dragged out of their own times and forced into the alien time of the West, the experience was not very different.

This needs to be remembered just now, because time can change its shape for reasons other than the arrival of invaders from overseas. It can also change if the gap between the shape of time defined by a culture and the shape that's experienced by people within that culture becomes too wide to be bridged. The opening of just such a gap is well under way in the modern industrial world; in the decades just ahead of us, it will become impossible to ignore.

HOW CAN A FISH LEARN to be aware of water? This is becoming a crucial question as the certainties of today's industrial cultures crumble beneath them. Most of us have not yet learned to see the shape of time that surrounds us, precisely because it surrounds us so totally.

That unseen shape is also the central myth of our age. To call it that is to run afoul of deeply entrenched biases. The claim that past societies had myths but ours does not is among the credos of contemporary culture. There are even books claiming that *amythia*, the pathological lack of myths, causes many of the ills of modernity.¹ Once again, though, we are deep in irony. Our society's problems have many roots but a myth deficiency is not among them. It is of course true that the myths of Christianity and Judaism no longer command the belief of most people. Even among those who still make weekly trips to churches, myths and symbols that once inspired martyrs to die with prayers on their lips have generally

¹ An example is Loyal D. Rue, *Amythia: Crisis in the Natural History of Western Culture*.

become social fictions maintained from no better motive than sheer nostalgia. Still, this did not happen because people stopped believing in myths; it happened because they abandoned their old myths for a more appealing one, the myth of progress.

Most people nowadays, even when they cling to the symbols of older faiths, believe that human history traces a straight line from the squalor of a primitive past to the grandeur of a Promethean future. Most people assume that by definition, newer opinions are more true and newer practices more effective than older ones, and old ideas and approaches are not just made unfashionable but disproved by the passage of time. Magicians are by no means immune to such logic; as already mentioned, a sizeable subset of today's magical scene likes to think of itself as cutting-edge innovators whose theories and practices are better than the magic of the past, for no better reason than that they are newer.

A thought experiment can help show just how much emotional power the myth of progress wields. Imagine, then, that the contemporary faith in progress turns out to be based on a simple misunderstanding. The triumphs of the last three centuries were made possible, let's say, not by some grand trajectory of progress, but simply by the exploitation of the Earth's fossil fuel reserves. The fantastic amounts of energy mined and pumped from the earth enabled the world to enjoy an unparalleled economic boom, the Age of Exuberance, in which the limits that bound all other societies were temporarily lifted by a glut of cheap fuel.²

Today, to continue the thought experiment, all the factors that gave rise to the Age of Exuberance are going or gone, and a massively overpopulated world is rushing to extract what remains of the coal, oil, and natural gas that made industrial society possible. Assume, for the sake of the experiment, that none of the proposed replacements for fossil fuels can make up the difference. The future facing us then is not a vista of endless progress, but a difficult retreat to the world as it was before 1700, with no hope of another Age of Exuberance to come.

Even to imagine this future as a reality is to confront the myth of progress head on. It can be an extremely uncomfortable experience. Take a moment to think it through. Picture our civilization winding down, technologies abandoned because no one can spare the energy and raw materials to keep them working, the scientific discoveries of the recent past reduced to historical curiosities.

² The phrase *Age of Exuberance* is from William Catton, *Overshoot: The Ecological Basis of Revolutionary Change* (University of Illinois Press, 1980).

Imagine crumbling nations and resurgent local cultures burning through the last fossil fuels in an attempt to cushion the descent into a new Middle Ages, as most people return to subsistence farming, craft work, or manual labor to support themselves, while a dwindling intellectual class struggles to market its knowledge to anyone who will keep it fed and clothed. Imagine the footprints on the moon fading into legend. Imagine the stars forever out of reach.

If your first reaction is that this can't possibly happen, set that aside and imagine that it has. If your second reaction is that people will inevitably find some way to get progress back on track, set that aside as well; imagine that rapid technological progress turns out to have been an exotic phenomenon fostered by one set of rare historical conditions, and that the millennia of technological standstill before the Age of Exuberance are matched by millennia more of stasis or slow decline after it.

Think about what the human situation looks like from this perspective. In such a world, people will still live, love, struggle, and practice magic, but they will do so as their ancestors did, in a world tied closely to the rhythms of nature and the harsh requirements of a subsistence economy. Does that destiny make the story of human existence meaningless? For many people nowadays, it does. That is what happens when a myth dies – or, to use the language already proposed in this essay, when time loses its familiar shape.

WHAT MAKES THIS THOUGHT EXPERIMENT even more uncomfortable is that a great deal of evidence suggests that it is not a fantasy. This evidence has been explored at great length in many recent books, and need not be repeated here; the curious can consult the sources listed in the notes.³

The core of the case these books make is that fossil fuels contain more cheap, abundant, readily accessible energy than anything else humanity has within reach; they exist in limited quantities; and they are being extracted from the Earth at a breakneck pace, several times the rate at which new deposits are being discovered. No other energy source available to us can replace them in any meaningful sense, and as they run short, a global industrial and

³ See Catton, *op. cit.*; John Michael Greer, *The Long Descent: A User's Guide to the End of the Industrial Age* (2008); Richard Heinberg, *The Party's Over: Oil, War, and the Fate of Industrial Societies* (2003); and James Howard Kunstler, *The Long Emergency: Surviving the Converging Catastrophes of the Twenty-First Century* (2005).

technological infrastructure completely dependent on them will grind gradually to a halt.

The alternative technologies now being touted as replacements for fossil fuels, these studies show, are actually dependent on fossil fuels themselves. Nobody uses wind power, for example, to manufacture wind turbines; electricity from coal and natural gas powers the factories, and diesel fuel from oil wells powers the trucks that transport the turbines and the machinery that installs them. For that matter, today's wind turbines cannot be made or operated without plastics and lubricants derived from petroleum, as well as rare earth elements that can only be mined and processed in useful quantities because vast amounts of cheap energy can be poured into the process. Add up all the fossil fuel inputs that go into wind power, and it's not unfair to call a wind turbine a roundabout way to convert fossil fuels into energy, with a little additional boost from the wind.

You will not hear perspectives like this in the circles where wind power is being touted as the answer to our energy problems. Nor, though the same points could be made about other energy alternatives from solar cells to fusion power, will you hear them raised in those contexts. The working assumption that dominates nearly all discussions of energy today is that the universe has to contain something newer, bigger, and better than fossil fuels, so that progress can continue unchecked. It's unthinkable to many people that fossil fuels may be the best energy source our species will ever know, and that when they are gone, we will have to make do with the same far more limited sources our great-great-grandparents used.

The resulting effort to avoid thinking about the unthinkable has backed important elements of the alternative energy scene into embarrassing corners. Consider the recent ethanol debacle in the United States. Prominent environmentalists hit on ethanol made from American corn as the wonder fuel that would save the day. They found plenty of support, not least from farm state politicians interested in scoring with their constituents and stock market mavens hoping to cash in on the next stock bubble. Nobody took the time to figure out if ethanol from corn would actually make money, or produce more energy than it consumed, and as it turned out, it couldn't do either one.

Across America's farm belt, as a result, abandoned ethanol factories have become another gravestone marking the slow death of the American dream. Meanwhile, biodiesel from algae has

replaced ethanol as the fantasy fuel du jour, and money is currently being poured into schemes with economic prospects even more dubious than the failed ethanol plants.⁴ When those schemes fail, as they will, there will be others. There have to be others, because the alternative is to accept that Nature is under no obligation to hand us a new energy source to replace the fossil fuels we have wasted so profligately over the last three hundred years.

All the money and effort being wasted on such pursuits could be put to work cushioning the decline and making sure that at least some of the useful legacies of our age get passed to the future. Excepting a few projects run on shoestring budgets by individuals and groups on the fringes of society, this is not happening. The power wielded by the shape of time shows itself here as well. In any culture, the shape of time determines what people are able to imagine about the future, even when what is imaginable does not include what is happening around them.

THE MYTH OF PROGRESS is not quite the only force shaping contemporary expectations about time and the future. An older myth, inherited from the culture that modern industrial society supplanted, still has followers of its own. This myth defines the shape of time in its own way, and it also has a clearly defined social role nowadays; in the stereotyped debates between progress and tradition mentioned at the beginning of this essay, it provides the losers.

The alternative myth has roots deep enough in our culture that everyone reading this essay knows it well enough to recite it in their sleep. There was, this myth claims, a time before history when human beings lived at peace with themselves and their world. Then some terrible event ended paradise; history began, and brought all the miseries and evils that have afflicted us ever since. After countless years of suffering, truth burst forth in a redeeming revelation, and a wise and fortunate few gathered around the banner of truth to defend it against the gargantuan powers of a corrupt and dying world. The next act in the drama, which will arrive any day now, is a cataclysmic change in which the old world will be swept away forever, paradise will be restored, history will come to a full stop, and nothing important will ever change again.

⁴ See Krassen Dimitrov's *Green Fuel Technologies: A Case Study for Industrial Photosynthetic Energy Capture* (www.nanostring.net/Algae/CaseStudy.pdf), which documents that algal biodiesel using currently available technologies will only make money if diesel fuel costs \$800 a gallon.

The only thing that makes this myth hard to see as a single pattern is that the names of the characters change from version to version. In the Christian version, the original paradise was Eden, the terrible event was Original Sin, the redeeming revelation was the life of Jesus, the fortunate band battling a corrupt world is the Christian church, and the next act in the drama is Armageddon, followed by the Second Coming and the New Jerusalem. In the Marxist version, the original paradise was primitive communism, the terrible event was the invention of private property, the redeeming revelation was Marxism, the fortunate band is the Communist party, and the next act is revolution, followed by socialism and the transition to Communism. In the radical Pagan feminist version, the original paradise was ancient matriarchal society, the terrible event was the invasion of the patriarchal Indo-Europeans, the redeeming revelation was Marija Gimbutas' speculations, the fortunate band is contemporary feminist Paganism, and the next event is the fall of patriarchy and the rise of a *partnership society* in which women will be just that little bit more equal than men, and so on.

The diversity of labels for the elements of the myth do nothing to counter its underlying unity. The shape it gives to time is a straight line segment with a beginning, an end, and half a dozen clearly defined points in between. The present moment is one of those; those who believe that myth and inhabit the shape of time it defines are always living on the eve of the apocalypse, just before the rising spiral of conflict between the chosen few and the corrupt institutions of a doomed but powerful system explodes into its final, fateful, and utterly predictable finale.

Thus it has exercised a potent magnetism on radicals on all sides of the political continuum since the dawn of the industrial age, as it allows them to see their protests against authority, however unimpressive these may be, as the beginning of the ultimate struggle against evil. It also encourages radicals to fulfill the role assigned them by contemporary society, which is to lose. It's worth noting that those radical movements that accomplish their goals, such as the Civil Rights movement of the 1950s and 1960s or the first two waves of American feminism, are consistently those that steer clear of apocalyptic rhetoric. Those movements that embrace apocalyptic rhetoric just as consistently fail.

It's hard to say why insisting that the world will crash into ruin unless your movement gets its way should be the kiss of death for radical movements, but the track record extends to all sides of the political continuum. Consider the abject failure of Christian

fundamentalism to force its moral vision on society. Despite half a century of efforts backed up by levels of popular support and funding that dwarf most left-wing movements, the fundamentalists have yet to get any major piece of their agenda enacted into law, or even manage more than occasional delays in points as fatal to their crusade as the legal recognition of gay marriage. It's anyone's guess which way the arrows of cause and effect run between this litany of failure and the fundamentalist obsession with the End Times, but the correlation is hard to miss.

The rapid spread of apocalyptic beliefs throughout the activist left in recent years is thus not a promising sign. Still, there is another and, at least potentially, a far more serious problem with the popularity of such beliefs all through contemporary society. The myth of progress and the myth of apocalypse both impose a distinctive shape on time, and define specific expectations for the future. The problem is that neither of these myths anticipate a future anything like the one we are most likely to get.

CIVILIZATIONS FALL. This is one of the most predictable things about them. What is too rarely noticed is that every civilization known to history traces the same general trajectory on its way to history's dumpster: a long, ragged process of crisis, contraction, and repeated attempts at partial recovery extending over one to three centuries.⁵

This is not the way most people today expect civilization to end. Hundreds of otherwise forgettable Hollywood disaster epics have taught us that the fall of our civilization will take place in the two-hour window between opening and closing credits, with special effects courtesy of Industrial Light and Magic. The myth of apocalypse in all its many forms assumes the same thing; Jesus or proletarian revolution or some other messianic force shows up with the biggest possible flash and bang, and by the time the rubble stops bouncing the old world is gone forever. The myth of progress assumes that civilization can only get better, but agrees that whatever the future brings, it has to be bigger, brighter, and louder than the past.

As the pressures of resource depletion and environmental degradation have begun to bite in recent decades, these three currents of thinking about the future have interbred with all the coy reluctance of minks in heat. Visit a bookstore of any size and you'll

⁵ Arnold Toynbee, *A Study of History* vols. V & VI (Oxford University Press, 1939), documents this trajectory in exhaustive detail.

find the results swarming on the shelves. My favorite example just now is Ray Kurzweil, who got the fifteen minutes of fame Andy Warhol predicted the future would give everyone by rewriting Protestant fantasies of the Rapture in the language of bad science fiction.⁶ Kurzweil's pop theology centers on the Singularity, the imminent point – like all apocalypses, it's always just about to happen – when science will know everything that matters and human beings become omnipotent. Once this happens, he insists, we'll all upload our identities into immortal robot bodies and go soaring off the planet to enjoy the good life forever in deep space.

Replace space with heaven, robot bodies with the Resurrection, and the Singularity with the Second Coming, and the narrative is instantly familiar; it's precisely Kurzweil's lack of originality that makes him so entertaining. He's not alone in attempting to tell an apocalyptic story using the language of the myth of progress, either. That sort of mingled myth was mapped by a great many people onto the $\nu 2\kappa$ nonproblem; an entire industry now exists to project it onto the inkblot patterns of the Mayan calendar; when the next baktun begins without incident on 21st December 2012, no doubt, some new target for the mythology will be found.

The end of the Age of Exuberance has provided an ample excuse for the same exercise, and those who read their way through current speculations on peak oil will find their share of sudden evolutionary leaps to a Utopian world, overnight cataclysms that send hordes of zombified urbanites across the landscape to provide target practice to survivalists, and so on. It's interesting to watch the logic of myth that runs all through these accounts, dismissing all the more likely outcomes so that the future can be forced onto the Procrustean bed of our culture's preferred ways of thinking about the future.

Fusing the myths of progress and apocalypse is easier than it looks, because a common theme unites them: both are myths of *the end of history*. According to the myth of apocalypse, history is what happens between the Fall and the Second Coming, or whatever their equivalents happen to be; once evil is vanquished, history stops and nothing significant ever changes again. According to the myth of progress, in turn, history as we have known it is already over; now that we have outgrown the errors and superstitions of the past, we can expect a future of endless improvement in which even the most overwhelming crisis will merely speed up the pace

⁶ Ray Kurzweil, *The Singularity is Near* (Viking Press, 2005), is as good an introduction as any.

of innovation, or at most impose a setback we will soon overcome on our journey to the stars.

Just below the surface of this insistence on history's end, it's not hard to sense the paralyzing dread of the future that drives it. Civilizations in decline very often experience this sort of terror of history; they see time itself as a trap closing around them, and flail about for some means of escape. As classical civilization faltered, mystery cults that promised a salvation outside of time grew strong, and then were swallowed up by a religion that promised an end to time not only for the individual initiate but for the entire world. Where the temples of the Roman gods faced outwards, embracing the community and its history, Christian churches turned inward and knelt behind closed doors as they prayed for time to end.

Religious people like to claim that all prayers are answered, but the only response this one received was a resounding *No*. Neither the Second Coming nor anything else saved the Roman world from its own mistakes. Instead, classical civilization stumbled down the slow arc of descent into history's dumpster, and the barbarian tribes that swarmed in to fill the vacuum founded new nations and histories of their own.

Two thousand years from now, some future essayist may describe the decline and fall of the American empire in similar terms. Long before that happens, though, those who cling to the hope that history will stop are likely to find out the hard way that it will not do so soon enough to keep them from experiencing the future that they most fear.

THE QUESTION THAT WILL BE ASKED by a great many people then, and may have risen in the minds of some of this essay's readers already, is how to replace the myths with knowledge of the true shape of time. Plausible though it sounds, it's the wrong question to ask. Cultures down through the ages have come up with a dizzying assortment of myths to give shape to time, and each one seems to work about as well, and about as poorly, as any of the others. Our competing myths of progress and apocalypse are no more true than the Chinese myth of time's complex circles or the Aboriginal myth of the eternal Dreamtime of which all earthly events are pallid reflections.

Nor do we even have the option of ridding ourselves of myths and seeing the world *as it is*; human beings think with myths as inevitably as we walk with feet and eat with mouths, and those

who believe themselves to be free of myths are simply caught up in the delusion that their myths are literally true. To abandon that delusion is to approach the borders of magic.

In the broadest sense, this entire essay has been about one branch of magic, the branch that masters the symbols with which we make sense of the universe. Dion Fortune used to say that magic is the art and science of causing change in consciousness in accordance with will.⁷ Thus magic does deliberately, on a personal scale, what myth does less consciously and on a collective scale. There's a sense, in fact, in which magic is to myth what engineering is to science: the practical application of patterns that span and shape the universe as a whole.

Thus the question that magicians might usefully ask themselves is not what shape time has, but what shape they might be able to give it. If the view of the future offered in this essay is anything like accurate, we face one to three centuries of decline, ending in a world with roughly the same energy resources and technological options as the one our ancestors knew. That future does not define the whole shape of time, and any number of myths could make sense of the curve of decline in their own terms. All that is needed to work magic with time is a recognition that time's shape is up for grabs.

Not that long ago, many occultists knew as much, and defined the shape of time in their own ways. Most practitioners of magic these days have heard of Aleister Crowley's theory of aeonic cycles, in which one dominant spiritual influence after another, proclaimed at intervals by a qualified Magus, holds the planet in thrall.⁸ Fewer know that William Butler Yeats, a Golden Dawn alumnus like Crowley, crafted a far more subtle theory of historical cycles as part of his masterpiece of magical philosophy *A Vision*.⁹ Other examples are easy to find; all through the magical revival of the late 19th and early 20th century, it was a rare occultist or magical order that didn't have a distinctive vision of time on offer.

It became fashionable some decades ago to dismiss this sort of thing as pointless clutter, a kind of Victorian architectural gingerbread unsuited to the gleaming Bauhaus constructions of up-to-date magic. Magical narratives of time went into the same dustbin of collective memory as, say, the colorful accounts of Atlantis and

7 Quoted in W. E. Butler, *Magic: Its Ritual, Power and Purpose*, p. 12.

8 Aleister Crowley, *The Law Is For All* (Thelema Media, 1996).

9 William Butler Yeats, *A Vision, and Related Writings*, ed. A. Norman Jeffares.

other lost continents. The parallel is exact; I have argued elsewhere that the Atlantis myth was resurrected by 19th century occult lodges in a subtle effort – too subtle, one gathers, for more recent mages – to introduce certain ideas about the morality of science and the future of society into the collective conversation of their time.¹⁰

The same deeper context can be found, with a little effort, in old occult literature about time and the future. It's easy to dismiss the gaudy furniture of rings and rounds and future histories as so much nonsense, not least because the prophecies of the near future included in them have proven far more often than not to be wildly inaccurate. Still, look past the clutter and trace the shape of time outlined in these ornate narratives, and it's often possible to glimpse what the occultists of an earlier age meant to accomplish with them, sometimes hijacking the standard myths of progress or apocalypse, sometimes contradicting them flatly or offering tempting glimpses of other ways of understanding the shape of time.

It may be useful, in other words, to revisit the dusty tomes that so many of us dismissed out of hand in the wake of the Sixties, and learn to see past the ornate forms of an earlier age to the potent tools they embody. Whether or not they choose to draw on these resources, mages and occultists might be wise to scrap the secondhand versions of the end of history that infest today's occult community, and replace them with a livelier sense of the ways that they might ride history's winds, or even shape them. In the process, they might also put some thought into ways in which the rich magical legacies of the present might best be handed on to a future very different from the ones that believers in the end of history have encouraged us all to expect.

¹⁰ John Michael Greer, *Atlantis: Ancient Legacy, Hidden Prophecy*.

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A YEAR OR TWO BACK I CAUGHT A SNIPPET IN THE SCIENCE NEWS about a university team that had used brain scanners to confirm that people do not indulge in repeated behaviour patterns without their brains registering some measure of pleasure from them. I read this out and it provoked a strong reaction from a person nearby, which resulted in a conversation along the following (abridged) lines.

ANGRY PERSON: What a load of bullshit! Why do they pay these wankers to research what is patently bloody obvious?

ME: Is it really so obvious? What about people who say they hate smoking but cannot stop?

A.P.: They obviously get enough pleasure from a cigarette that they want to keep smoking.

ME: What about people trapped in patterns, like a woman who keeps falling for men who turn out to be violent alcoholics? Or losers who repeatedly fail at jobs? Or dreamers whose schemes never take off?

A.P.: You can be sure they get some sort of kick out of it, wanting to get sympathy as a victim, or needing to be the rescuer, or whatever...

ME: So, you insist that it is patently obvious and undeniable that no-one ever does repetitive actions without in some measure gaining pleasure from them?

A.P.: Absolutely!

ME: That is interesting. Because my memory of the day that planes flew into the World Trade Center was of the pictures of the burning towers that were shown over and over again on the news all day, and that people, including me, watched them over and over again. That would add up to an awful lot of pleasure, not just in the USA but all round the world. And yet I've never heard a word of thanks in the Western media to Al Qaeda for providing us with all that pleasure...

A.P.: That was different.

I never really found out why it was different, why this repeated action broke an otherwise universal rule – because in those days the penalty for saying anything about 9-11 that did not fit the accepted script, was to be accused of being a terrorist sympathiser. So the conversation ended and I was left with a mystery.

No, actually, it was not such a mystery, because I could recall the pleasure I myself felt that day. Firstly the aesthetic pleasure: the towers looked so much better with smoke coming out of them, that I guess the architect must have wished he had thought of it first. (Or maybe he had, maybe his buildings were deliberately designed as two fingers raised to the airspace expressing the invitation: *c'mon, make my day!*)

Then came something close to sheer curiosity, a sense akin to *yippee!* *some interesting news has happened at last!* This surely must be what the media were thinking. I do recall one journalist later admitting in private conversation that 9-11 was: *Brilliant! the best thing since the day Diana Princess of Wales snuffed it*, but I have never seen such feelings admitted in the news stories – even though they must have been rubbing their hands with glee and thinking ahead to the “one week...” “one month...” “one hundred days...” “one year after” and umpteen other anniverseries that would keep this story running and running.

As details of how the attack was achieved began to emerge, I felt a new pleasure – the joy that a small group of determined individuals armed with nothing but a craft knife and their wits could actually take on The System and score a significant victory.

At this point I must pause in my narration and address those whose hands have shot up in horror that I could be so evil and “inhuman” as to feel pleasure at the suffering and death of nearly three thousand innocent people.

I'm sorry, did I say that it was the suffering and death of innocent people that gave me such pleasure? Not at all, the pleasure came from a visual spectacle, from news outside the ordinary, and from the thought that the individual could impact The System. I had yet to assimilate the extent of the agony behind that spectacle.

Far from being inhuman in my detachment, I was in the all-too-human state of denial. I recall as a schoolboy that my father died suddenly and unexpectedly from a stroke, and how uneasy I felt because I was not crying as a result. But adults reassured me that it would take weeks or even months for me to really believe what had happened, and that the tears would come later. They were right. Similarly, the full implications of 9-11 in terms of human

suffering only came to me later, and not having witnessed it close up or knowing anyone in the building, I could even then only identify up to a point. It is hard to grasp such enormities.

Far from being inhuman in my denial, I felt that those politicians and spokespersons who came out the same day with polished speeches of sympathy and condemnation were less human than myself. They came across like looters – raiding the debris and carnage for any scraps that could be exploited to boost their image and reinforce their political status. It was the best thing that had ever happened for politicians like George Bush who cashed in on the crisis to boost their popularity. Although Bush never acknowledged this debt, he did at least take steps to repay Al Quaeda by removing their Sunni enemies from power in Iraq.

Anyway, that is a diversion. The point of this essay is not to go over the well-worn and deeply mined paths of suffering, but to address the less familiar topic of why 9/11 gave, and continues to give, so much pleasure to people in America and the West. And why the young men who gave their lives to deliver such pleasure have not been celebrated for it in the Western media.

OUTRAGE AND ITS CONSEQUENCES

HAVE YOU NEVER FELT OUTRAGE when wanting to be heard, but finding yourself fobbed off with an automated telephone answering system that in no way matches your needs? Some fat cat is saving money by putting telephonists out of work, while you pay the price in terms of time, and often phone bills too.

Have you never felt outrage when your favourite little shop or cafe has to close because some bland chain store is putting it out of business? Some bloated drones far away are killing your community for their own profit.

How do you feel when big business can defy local sensibilities and pull down a district to make room for an ugly office block, while little people around cannot even get planning permission to add a room to their houses? Or when giant enterprises leverage their near monopoly to kill off competitors and trap you into depending on their lousy products? Or when government and media corporations get into cahoots to present their slimy self-serving scams spun in the glossiest and most glowing terms? Or when a gadget you depend upon becomes inoperative because some small plastic component that should have been made of better material

breaks down and causes endless frustration while saving the manufacturer a fraction of a penny?

The World Trade Center was a fine symbol of The System. Nor was it just a symbol, it actually housed many of the fat cats whose money, power and influence shape our society. How deeply satisfying to think that two or three determined individuals armed with no more than a craft-knife and their wits could hit back at those bastards to so great an effect! Little wonder that so many people can watch the results of that day's handiwork over and over, and that – nine years after the event – the all-time best selling post-cards on the streets of New York continue to be the ones showing those burning towers.

The pigs who gorge themselves at our expense think that their bodyguards, surveillance systems, security gates and private estates put them well out of reach of the common herd they trample upon. They see themselves as magnificent fungal excrescences feeding upon the decaying structure of a society that rots beneath them – held safely out of reach by the barriers they install. They believe they are immune from the outrage they invoke in the masses, that they alone are individuals with the power to choose.

It would be very hygienic for such people to face the fact that every time they make some little person angry they could be setting off a human time bomb of outrage that might one day explode and destroy them. Such knowledge might even make them pause and think about the broader consequences of their actions.

Let us celebrate the so-called Tall Poppy Syndrome. It is not that every tall poppy should be cut down, but simply that the knowledge that it can happen might help them think carefully about the means they use to become tall, and how they use their advantage of height for good or ill.

What would it take? Wouldn't it be nice to see some corporate headquarters going up in flames once or twice a year, to see the occasional armoured limousine being smashed by an angry mob with sledge hammers who drag out the CEO lurking within and tear him to pieces; to see political assassinations relegated to second page news as they become so commonplace?

Wouldn't it be healthy for our society and the well-being of the planet if anyone and everyone in a position of power felt they were surviving on the edge of a volcano where every step must be taken with the utmost care and consideration? That they could at any instant die a horrible death, be despised as a curse on their kindred and, in the final count, could rely on absolutely nothing except the

personal knowledge of the sum total of good that they had done in their life times?

THE INDIVIDUAL AND SOCIETY

IN THUNDERSQUEAK IT WAS SUGGESTED that the dilemma of the Age of Aquarius could be the fact that Leo was the opposing sign across the zodiac, and could therefore play a shadow role: Leo the kingly individual against the all-encompassing humanitarian embrace of Aquarius. The Individual versus Society, or The System. It is ironical, yet typical, that I am celebrating the power of the angry individual to strike back against the might of the system we live in, when the people running the system see themselves as the only true individuals, lording it over the undifferentiated masses beneath.

So let us consider a different example: the school-kid who feels isolated from the other pupils, the lonely geek who decides to win significance by taking a gun to school, a church, or a shopping mall and killing as many people as possible before being stopped.

This has happened in several countries, with or without gun controls, but it is still mostly an American hobby – hence the popular saying *It isn't guns that kill, it's Americans*. Nevertheless, the idea has a certain universal appeal: one morning you wake up a nobody – jeered at by the jocks, ignored by the girls, dismissed by the teachers – but by the end of the day you will be the most famous person in the school. You will be a global celebrity. That'll teach them. They'll be sorry. Don't push this individual too far!

What is this sense of significance, of celebrity, that becomes so precious that it is worth killing, and getting killed, to win it? I have sometimes illustrated a change in our relationship to society, and the universe, as a change from being *a cog in the machine* to *a drop in the ocean*.

In the past, in feudal times for example, we were all cogs in the machine with definite roles stamped on us by society. The village blacksmith was the village blacksmith and had no way of becoming a nobleman or re-training as a scribe. Even the local squire was locked into a pattern of duties and privileges that gave little room for change. So there was little sense of individuality, of freedom to be oneself and make personal decisions. On the other hand, you knew exactly who you were and why you were significant. Without the blacksmith, or the squire, the village would suffer. In those

societies, even the humblest role had a clear value and could not easily be refilled before the development of a mobile workforce.

That is much less true today. Now the individual feels more like a drop in the ocean of humanity.

Think of the single drop of water suspended above an ocean. It is like a tiny gleaming lens: look closely and you see the entire ocean mirrored in that tiny lens, for it is a microcosm of the whole. Analyse that one drop in a laboratory with the best scientific equipment and you can discover the chemical and physical properties of the entire ocean, for they all exist within that single drop.

As an individual I know that my DNA is as good as anyone else's. Leading politicians, top filmstars, award-winning artists and billionaires may have developed certain abilities more than me, but look close enough and you could barely tell the difference between myself and them. I'm as good as they are and yet, drop me into the ocean, and I am utterly insignificant. Unlike the cog in the machine, I have no irreplaceable role. Snuff me out and the ocean wouldn't even notice, let alone suffer my loss.

In the ocean of humanity, I am nobody. But if I take a gun into a public place and kill and kill, I make a splash. Briefly this one drop of water is flung high in the air for all to witness, glittering in the light. Shine on, you crazy diamond...

THERE REMAINS A PROBLEM

IT LOOKS LIKE I'VE FOUND THE ANSWER HERE. Buy a gun and load it. Buy one of those plastic knives that don't set off the metal detectors. Fill your shoes with explosives. Each and every one of us should take steps to arm ourselves, to become a walking time bomb.

Ready for random acts of outrage, together we will create a society where no-one dare trample on the weak for fear of violent reprisal. Where the system dare not ignore or exploit any individual for fear of what the consequences might be. Where the man in the Rolls Royce daren't cut in front of you, for fear you might ram his car in a suicidal strike. Where the woman behind the counter has to treat you well, in case you happen to know where she lives. Where the prettiest girl in the school must smile sweetly on the potty loser, just in case.

It sounds great, but there remains one big snag: I don't want to live in a society like that. I want to be able to walk down a street without being afraid of getting hit by a random shootout. I want to be able to take a high speed train without fear that it will be derailed by a lump of concrete on the line. I want my grand-daughter to enjoy her school days without any killers on the campus...

RAGE ON THE SCREEN

IN THE LAST COUPLE OF MONTHS I'VE SEEN three films on television that set me thinking along these lines: *The Assassination of Richard Nixon*, *The Killing of John Lennon*, and *Liberty Stands Still*. The first two were based on fact, the third was fiction.

In *The Assassination of Richard Nixon*, Sean Penn plays a real loser. We see him failing in his salesman job and in his life. He's a pathetic character, too feeble to really win our sympathy, but we cannot totally dismiss him because what drives him is an exaggerated sense of honesty. Among his failings as a salesman, his refusal to lie means he cannot play the role demanded, even as a game. But, instead of being nourished by this sense of honour, he grows bitter at its consequences. He begins raging against the liars who run this world – people like President Nixon. He steals his one true friend's pistol – ironical for a man who thinks himself so honest – and sets out to assassinate Richard Nixon. But, like everything else in his life, he bungles it. Having used some skill and intelligence to get through security with his pistol, in the plane he panics, shoots a couple of innocent people and finally dies himself.

The story is based on fact and rings true, because it is so like those local shoot-out stories. A few innocent people killed, a loser makes the headlines, a flutter of posthumous fame and that is all. The only thing that puzzles me about these killers is how few lives they take. Surely with a gun, with careful planning and the element of surprise, anyone could take out tens of people, not just one or two? And there are even better weapons available, like cars loaded with petrol – why not kill hundreds and really make a name for yourself? Do they value their own selves so little that they are prepared to squander it all for a minor news story?

The Killing of John Lennon might seem superficially similar. An angry young man – not such a total loser as before, but not really going anywhere – becomes obsessed with a moral cause. Similar to the previous example's crusade for "honesty", this man rages

against "phonies" and decides that John Lennon is the ultimate example and decides to shoot him. From there, the story is a bit different. Instead of a desperate act of rage, this man plans more carefully and studies his subject, his patterns of movement and behaviour. After some false starts – unlike the previous example he knows when to pull back and wait a better opportunity – he succeeds and kills John Lennon. He does not shoot himself, he simply waits to be arrested and spends the rest of his life in solitary confinement, because the authorities reckon he would not be safe mixing with the other prisoners.

This film is also based on truth, and I assume it is fairly accurate because it is based on the killer's detailed diary. The diary included words along the lines I suggested: just wait till tomorrow, I'll be famous. After the event he writes something like: *I have not just killed John Lennon, I have brought an era to its end.*

While I can admire his dedication, I reject his cause, because I personally liked the era he set out to finish – not that I believe that he alone achieved its demise. Like most people, I would rather that the killer had died and John Lennon had lived on. On the other hand, unlike the previous character, he did keep his cool and complete the job, without killing innocent passers-by or himself in the process. And he did mark a major change to the lovely era that so enraged him. Full marks for performance and delivery, but not for artistic merit.

The third film, *Liberty Stands Still*, scores high on both counts but has the advantage of being fiction, not tied down to historical truth. It is a very intriguing film, with some experimental touches such as using cellphone conversations for a large part of the action and yet still creating huge tension. Again we have an angry killer with a mission and a gun – this time even better prepared and skilled because we are moving into the realms of fiction where a skilled ex-secret service man can get hold of all the right kit and anticipate the enemy's every move. All that, without becoming corny and predictable himself.

Basically he manages to create a hostage situation from a distant sniper stronghold, with the daughter of a rich and crooked businessman used as bait to force the public revelation of the chicanery and political corruption behind some major arms deal. The trigger for his outrage emerges as the story progresses: his daughter was killed in a school shoot-out by a weapon sold from this company. The film is full of ironies – he is now using the company's own weapons to wage war against it. Being fiction, the film

ends with his victory. What's more, the key weapons – two bombs he has strategically placed – turn out not to have been armed at all. He simply relied on the company's fear of the true potential of its own weaponry. But that does not mean no-one gets killed, in fact he does shoot several people in cold blood, but they are all in some way implicated in the conspiracy he is unmasking, so don't really count as collateral damage. The only other death is his own.

It's a terrific thriller, despite the limitations of dialogue over a phone and the sort of minor flaws where any thriller cuts corners to maintain excitement. And it represents a sort of ideal that the other two true stories merely aspire to. This man really did hit back at the system that enraged him, effectively drawing public attention and exposing corruption. The attack was much better focused than an attempt to end a whole era by killing one major figure representing it. And the hero goes out on a high note – unlike John Lennon's killer who may now be regretting how quickly his name was forgotten, while the legend of John Lennon lives on without being tarnished by us ever see him grow old and grey.

Liberty Stands Still is perhaps how it should be. Corrupt fat cats should know that every act that generates anger among the masses increases the likelihood of people returning that anger to them, with the possibility that among those angry people might be one or more with the skill, discipline and perseverance to aim well and hit them hard with the very rage they invoked.

CHECKING THE SCORECARD

A SOCIETY THAT ALLOWS people in power to get away with abusing that power at lesser citizens' expense, is not a just society. If the law does not stop this, then I celebrate those dedicated individuals who can channel the outrage of the masses into an act that punishes the perpetrators. Again, it is not so much the act that I celebrate, as the knowledge it instils in the powerful that they cannot get away with it.

Hooray for the terrorist that creates terror among the evil doers! It's a lovely thought, but comparing those films showed that there can be a huge gap between the ideal fiction revenge and what happens in real life. Noting that gap between true life and the idealised act of fiction, how would I rate the 9-11 attack?

The first question must be, *what was the attack directed against?* It has been widely suggested that it was an attack on American

people or the American way of life. If that was so, 9-11 was a bit of a flop, because life for most Americans has gone on much as ever once the initial excitement wore off. Economic downturns have made a far greater impact than any terrorist threat.

More realistically, 9-11 could be seen as an attack on American business, because business premises were struck, the stock markets did wobble a bit, and subsequent business travel has been hampered by all the added security at airports. But again, the effects were negligible compared to the damage perpetrated by financiers.

Or was it an attack on the US government? In those terms 9-11 would be a total disaster, because it acted as a kiss of life for the Bush administration. Looking back at the gleeful reinstatement of torture and the subsequent denial of citizens' rights to privacy and justice, the image is not of a government under attack so much as that of a wild beast being released from captivity – a recent quote from a member of that administration was *after 9-11, the gloves were off*. Other governments, notably Blair's UK government, rushed to get in on the act by taking steps to stir up Muslim hostility in the hope that they too could enjoy the vicious freedoms that the public grants to government after such a large scale terrorist attack.

To really appreciate the success of the 9-11 attacks, however, they need to be seen as attacks on Liberal Democracy – and that is why they were so welcomed by the more right wing governments. Bush and Bin Laden made gestures of hatred to each other, but both clearly insisted that they were working for the same boss – namely God. Liberal democracy, on the other hand, puts the will of the people above divine or government authority, it is a rational process that explores ways to constrain those authorities, and so it is hated by those who are revelling in the corruptions of power. Both Bush's advisors and Al Qaeda were united in their hatred of the freedoms inherent in the American Way of Life and, by becoming the two horns of the one demon, created the split that started to tear those liberal traditions apart.

Remember that the defeat of Adolph Hitler marked a rise in the acceptance of his policies – from the anti-communism of McCarthy in America to the racism of apartheid in South Africa, governments around the world were quick to promote motorways, people's cars, and the shaping of media for propaganda purposes. In more recent times the defeat of Saddam Hussein has left us with a new role model for today's leaders who detest the tiresome restraints imposed by a liberal democracy – where even those

supposedly in power are obliged to pay taxes, are forbidden to kill or torture their enemies or to seize citizen's assets, and have so little power to gag media criticism.

Faced with these restraints, today's leaders look with longing on the freedoms enjoyed by third world dictators who can build glorious palaces and take their many wives and mistresses on endless shopping sprees while their citizens starve. Note that the poverty of others increases rather than diminishes their pleasure, for recent research has shown how happiness does not depend on absolute wealth so much as relative wealth. So the parasites gain greater satisfaction if their wealth is surrounded by poverty, even better if they get rich by making others poor.

So we find an accelerating trend in many first world countries towards encouraging or even creating third world conditions across the nation. Britain, for example, has for three decades opted for policies that increase the gap between rich and poor, it has raised the stakes in violent crime by allowing police with guns to be seen in public places and to increasingly promote arrest without trial, and it is pushing ahead with an identity card scheme to criminalise the population. Meanwhile, in the US the income share of the richest ten percent has risen since 1978 from two times to three times private investment in GDP, and is now level with Chile and Brazil (Argentina and Mexico being closer to 2.5 times). As a former chief economist of the IMF, Johnson, puts it:

In its depth and suddenness, the US economic and financial crisis is shockingly reminiscent of moments we have recently seen in emerging markets, *and only in emerging markets.*

Policies that were seen as signs of backwardness before 1980 have since been promoted as progress by politicians greedy for personal power. So I find myself comparing 9-11 with *The Killing of John Lennon* – a good effort, but I wish they'd chosen a different enemy. Just as I wish John Lennon's killer had waited a few decades and chosen to end this era rather than the 60s, so I wish Al Qaeda would pick on McDonalds, BAE, Exxon, Fox News, Halliburton or some other scum rather than direct its anger towards poor old Liberal Democracy.

Knowing that Liberal Democracy was the target also helps to define collateral damage. Do we see the business interests represented by the World Trade Centre as part of the freedom permitted by liberal democracy? Or do we see them as enemies of the people?

It is debatable, but there is no doubt to me that the other passengers who died in those aircraft were collateral damage. Their death marks a failure in the enterprise, a fall from the *Liberty Stands Still* ideal. While I can admire the young men who hijacked those planes for their dedication and courage and resistance to a foul system that degrades our society, I regret the fact that the system still lives on while so many people of varying levels of involvement and innocence died as a result of their actions.

In saying that, I recognise that I am drawing a distinction between the freedom fighter and the terrorist. The freedom fighter aims at a precise enemy and does not want to alienate those it wishes to free by harming them along the way – for example the ANC's military wing tried hard to ensure that its bombs were placed to cause maximum inconvenience to the government, while risking as few lives as possible. Whereas the terrorist aims to destabilise the status quo and disrupt the environment that supports its enemy and, if that means harming innocent parties, so be it. The terrorist is basically just shaking the die box and hoping that the next throw will be better.

CHOOSING A WAY

IN THOSE TERMS, I AM HERE ADVOCATING SUPPORT for the freedom fighters, not the terrorists – while I also recognise that those under attack from freedom fighters will always label them as "terrorists".

So, I would like a society where it was universally recognised that one characteristic that utterly disqualifies anybody from a position of power is their lust for that power.

A man driven primarily by a desire for power is the sort of man who would consider rape more exciting than consensual sex. This is the gang leader who wants to be feared more than loved, the ruler who actually delights in his people's hatred, for it makes him feel more powerful.

Why is it that prestigious office buildings so often ruin the environment when you would have thought it better for the corporate image to make a beautiful, harmonious headquarters? It is because such people feel even more powerful when their gestures not only provide status but also degrade the status of those around them. Why did the government ignore the British people when they took to the streets against the proposed Iraq war? Blair did not ignore them, it was just that that the thrill of slaughtering moslems would

be heightened, not diminished by knowing that the people were forced to do it against their will.

The ultimate power thrill provided for such people is torture. Why was the US administration so eager to *take off the gloves* after 9-11? Because, as the school bully knows, there is no greater thrill for the power hungry than to make an intelligent individual hate them, then fear them, then finally be reduced at their will to a trembling mass of mindless terror – it makes them feel like “real men” for once. The thrill of being able to send those who voted for them away to be killed in war eventually wears thin in a democracy that forbids its leaders from enjoying the ultimate thrill of torture. Sending victims on secret planes to countries that allow torture provides some relief, but then why should foreigners get all the fun of playing “real men”? Thus we find waterboarding redefined as therapy rather than torture. The rot sets in and the rats snicker in glee.

(Actually, I am being too specific here. The problem is not so much being driven by a lust for power, as being driven by a lust for any single un-complex objective. As I write this, the world is suffering the consequences of a financial system where people were given bonuses based purely on the profit they generated, rather than some broader measure of their worth. The attraction is that it is so easy to measure profit. If instead they had been awarded bonuses on something like “their contribution to the reputation of the bank” – a measure that would embrace profit, ethical behaviour, positive attitudes and image etc – it would do much greater good but would be a pain to administer. Legitimate business is sneered at by City financiers, who deem it “cissy” because it spreads wealth rather than concentrating it to maximise the thrill of relative privilege. That is why Britain has moved from a manufacturing to a service economy since the 1970s.)

What’s more, I suspect that the privations imposed on Nelson Mandela in his 27 years in prison did a lot to shape him into the inspiring (but not perfect) leader he became. So that 27 years of brutal treatment should be a necessary prior condition for anyone who aspires to world leadership – anything less is too cheap a price. In this way all so-called “top jobs” would be filled only by people who had been elected into those positions by the masses in recognition of the many qualities they possess, and who would have only one desire: to fulfil public expectations and then get out as soon as possible.

It is inevitable that, even in such ideal conditions, decisions would still be made that evoked anger in parts of the population. Then I would wish for a tradition that encouraged people to consider whether their anger was the fault of certain people, or of a system within which they operated. For example: I can feel very angry at a board of directors voting to maintain their high salaries while reducing the workers' pay, but I can also recognise that it is possible as an individual to be quite high minded about making sacrifices and yet feel obliged to maintain a high income under pressure from a wife and family who expect to be supported in the way they have become accustomed to.

In such a society I could indeed salute the presence of freedom fighters ready to take violent but very well targeted action against any abuses of power. But, alas, we do not live in such a society. Instead we are in a world where those who abuse power or promote themselves through corruption increasingly get away with it and remain in power or, when admonished by the legal system, are able to finance an appeal, a media whitewash or a simple bribe and quickly return to their role. Outrage is seething in the populace, and has not yet found expression. What can we do?

ACTION

THE BIRTH OF DEMOCRACY marked the development of an immune system to defend society against tyranny. But tyranny evolves fast and learned, like HIV, to infect the immune system itself. Thus, muck like Hitler, Thatcher, Bush and Blair can use the democratic process to slime their way into government and degrade their host.

Society's immune system has a flaw that allows pollution to be ejected towards the head of the corporate body – as the saying goes "scum rises to the top". What is needed is to accelerate the evolution of society's immune system to cope with such malignant growths and spew out their excrement via more hygienic channels.

The Internet provides a medium for synchronising mass feeling and action. It also serves as an amplifier by means of resonance – you unload your feelings on an outrage website and others become incensed and feed back further anger. So what is the Internet's potential for developing absolutely blistering waves of hatred against those who abuse power? Could we hope for a future where grubby power seekers and all their immediate friends and family would be unable to even stick their noses out of the bunker without being

faced by a raging mob hurling stones and petrol bombs, screaming "Hate! Hate! Hate!..."?

Tawdry media, inspired by Hitler's propaganda machine and its stirring of anger against Jews, have ever since used this feedback process to stir up public anger, but it would be a welcome change to see it arising spontaneously from the grass roots rather than being orchestrated in order to sell newspapers.

How then to focus such a wave of feeling into an effective purgative? Here I call on the whole ancient tradition of cursing: the rituals, the chants, the fetishes, the pointing of bones etc.

Of course, the sort of people we would rage against would laugh at the very idea of a magical attack having any effect. But such "tough minded" thugs do tend to have a superstitious underbelly, exemplified by those mafiosi who kill all week and then go to church on Sunday. Such people would publicly laugh off any curse, and yet they only need suffer a few small setbacks or bits of bad luck to set in train a sense of unease that could make them wonder whether there might be something in it after all. That is human nature, and it begins the slide into terror...

Moving beyond the traditional curse, I look for what the marketing folk would call a "campaignable" attack concept – that is to say an attack that "has legs" and can evolve with time. This is perhaps best illustrated with an example. Around 1980, when Margaret Thatcher was at her most noxious, a friend suggested manufacturing and marketing voodoo Thatcher dolls to be hung in the rear windows of cars – provided along with a set of interesting-looking needles to be used for piercing the doll (at the time there was a minor craze for hanging fetishes in car windows). I saw it as a great concept because it was self-promoting: each car becomes a shop window where carrying such a doll would allow it to be seen by dozens of amused passers-by, who would tell other people and build a demand for such dolls, and thus launch a popular craze. Interestingly, I read recently that the idea re-emerged in the shape of voodoo dolls of a French politician, though I'm not sure whether these too were designed for hanging in cars.

Now the nature of such crazes is that they flare up until they become a cliché then they quickly die away – for who bothers to buy such a doll once it's lost all novelty value? So my suggestion was that the dolls should all have a tiny magical sigil concealed somewhere on them. Then, as the craze began to abate, they get someone with acting ability to approach the media in a state of panic, saying that they had been working for the company making

these dolls and that they fled in terror when they discovered that, far from being just a comic novelty, these dolls were part of a serious magical attack designed to undermine the authority of our beloved Prime Minister. When questioned by the media, the stooge should do all the usual things like insisting on not being named, not giving an address and only been seen in silhouette on television interviews, because they were "scared stiff of the power of these evil people".

After a flurry of publicity the doll manufacturers would fight back with solicitors' letters and very expensive lawyers demanding proof of these "scurrilous and utterly unfounded accusations". Then the bombshell would be released: "remove the doll's right leg and you will see a tiny occult symbol of evil printed on every doll". This disclosure generates a new wave of publicity and more people buying the dolls to see if they really did have magic symbols on them.

To keep up the momentum you then employ some nauseatingly greasy and sinister-looking company spokespersons to publicly deny the claims and make nasty innuendos in the face of an increasing number of employees paid to flee from the company and demand police protection from the satanic cult that they claim to be behind the operation. When the story has been spun out as long as possible, and the public finally tires of the whole business, that is when you give the dying horse a final flogging by announcing that the whole thing was from inception just a cynical set-up designed to maximise profit – knowing there will always be some who continue to insist that this final story is just the latest clever cover-up for what really was an evil satanic plot.

What I am suggesting by this example is that magical attacks on nasty public figures need to be designed in such a way that they can run and run rather than make just one big impact that could miss the mark. The rationalist tradition is still strong in our society, so any such person would initially laugh off a magical attack and be presented by their spin doctors as "sensible" and "having a sense of humour" as a result. But when an attack continues and keeps flaring up in public awareness, there will almost inevitably be chance setbacks in the victim's career, and these can be ascribed to the power of the attack and thus generate an uneasy feeling of credibility.

CONCLUSION

WE ARE FACING A CURIOUS ANOMALY in our civilisation at present. The public is growing increasingly ethical at the same time as those in power grow increasingly greedy and corrupt. Plato would not like this, nor would those Enlightenment thinkers who believed that the masses need noble leaders to steer their upward evolution towards an ideal society.

Greedy and corrupt people have nothing to gain, and everything to lose, from the civilising effects of a liberal democracy, and so they have been taking measures to turn back Western societies towards the political state of the world's worst governed third world countries. They yearn for the unfettered power enjoyed by a wealthy minority under a banana dictatorship.

This generates outrage in those without the power to stop them. There is little that an individual can do to fight back. It is dangerous to hold such rage, as it can be manipulated by those in power to serve their own ends – as when a freedom fighter is identified as a "terrorist" and is used as an excuse to impose even greater controls on the masses.

So we need to find some way of directing such outrage back to those whose actions are responsible for generating it. Unless we really are in a position to deliver a tightly targetted and effective attack as in *Liberty Stands Still*, the best option could be to unite and form an enhanced immune system to resist such corruption.

The disteleocracy might seem invulnerable behind their bodyguards, surveillance cameras and electric fences, but they do have one potential weakness: in declaring war on Enlightenment values they are unwittingly undermining humanity's finest defence against superstition. As they direct society into primitivism and chaos, they empower the fear of the unknown. Harness that fear, that nascent uncertainty, by launching global curses against them, and see how long they can hold out. Next time you burn with outrage and feel like scratching the paintwork of a black Mercedes with diplomatic number plates, just make sure you scratch a curse thereon. Then direct your rage to flow into that curse with such ferocity that it leaves a vacuum in your soul – a vacuum that can draw into itself the Love of Humanity. The tarot trump that follows the shattered Tower is the Star of Aquarius. A sign of humanity and hope. Invoke it.

**EVE
RYT
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ON!
CAR
LAB
RAH
AMS
SON**

*For nature applied to nature
transforms nature.*

*Such is the order of the natural law
throughout the whole cosmos, and
thus all things hang together.*

ZOSIMOS, THIRD CENTURY AD

PLEASE CONSIDER THIS IDEA: new, consciously made, magical, talismanic totems as members/parts of a new divinity. Artworks of different kinds become cells and building blocks of a new pagan pantheon of intelligence, of whose essence future generations can rely on and partake of. Special importance should be given to indigenous, traditional, tribal folk culture, woven into the mosaic fabric of genuine human creation. The final times of our mercurial technocratic culture could actually help in setting this up before these new gods are properly established enough to live on through the rituals of the post-technocracy-survivors.

In ancient grimoires, forces were evoked to visible appearance in order to be questioned and/or commanded through certain arcane techniques and mind-frames. This was also true of art up until High Priest Duchamp celebrated the mental and conceptual while discarding two-dimensional bourgeois thought and a wordly Weltanschauung. When art suddenly became intellectual, intangible and non-personal, the power of the old forces by no means decreased. They just went into a slight hibernation, awaiting the duchampian antithetical fulfillment. The coming synthesis of tangible, will-driven talismanic art and an anti-bourgeois, non-commodified approach will be a distinct characteristic of our new pantheon's magical bag of tricks.

Is it a far-fetched idea or one worthy of consideration? I think it should be considered as a project where individual seeds are sown in communal ground, where each garden patch then in itself becomes a new seed, and so on. I believe it is possible to make a quantum quilt of new creative possibilities.

I wouldn't be surprised at all if the sacrament of the new religion will be psychedelic – either organic or chemical. The transubstantiation process in itself and the integration of the divine in edible, digestible form has been with us since the dawn of human time. The psychedelic age, with its chaotic beginnings in the mid 1960s, has been instrumental in bringing forth a radical reevaluation of art, aesthetics, thought, philosophy, etc. I can foresee this pleasant open-mindedness becoming a prerequisite for future communications with the very principles of life, of nature, of human interaction as well as those of art and culture. We discover things when they're apparently badly needed. We seem to have a built-in intuition in situations of dire emergency. An expansion of the mind and a related expansion of art are crucial emergency routes at this point in time and space.

What's wrong with the old grids and frames of reference then? Well, I don't think anyone really doubts the sincerity of some religious believers or entertainment industry people, but the focus on greed in both areas help facilitate what I call the "180° phenomenon." What's put on for show actually, in reality, signifies the opposite. An example: although the "moral" key in disaster movies - that we should all work together as one human race post the big disaster - seems fair, fine and human(istic), the effect of the movies actually engender subconscious fear of disasters that will very likely never happen. What on the surface appears to be benevolent cathartic entertainment in fact cements the biggest lie of all: that humans are victims of nature, separate from general biospheres and eco-systems. Well, in a sense we are the victims now, but it's certainly no fault of nature's! What does this huge fear create in human beings? As with all fears, a desire to be safe. How do people handle this today? They consume.

Here's another example: If it's so painfully obvious that many people are starving today, why then not, as a first step at least, celebrate, encourage or even enforce the use of contraceptives among the cultures and people who can't, at this point in time, deal with their own fertility? The gilded pro-life (so called) benevolence of the Catholic Church and State makes absolutely no sense whatsoever. They simply engender fear through fiction so that people remain loyal to the herd. And pay their dues. The same old story over and over again. Our contemporary Axis of Evil is the epiphytic effect stemming from the Vatican and Hollywood, both enticing dream factories working overtime to create very real nightmares.

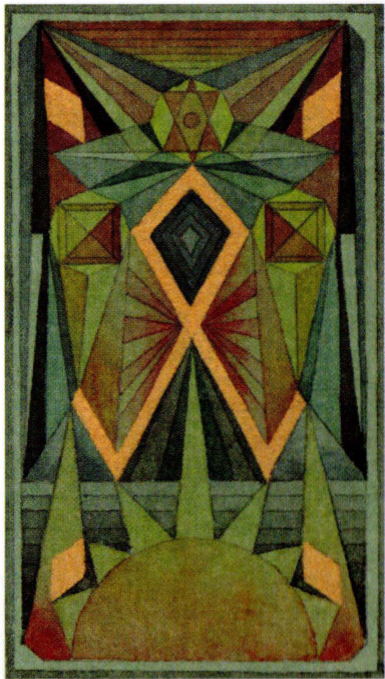
However, everything must go, disintegrate, fall down, evaporate... As all empires crumble, so will the hegemonial grip of fragmenting entertainment and the parasitic power of the monotheistic power structures. After this huge "paradigm shift" has taken place, I foresee a development towards a post-technocratic neo-feudal culture, where food access will be the driving force. A variety of land owners will protect what they have through privately owned armies and regional skirmishes will be common. The technological "daze" will have created a new breed of mindless serfs who will be forced into manual labour. Basically: when the technological culture has gone overboard and greed disguised as misdirected altruistic charities (as in the ongoing NGO swindles) have created very hollow human infrastructures, we are faced with Homo Talionis and desperate living again.

In this scheme of things, the artist will no longer be a state-funded iconoclast of irony, but one of religious stature and active function. The art has to be relevant to the times, as always. One gets the culture one deserves. If artists conscious of this already now start working in their own pantheonic cellular bio-art-work, the transition may be gentler and more intelligent, with less violence and devastation. Showing the past in its often violent manifestations through art can help change how we approach the future. Non-dogmatic instructions are just some of the building blocks I'm referring to.

The escapist aspects of wishful thinking are easier to distill in hard times. That's why art in our present times is thin, evanescent, transparent, dreamy, infantilistic, afraid. The current core of thought on a deeply rooted emotional level is spelled S-U-R-V-I-V-A-L. If our own culture is afraid to deal with it because of complacency or ingrained fear best cured with entertainment, then pioneers and movers and shakers will have to take responsibility and show new models and possible avenues. It really is time for our culture to grow up.

By "growing up" or "taking responsibility", I'm not specifically referring to technological solutions of "saving" energy, the environment, nature etc – humans in panic seemingly always need to "save" something! – but rather of multidimensional artists evoking new behavioural patterns, intelligence interchanges, existential models. These experimental engineers will very likely not use the commonplace given methods (art history, empirical science, interest-based economy, etc) but rather seek out entirely new ways based on visionary perspectives and, not forgetting, common sense.

When we meta-program the future through our art, we are very aware that our will is not singular and its manifestations may not be exactly as "wished" (analogous dynamics may occur in traditional magic). If we do good according to our own plans, yet the world is breaking apart in cataclysmic upheavals of politics and geo-shudders, we shouldn't be discouraged. We cannot fully grasp the mechanics of art, at least not until a greater kind of illumination has taken place. Whether one is secure, safe and pampered or vulnerably naked in the rubble, it is important to never lose faith in art and its transformative powers. Instilling will and soul in art-works has created, creates and will keep creating major changes in the world outside your own.



Óðal

FREDRIK SÖDERBERG

We are accustomed to art being a secluded area of activity for kooks and experts. Some become successful and take on the roles as clowns or jesters. Some remain unsuccessful and take on the roles as tragic clowns and derogatory objects of ridicule. The experts, like similar people in high finance, do essentially nothing but are expert in meta-trading adjectives dealing with "worth" and "relevance". What could be a free-flowing exchange of irrational (in the good sense, I have to emphasize), emotional and radical ideas, has become hi-jacked/lo-jacked and dragged into an arena of stress, trade, illusion and mere decoration. I'm not merely talking about fine art in the traditional sense, but about our entire culture. Everything's commodified and marketed except perhaps events (performances, temporary installations, etc) which are usually handled by a sub/supra-economy of institutional funding. The direct communication between artwork and viewer is perhaps best handled by classic structures like museums and publicly available collections. The shady relationship between these kinds of structures and the art dealers is more than well-known though. Kickbacks mean the possibility to kick back and who could ask for more in stressful times like these?

Grassroots reactions in the form of art are seldom vital in themselves in the long run, but definitely interesting as phenomenae where art in itself is actually looked upon as more powerful than throwing a rock at a building. The expression of aggression and frustration by proxy is an emotional-magical act that could be integrated in mainstream culture if it's loud enough (punk culture being one clear example). That's how the overall culture works, by sucking up new, radical and aggressive seeds into its own slow-grinding soil. Whether the seed later becomes a bland garden flower or a nutritious vegetable no one powerful curator or institution can singularly decide. Herein lies not only great stimulating mysteries but also great optimism for the future.

And here we come again to the crux, so to speak: history shows, again and again, that change in direction, culture and behaviour comes not through divine providence but through distinctly human initiative. People with ideas and the will to manifest the ideas in question take on the role of creators and leaders and then change everything. How does this revolutionary process begin? It begins in fractions of thoughts and invisible inspiration that gradually conglomerate into ideas or feelings that in their turn eventually take on the shape of communicable forms (words, images, "memes", etc). Then, through a suitable medium, these formulations

are spread and given by talismanic proxy to the world outside the mind(s) of the formulator(s). The sparks drifting towards the fuel.

Our culture is currently saturated with opportunities of communicating which, quite paradoxically, make it harder to communicate. If everything is apparently ablaze, who can see the flame of Prometheus? Our culture is saturated with possibilities of travel and discovery, but to an increasing degree we are only met by a globalised culture similar to the one on our own street. Our culture is saturated with concepts like freedom and choice but advertising, expertly using feelings of insecurity, make most people strive for complacent and comfortable homogeneity. It's literally the emperor's new clothes designed by black magic: everyone wants a piece of the exclusive but everyone looks exactly the same!

Is it far-fetched to call our present culture one of illusion? We are presented with givens but none can really tangibly be taken, unless you very clearly leave the trodden paths. "Who dares wins" is something we are taught, but the culture as such does not encourage its manifestation in action.

At this point, we can touch upon the concept of magic in itself. As with most terms, it is used as the tribal leaders see fit. Today, it is undoubtedly synonymous with stage magic, tricks, illusions, extravagant, flamboyant magicians and their scantily dressed assistants. The magical aspects of pre-science and pre-culture, the pioneering seed-sowing work, are humourously disposed of. The aspects of empowerment of the individual, tribe, society, etc, ditto. The aspects of consciousness training also. Anything or anyone that distinctly brings magic back to a tangible surface, will be associated with certain negative keywords that are inherited from one indoctrinated generation to another. Why is this? The fear of real, tangible change in one's life is greater than the fear of abstracted demons and wizards in our entertainment-drenched contemporary mythology.

Is my view of the future too dystopic? Isn't it better to try and get along in peace and harmony instead of painting things black? Well, of course it is, but not to the point of cheating ourselves that human happiness comes from dictated consumer patterns. Or that genuine happiness comes from obeying those one intuitively feels are ripping you off (or even apart). My view is not dystopic. It is realistic. The varnish of our civilisation is wearing thin and that is neither bad nor good. We, as caretakers of the present times, can probably enjoy our lives in wealth and comfort until we die. But the lives of our children may not be so blessed. The present

superstitious belief in science, technology, urbanisation, globalisation, etc, is making a big pooh-pooh mess and unfortunately I believe there will be a big and violent "baptism of fire" in the centuries up ahead.

Counter-seeds of change can and will have to be planted today. And they are. The spirits of the elements and other spheres will have to be evoked to visible and tangible appearance. Let nature in her splendour, beauty and philosophy be the guide. The guidelines are readily available. If we are currently living in a so called technological heaven, then the gates of hell should be opened and minions of pro-human demons should be warmly welcomed to create havoc and tear apart all the digital illusions that enfeeble and fragment us. Regardless of our languages or terminologies, let's just agree that change is necessary. Not the transparent "change we can believe in", but one where future generations can look back at us and nod in proud approval rather than shake their heads in utter despair.

It could be appropriate to end as we began, with a full quote from the Gnostic philosopher Zosimos. Not necessarily to tie this in with the "ancients", but rather to give another fine example how the basic, well-known conditions of life that we all share are preserved for future evaluation – and resonance. It is through poetry, literature, art and music that we decode and then encode ourselves, our children and those around us. We can indeed set examples for ourselves and for the future.

BEAUTIFUL IT IS TO SPEAK AND BEAUTIFUL TO HEAR, beautiful to give and beautiful to take, beautiful to be poor and beautiful to be rich. How does nature teach giving and taking? The brazen man gives, and the moist stone receives; the metal gives, and the plant receives; the stars give, and the flowers receive; the sky gives, and the earth receives; the thunderclaps give darting fire. And all things are woven together and all things are undone again, and all things are mingled with one another, and all things are composed, and all things are permeated with one another, and all things are decomposed again. And everything will be moistened and become desicated again, and everything puts forth blossoms and everything withers again in the bowl of the altar. For each thing comes to pass with method and in fixed measure and according to the weighing of the four elements. The weaving together of all things and the undoing of all things and the whole fabric of things cannot come to pass without method. The method is natural, preserving due order in its inhaling and its exhaling; it brings increase and it brings stagnation. And to sum up: through the harmonies of separating and combining, and if nothing of the method be neglected, all things bring forth nature. For nature applied to nature transforms nature. Such is the order of natural law throughout the cosmos, and thus all things hang together.

THE TOW ER- ERI- C-K LER NER

Bodies spray

like drops

Of semen

Open towers

Mighty hosts

lick flame

ON SEPTEMBER 11TH 2001, A PRIMORDIAL SYMBOL BURNED through the glassy haze of a warm New York morning: The Lightning Struck Tower. The XVIth trump, known as The Tower, The House of God, The Lord of the Hosts of the Mighty, became incarnate in 21st century televised broadcasts. A plane pirouetting and swooning into glass, metal and flames lingers in our imaginations as the quintessence of terror. The resemblance to depictions of the Tower is uncanny. In this essay, I wish to examine how the Tower is reflected in two historical events: the World Trade Center attack of September 11th and the downfall of an African Divine King in 15th century Oyo, Nigeria.

First, a little background on the card itself. The Tower did not always appear in early decks. According to Tom Tadford Little, whose website Tarot Hermitage is an impressive account of Tarot history, The Tower's place in a deck was often occupied by Fire or the Gates of Hell. He hypothesizes that the Tower itself was a symbol of European nobility. A lightning struck tower carried too grave a political implication for the aristocracy who commissioned many early cards. Little examines the connection between the Tower and its preceding trump, the Devil:

The connection with the Devil (and Tower) is...understood in terms of his lordship over the world of matter; he blocks the way of the spirit that seeks the heavenly world. ... The Devil ... shaped the world of matter to be a prison for the human spirits. He erected for himself and his minions a great dwelling extending above the Earth, a kind of false heaven. But when Sophia, divine Wisdom, reveals herself to the enslaved spirits, the Devil's tower shakes and falls.

Through the Tower, the vanity and devilish bonds of the Devil are destroyed. That interpretation is evident in some of the tower card's earliest iterations. For instance, Trump XX, Nembroto, of the Sola Busca deck, dated to the late 15th century, depicts a young man overwhelmed by a pillar disintegrating amidst a hail of divine fire. On top of the column is a globe symbolic of man's mastery of the world. Already lying on the ground are a helmet and crown. The lightning bolt pierces the actor's heart through his breastplate and shielding hand. The obvious conclusion to be drawn is that man's designs are puny when challenged by divine righteousness. False pride and artifice are laid waste. The image warns against living through vain constructions. It is also a forerunner of depictions

of the Tower. Many of those depictions level human hierarchy for both king and peasant who tumble out of windows when God vents his wrath.

To me, the Tower card symbolizes the moment when we perceive the world apart from God. We imagine the loneliness and terror of a world without a divine spirit existing in it. Such a world is ruin. The building falls because reason fails. There is no underlying purpose for existence.

According to Papus in *Tarot of the Bohemians*, the Tower manifests in three worlds – in God's as Divine Destruction, in Man's as the Fall, and in the Universe's as the Visible World. The worlds represent extremes of spirituality and materialism. In the case of the Tower, its presence in the purely spiritual World of God elicits the direct action of God through his anger. God withdraws his presence as the Tower manifests in the two lower worlds. He can no longer be perceived in the World of the Universe (matter.) Divine wrath and punishment lead to a barren extreme, the world with only its edifices. Without Divine energy, earthly constructions are useless and hollow.

Many people felt that God abandoned them on September 11th. Household heads did not return home. More than one bereaved family member protested during televised interviews that they could not imagine a world in which their loved one would not return home. Such an event could not occur in a universe with a merciful god at its center. The list of victims seemed endless, with no distinction made for anyone's place in society. Both the executive and charwoman perished.

As an ex-New Yorker who had worked at the Trade Center many years ago, its destruction seemed unreal. In later years I recognized the Trade Center as a skyline fixture that indicated I was approaching home in my travel up the New Jersey Turnpike. For solace, I tried reading tarot cards on the phone line that day. It was during those exchanges that I began to realize the depth of the tragedy. My callers that day exhibited the usually self-absorbed spiritual poverty that percolates through the 900 psychic lines. I could not understand how little they seemed to care about what was going on. I tried to block out their callousness and focus on my cards. I had faith that I would find integrity and truth among their numerous signs. However, I could not connect with my dog-eared Thoth deck. Increasingly, spreads I threw did not make sense. Eventually, a sweet grandmother called. I threw a spread for her that would have been consistent with the lot of a drug

addict facing serious jail time. Panic had replaced the spirits who were normally there for me. I felt like someone had just punched a giant hole into heaven.

Since then, I, along with other readers who've shared their experiences with me, have come to recognize that the Tower can represent September 11th for clients, rather than reference a specific tragedy in their lives. This new attribution gives testament to the tarot's ability to adapt itself to new circumstances. Of course, this is not the first time a period in history has been defined by a disaster akin to a lightning struck tower: think of the poison ashes of Hiroshima, the downfall of the French monarchy, the burning of Rome. These are just a few examples of events that illustrate the Tower principle.

THE TOWER UNDERSCORES A SIMILAR TRAGEDY that took place in Oyo, Nigeria in the 1500s. Oyo is the setting for the Oba ko so myth. *Oba ko so* literally means *the King does not hang*. The affirmation applies to the orisha Shango as a mortal king who brought down lightning on his own castle. (Orisha are demi-gods in Yoruba religion. Belief in them has endured in the New World through Santeria and Candomblé.) It is a story of witchcraft, devastation, suicide, apotheosis and a 'virgin' birth in hell.

As a deity, Shango embodies virility, passion and divine justice. Historically, he was the fourth Alafin of Oyo. His brilliant ascendancy to the throne and leadership ability brought him worship during his lifetime. However, his fiery disposition led to his downfall. Samuel Johnson writes of him in *The History of the Yorubas*:

He was of a very wild disposition, fiery temper, and skilful in sleight of hand tricks. He had a habit of emitting fire and smoke out of his mouth, by which he greatly increased the dread his subjects had of him.

Shango ruled for many years, greatly increasing the size of his realm through his constant answer to the call of battle. It is said that his had three principal wives: Oba (his legitimate wife), Oshun and his favorite Oya. Shango also plied his wiles as a sorcerer, making charms. Today his faithful attest that there is no greater witch than Shango. Once he designed a charm to attract lightning. Johnson describes what happened next:

The palace at Oyo was built at the foot of a hill called Oke Ajaka (Ajaka's hill). One day the king ascended this hill accompanied by his courtiers and some of his slaves, among whom were his two favorites, Biri and Omiran; some of his cousins went with him but none of his children. He was minded to try the preparation he had in hand; thinking it might have been damp and useless, he first made the experiment on his own house. But it took effect, a storm was immediately raised and the lightning had struck the palace before they came down the hill, and the buildings were on fire. Many of Shango's wives and his children perished in this catastrophe.

Shango was ashamed. It is rumored that a powerful force in state asked him to resign (and thus have to commit suicide). Whether or not that occurred, Shango had 160 of his subjects slain when he lost his temper because they showed too much concern over him and his situation. Even his use of sorcery was turned against him. His subjects felt that he exerted too much power. Already king, master of all, he could affect events and people supernaturally. That was too much power for a monarch.

Shango began his exodus. His favorite slaves, Biri and Omiran, and Oya joined him. Shango refused advice from both slaves that he return to Oyo and accept the tributes which promised to rebuild his palace and restock his wives. Disgusted both men turned back. Oya visited her family at Ira. Abandoned, Shango hanged himself from a Shea butter tree.

When word of Shango's death reached Oyo, his followers were shamed into action. They took the lightning attractant powder Shango had created and placed it in the homes of his enemies. Soon all who opposed him met horrible deaths in lightning strike fires. His followers proclaimed, *Oba Ko so*, the King does not hang. It appeared that Shango had dispensed justice from beyond the grave.

What happened to Shango during his time in Ilé Iku, the house of the dead? There he met Yewa, the beautiful daughter of Olofi, God on Earth, dedicated to remain a virgin. Legend said that they met once before years earlier. Shango entered the secret garden where she was kept. She looked upon him and experienced lust. Olofi realized that he could not trust Yewa to remain pure in the realm of orisha. He sent her to live among dead. While the deity Oya delivers people to death, it is Yewa who consumes their



SHANGO
Oba Ko So

bodies. She renders the waste of inert flesh into nutrients for the earth. When he visited the lower depths, Shango seduced the eternal virgin. Their son, Brusina, is conferred on initiates when they receive the mysteries of Yewa. She is nonetheless regarded by the faithful as being an intact virgin. Shango found his way out of the land of the dead by inseminating Yewa – the ultimate eater of men – with the seed of life. His virility manifested in the outermost realm of desolation and loss, and he triumphed. The secret son became a means of the Father's immortality. Raised from the dead, Shango became orisha.

I recognize the archetypes embodied by orisha in the Tarot. Whilst many other diverse deities and myths are illustrated by the picture card book of life, what is inspiring about Oba ko so's relationship to the Tower is Shango's redemption from the land of the dead. Shango's tragedy is transformative. He emerges from it as a divinity. When the flawed king dies, it is the memory of his leadership and savvy that endure in legend among his people. Even the bloody lightning bolts and tower itself of the 16th trump are among his own holy emblems! When the Tower appears in a tarot card reading, the reader may wish to recall Shango's energy, his enormous appetite for life and ability to think on his feet in order to guide the client through turmoil.

In response to the burning towers of September 11th, many in the Santeria community turned to Shango for solace. The Lukumi Gathering discussion board, a popular Santeria discussion group, overflowed with announcements of drum parties for Shango and propitiatory prayers for him. Shango embodies the dance of life and celebrates it throughout every nerve pathway in his divine essence. He is dressed in flames. Another story about his divine nature states that he was hurled to earth as a baby by a lightning bolt – one more echo of a lightning struck tower. Shango is the wrath of God. The destruction wrought in the Tower results from specific behavior. Retribution can befall a human actor, a King or even an entire nation.

HISTORICALLY, THE UNITED STATES has committed a long list of evils. We smashed the foundation of Native American civilization in order to erect our own. We built over sacred graves. We handed out blankets rife with Smallpox to women and children. We buried ghost dancers alive... Is there so much to wonder about when dark invaders rain down terror on us from the skies? Part of being able

to pick ourselves up involves recognition of what we have done to lead ourselves to this point in time. Recent actions in the Middle East, as well 'old history', demand examination.

The Tower dispels comfort. It forces us to examine what we have done so that we can rebuild effectively. I believe that the bricks and mortar that held the tower together were coming apart long before lightning struck. Freedom lurks amongst the rubble. We no longer have to waste our precious time and energy trying to hold together an ineffectual construct. Strength is imparted on those who pass through the conflagration.

Tests by fire are part of Shango's nature. That which has been struck by lightning is sacred to him. In Yorubaland, his priests immediately took possession of houses struck by lightning. They plundered the wreckage for a precious commodity: *edun ara*, the stones created by the fusion of electricity and soil during the lightning strike. (Interestingly, they also gained the property to add to their real estate, and were suspected by many of the dispossessed to direct the lightning attacks to increase their wealth). *Edun ara* are rare and valuable. They possess sacred force. They are foci for lightning's power, and they endure.

In spite of the evil events that led to Shango's death, he still possessed a spark of divinity to ignite his immortal legend. The Tower's fire liberates both positive and negative energies from their material form. It is a long established scientific truth that energy never dissipates. Energies unleashed by tragic events such as the Trade Center attack do not simply cease to exist. They continue to be available to us so that we can harness, redirect and even transform them along new pathways. When the Tower breaks apart, we can look at it as symbolic of our situation. It terrifies us. At the same time, it beckons us to recognize its destruction as a turning point in our lives. Even in the coldest depths of hell, Shango was able to rally the vibrant life force that led him to his over-indulgence and disaster. This time, he used it to create new life and transcend his circumstances. When we perceive the Tower card's meaning manifest in our lives, Shango's feat contains the seed of truth that can enable us to survive. It takes an enormous amount of energy to effect an edifice's destruction. That power is still present. We need to find the courage within us to use that force to effect change.

TONIGHT MARKS THE EIGHTH ANNIVERSARY OF 9-11. A holographic image of the two towers looms over the Manhattan landscape and is seen on television screens nation-wide. Much television programming once more recounts the events of that day and the political events that followed. Images from that day play a role in the Western diviner's approach to the Tower. Images of the World Trade towers have been indelibly printed on the public imagination, and their resemblance to Tower depictions are too strong to overlook. However, to analyze how Western culture – particularly the US and the United Kingdom – have responded socially does not do much for me in developing my understanding of the Tower right now.

Much has changed for me in eight years. I was widowed after eighteen years. The padrino who initiated me into the mysteries of Santeria, also died. I accrued a small fortune only to see it vanish over the course of four months as I paid bills due to a personal medical catastrophe. Events such as these have taught me how quickly any structure I embrace has the potential to dissipate suddenly and force me to reinvent my world. Such experiences provoke a more visceral personal reaction to the Tower when it appears in the context of divination.

The way I perceive phenomena has also shifted. On a mundane level, my mode of creative self-expression is visual art more so than writing now. I try less to eke out precise word meanings behind symbols. I respond to elements that immediately catch my eye, and more often free associate. Interestingly I have illustrated the Tower at least three times in the past eight years. Each time the images have provoked comments to the effect: *Oh my God, you're a pervert. That's a penis, not a tower. Is that all you think about?*

Initially that conscious notion did not play a role in how I executed the drawings and paintings. I try not to impose meaning in my art but to stay true to what needs to develop on the page and arrange a harmony of elements that arrive at a balance. However, such responses to my own work motivated me in conducting research for this essay to look at many Tower images anew and determine if what others saw in my work was reflected historic representations of the Tower. More importantly, what could that suggest about its organic meaning? How can we use that in a new way?

It is naïve to suppose that familiar representations of the Tower are not blatantly phallic. One only needs to look at them. The earliest extant illustration of the Tower in a tarot appears in the Charles VI tarot, housed at the Bibliothèque Nationale de France in Paris, and attributed to an anonymous artist from Ferrara, c. 1470. The image usually named the Tower suggests an ejaculating phallus. Its depiction establishes visual motifs that became common to that of a lightning struck tower found in most Marseilles and the rectified Oswald Wirth style decks. In it falling bricks hold the place later assumed by floating globules, scattered Hebrew glyphs and actors ejected as ejaculate matter from the tower in later decks. Another early example has a homoerotic bent. The aforementioned trump XX, Nembroto, of the Sola Busca deck, evokes a penis as the lightning shaft plunging directly into the subject with a suggestion of sodomy given the strong visual emphasis on the comely victim's buttocks in the illustration. (The Sola Busca deck also has a minor arcana depicting a subject with grossly exaggerated testicles which may have been a symptom of plague or sexually communicated disease. The artist was not prudish). Further, it is not a great stretch to indicate that Pamela Coleman-Smith's depiction in the popular Rider-Waite deck suggests circumcision or an even crueler cut.

Of course, it is easy to suggest that any cylindrical shape, such as a tower, indicates a penis. However, if you examine fundamental literature about the Tower (I will cite Wirth and Aleister Crowley) and compare that to spiritual beliefs and practices that relate to phallic symbolism I believe this simple observation will reveal yet another dimension of the Tower.

Wirth's description in *The Tarot of the Magicians* is striking in its emphasis on the condensation of matter in trump XVI and its correlation to Hindu beliefs about the Shiva lingham. Wirth's language is replete with veiled sexual references: one important faculty to develop when reading esoteric texts is to be open to interpreting subtext. First, Wirth's description of the Tower itself reminds one of a phallus:

[The tower is composed of] bricks...of an overall flesh colour to indicate that it is a question of living construction endowed with sensitivity.

I'd like to juxtapose one of Wirth's simpler statements with a Hindu story. Wirth writes:

Arcana 16 presents with the picture of a similar tower in the Lightning-struck Tower, a typical designation, for it is less a temple, a house of God, than a sacred building of a body mistakenly identified with God.

The identification is the consequence of original sin which clouds the spirit descended into matter. The Fall is the natural consequence of incarnation, which is not necessarily the result of a primordial fault. The sin of Adam is relative and only exists in relation to blind humanity which whines on seeing itself condemned to work without understanding that they make themselves divine by associating themselves willingly with the eternal work of creation. Hindu mythology describes how Shiva became represented by the lingam or phallus. Once, a great sage went to consult Shiva. When he arrived, Shiva was busy making love to his wife, Parvati, and did not receive the holy man until they were finished. The Holy man was outraged and cursed Shiva to be eternally worshipped as a lingam because of his carnal appetite. While the symbolic attribution of the penis to Shiva is not exactly equivalent, I believe much can be drawn from how his totality is represented by an organ. Wirth calls attention to how a "sacred building of a body is mistakenly identified with God." Also, the long-held correspondence between the Fall and sexuality and Shiva's enthusiasm strikes a similar vibration.

Wirth's introduction of the Tower and profounder Hindu beliefs about lingam also reflect on each other.

The Tower in arcana XVI is the first building that we meet in the Tarot, where similar constructions are only shown in the Moon. Now XVI, XVII and XVIII make up the sixth ternary, which corresponds to the body of earthly Adam, that is to say the organism which is constructed out of human individuality, or to the organism of humanity seen as a whole. We have in XVI the first term of the ternary spirit and in XVIII the last term of the same triad, the result of corporization when it is carried out. Nothing is corporized without the presence of condensation, first ethereal or fluid, under the restrictive or particularizing influence that is agreed we attribute to the Devil. So the Devil becomes the spiritual father of the smallest atom, no less than of the immeasurable cosmic system, for at the root of both one and the other there is conceived

a wild whirlwind around a centre of attraction which is perforce selfish and grabbing.

Here I quote from an online article by Nitin Kumar, *The Shiva Linga: Images of Cosmic Manhood in Art and Mythology*, that paraphrases many popular references on lingham worship. It also touches on a few more myths that the reader is encouraged to investigate at his own leisure. According to Stella Kramrisch, the linga of Shiva has three levels of signification; these are:

- 1 *As a sign of Shiva*: this is evident in the literary meaning of the word *linga*, and also in the fact that the linga fell from Shiva's own body. Indeed, God resides in whatever is part of god.
- 2 *The Linga as Phallus*: this is depicted in the tale of the curse of sage Bhrigu, and Shiva's violation of the chaste wives of the ascetics in the forest.
- 3 *The Linga as made up of cosmic substance*: established in the tale of the rivalry of Brahma and Vishnu.

In a different three-fold division, it is believed that the linga contains within itself all three divinities of the Indian trinity of Supreme Godhead, namely Brahma, Vishnu, and Shiva. Brahma abides in the lower part that is hidden inside the earth. Vishnu occupies the middle portion of the linga that is covered by the pedestal, and finally there is Shiva, in the top portion that is visible above the pedestal.

The trinity contained in the lingham and the ternary configuration that Wirth begins with the Tower further link the two. Crowley more explicitly establishes this correspondence. He employs Shiva as an actor in the Tower, or War, in the tarot deck he conceived with Frieda Harris. In Hinduism, Shiva personifies both procreative and destructive energies. Many of us remember J. Robert Oppenheimer, the Scientific Director of the Manhattan Project, quoting from the *Bhagavad Gita*, to the effect, *I am Shiva, Destroyer of Worlds*, upon receiving accounts of the devastation his atomic bomb delivered at Hiroshima. Crowley writes in *The Book of Thoth*:

The dominating feature of the card is the Eye of Horus. This is also the Eye of Shiva, on the opening of which, according to the legend of this cult, the Universe is destroyed.

Crowley develops his exegesis to take the reader down the path of OTO sex magick to the unformed nature of the garrison of soldiers shot out of his lightning struck tower. Crowley describes them: Falling from the tower are broken figures of the garrison. It will be noticed that they have lost their human shape. They have become mere geometrical expressions. Compare this with Wirth's description of spheres in his tarot:

It remains to mention the multicoloured spheres which the explosion of the Tower seems to have projected into the environment. They are the energies accumulated by life, condensations which red indicates as being sulphurous or fiery, green as being passively vitalized in the mercurial order, and yellow as being dead like straw or even empty seashells.

It is important to note that in both tantric Hindu meditation and some traditions of Western sex magick that ejaculation is not the object of the meditative or magickal act. Release would represent a failure. A Yogi manifests the godhead of infinite potential creation by achieving a sustained erection. That would be devastated by ejaculation. Similarly, many Western practices, including homosexual sex magick that Crowley references in his description of the *atu*, focus on the harnessing of masculine sexual energy without its actual release. It might prove useful to look at these practices in light of the *Nenbroto* image.

The tragedy of the Tower takes place through a release of male energy in undifferentiated forms. Crowley exposes this somewhat cryptically by talking about the magical work simultaneously with the Tower's esoteric meaning embodying the will to live and the Will to die. When a man ejaculates, whether in or with a partner of either gender or by himself, his semen is not a differentiated life form in itself. His energy gushes. His penis loses its rigidity and structural integrity. Even if insemination occurs, a newborn child is, as Wirth points out:

...but pure animal. He by nothing but himself with the most absolute and unconscious egoism.

He carries the potential to become a destructive force. Indeed, Wirth's entire essay is so rife with phallic-sexual metaphors that I could devote a few more pages citing the specifics.

This line of reasoning on my part is not meant to decry any sexual act, but rather my attempt to come to terms with the more chthonic dimensions of male procreative energy. Such understanding I feel is an essential part of an ongoing inner process of individuation for myself. Also, I have woven a somewhat tangled web of images and statements that are not fully resolved. I don't want to fully spell everything out so that the reader can work through some of the challenges set up by the Tower image, its phallic qualities and his own spiritual development. Also, while I am a veteran tarot reader, I am not a Hindu or OTO initiate. I am a Santero. I believe investigating other spiritual methodologies plays an important role in achieving deeper understanding of one's own. It would be pompous of me to delineate intricate points of another's deeply felt systems of metaphysics, especially when my own provides a clear resolution for the challenges I have pointed out regarding the Tower's unique force.

Phalli occur in the symbolism of almost every culture. Jung postulates that phallic images are a means of penetrating from the known to the unknown, and that in a positive light can reinforce deliverance and healing. Usually the attribution of the Tower deals with the destructive potential of male energy release and to achieve deliverance one must come to terms with that as stated in the first part of this essay.

In my own culture of Santeria, developed from the Yoruba people, there are many phallic symbols. They include the Staff of Oranyan, an obelisk located at Ile-Ife – the birthplace of humanity, phalli jutting from the heads of Eshu-Elegua (the messenger trickster orisha) figures, and in the pilons associated with Shango, and many others. However, it is with Shango, Oya, and another tower story that I wish to bring this cycle of images, quotes and thoughts full circle and provide the reader with a means to develop his own praxis for the lightning struck tower image.

War once again raged upon the land. Shango claimed another victory, expanding his already vast empire. Liquor stoked his victory celebration, and he decided to journey back home incognito, delighting in his heroic exploits and drunkenness. On his way, he wandered into the land of an enemy king. He was captured. When his captors realized who he was they dragged him off to a tower and weighed him down with seven chains. They contemplated whether they should ransom Shango or wage war against his kingdom. In the meantime, Oya longed for husband. Usually she had led the way for him into battle, but perhaps this being a

minor skirmish she did not go. Now she fondled a magic pestle that Shango used for divination. With each caress her desire for him deepened and she fell into a visionary stupor. She saw her husband chained in a tower bound by seven chains. The image startled her into action. She sang, *Centella que va bene Yo summa-rela sube. Centella que va bene. Yo sube arribe palo*. A lightning bolt in the shape of the number 7 appeared in the heavens striking the tower and breaking Shango free from his shackles. He easily subdued his captors. In that act, Oya gave Shango the use of lighting, which was her gift and weapon.

This story occurs in the divination verses for the holy odu Obara-Sa. Right now, for me, it is the story that first comes to mind when I think of the Tower. There are a number of reasons for this. I draw on my Western upbringing and look at the prominence of the number seven being the combined reduction of 16. I employ reduction in some Tarot reading techniques. There is a methodology of reading numbers in Santeria in which the number seven is interpreted as *Èje* which means to destroy or consume. That relates the Tower's typical meaning and is yet another synchronicity that weaves through the image fabric in systems of meaning by which I understand how disparate spiritual principles connect.

The narrative employs the visual elements common to tarot images, and I perceive this as a very erotic story. An exact translation of Oya's song is beyond my capability since it is rife with double entendres, many of which also have specific spiritual connotations. Basically, she says that I hope my lightning reaches you effectively because I'm mentally sending it to you pronto making your stick or penis standup. *Centella* which means lightning bolt also refers to Oya's name *Centella Ndoki* – literally lightning bolt in a dark state – in the Bakongo necromantic religion Palo – which literally means stick – that many Santeros also practice. When the story was first told to me, the storyteller made a point to sing it like a love song and touched his crotch. Metaphorically, Shango is confined by his own hapless desire and is only freed when his beloved releases her energy whilst contemplating a phallic representation of him in astral projection. Oya manipulates Shango's phallic energy in a state of deep meditation to realize her own vision and delivery of force. Hers is a transcendent act.

Esoteric attainment is possible through the Tower by harnessing fecundating energy in a sublimated manner. Actual coitus or masturbation creates potentially catastrophic emissions and destruction of the organism when this specific image and circumstances it

THE TOWER

indicates come into play. Being able to focus erotic all consuming force in a non-physical manner results in staggering condensations of one's energy that can break through forms of bondage that imprison us. Doing so often entails journeying through dark and painful emotional and physical substance. That is a way to triumph over the adverse circumstances manifested in the Tower. To me it is key to magickally unlocking the Tower.

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*Be the change
you want to see
in the world*

GANDHI

IN THE MORNING, I WAKE UP BETWEEN MY TWO PARTNERS. I am polyamorous and pansexual, and I sleep every night between my wife of 16 years and my boyfriend of 8 years. Both of them came into my life after I asked the Gods to provide me with the right partner – not once, but twice. They were given to me, complete with invisible tags saying: “Arranged relationship package from Divine HR, by request – please take delivery!” How do I know what that tag looks like? Easy. It’s a Vesta-Juno conjunction on the ascendant of our composite astrological charts – hers and mine, his and mine. Both times. The odds of that happening twice in a row are ... astronomical. But when you’re dealing straight up with Gods, all the odds go to Hel. Literally, in my case.

Of course, it also means that I can’t ever get divorced, should I want to. It’s been made clear to me that to do so would be an insult to Divine HR (also known as The Love Goddesses), and They would punish me accordingly. I’ve seen what they can do. I know better. I also know I’d never get anything better after that, either. This gives me incentive to make my relationships work, with communication and consideration and being a mature adult instead of a jealous child. I’m not perfect, and sometimes I make mistakes, but I try to love through and around and beyond all the social garbage that we’re told about long-term committed relationships. I try to love as if I’d grown up in a world where those didn’t exist.

And this, too, is an act of magic to change the world.

My wife usually gets up before me and goes out to do the morning chores. She feeds the sheep and goats, the chickens and ducks and geese and rabbits, and if it’s winter she starts the big old Victorian wood cookstove that heats our food and our house. We found our stove at a yard sale when we’d first bought our little 18-acre homestead, more than a dozen years ago, and named her Esmeralda. She is the guardian spirit of the kitchen in our admittedly animistic eyes. She costs us nothing but labor. It’s said that woodstoves warm you three times: once when you cut the wood and drag it home, once when you split it, and once when you burn it. We’re working toward energy self-sufficiency, but it’s a long, slow, expensive haul. In the meantime, when the power goes out during our fierce New England blizzards, at least we have hot water and hot food. We log our little piece of the forest in sustainable ways that do not offend the forest spirits. When we say that, we mean it; it isn’t an affectation or a metaphor.

We get our meat and eggs from our farm, and much of our dairy when the goats are in milk. It's my job to milk them, a meditative job that I've come to enjoy. Hearing the squirt of milk rattle in the pan somehow connects me to centuries of ancestors who heard that same thing on their daily quest for nourishment. When I do the night time milking and come outside to a full or near-full moon, I make sure to catch the moon's reflection in the bowl of milk. It's good mojo for my nourishment. No, it's not superstition, it's all part of the great spell of my survival.

I belong to Hela, the Death Goddess of the Northern Tradition, but I also honor many other gods, some from other pantheons. The patron of our farm is the Norse corn god Frey, the Sacrificial King. We sacrifice to Frey by holding ourselves strictly to organic farming, even though it's sometimes more work and we do lose crops occasionally. Food is sacred, says Frey, and should be produced and eaten with respect due to the sacred substances that keep you alive. This includes both plants and animals – it was Frey who first explained to me that raising plants that are genetically modified to be soaked in chemical pesticides and still survive, and then extracting their fruits and heating them to such a degree that they develop trans fatty acids, is just as disrespectful to the plant spirit as keeping a chicken in a confined, disease-ridden cage is to the chicken spirit.

I wouldn't suggest homesteading, getting back to the land, to anyone unless they really loved it. This is not the kind of lifestyle that you take on quickly or thoughtlessly. The physical work alone can eat you, unless you see it as an earth-centered meditation, an act of mindful worship. If one can rake patterns in a Zen garden, one can hoe potatoes with the same mindfulness. Pulling weeds becomes a magical act of cleansing, removing stressful or obsessive thoughts and feelings from one's mind. There's an African Ashanti word – *fofoo* – that literally refers to a kudzu-like weed that must be entirely obliterated from a garden or it will take over and choke the melons and millet. It is also used metaphorically in that language to mean the sort of negativity that will take over your whole life if you let it. Every time I kneel in the garden, it's a chance to remove *fofoo* from my head... and other places as well. Every time I lay another bed fertilized with nothing that came from a chemical factory, I remember that I am modeling this for others in some small way. See, it can be done, and done well.

And this, too, is an act of magic to change the world.

THE VEGETABLE GARDEN is also my job, as is the herb garden that has entirely taken over our front yard. Since my childhood, I've talked to plants. I didn't have any wise old family members who held old herbal knowledge and taught it to me, as so many famous herbalists have recounted. I did have a grandmother who was into gardening, but she tended towards pansies and pachysandra. My family were middle-class American suburbanites who saw everything in terms of the latest scientific theories, and would have found my practice of talking to plants fanciful at best and ridiculous at worst. Gardening was all right – for a few years my father grew some vegetables in the back yard, and my mother put in a few small trees and some chrysanthemums – but plants weren't medicine, and they certainly weren't people that you could talk to.

I knew better. I was one of the outcast children at school, poorly coordinated and oddly behaving, picked last for gym teams and exiled to far left field for many phys-ed classes. Sometimes an hour would go by without a ball coming my way (not that I could have caught it, anyway), or anyone noticing that I was sitting down in the tall grasses at the edge of the recess field, touching weeds. Sometimes I would pick leaves and fold them, pull them apart. Sometimes I just stroked them like a pet. (I wasn't allowed pets at home due to the allergies of other family members.) Sometimes the plant would communicate with me, not exactly in words, but I could tell that its consciousness had responded to me. A clump of plantain read about like a mouse to me in terms of consciousness sophistication, although one was mobile and one sessile. Like one might talk to a mouse in a box, I would talk to it, and it would respond in some small way that did not include physical movement. I'd long ago learned that I could see the glow of life force in a living thing, and I could see it in plants just as strong as animals. As I petted it, it glowed brighter. That plantain was just as alive as an animal, although it wasn't very bright.

But there was something else present that was. Sometimes when I talked to plants – on the recess grounds, in the back yard, at my grandmother's house – I sensed a larger presence looming behind the plant like a parent standing over me and watching my interaction with their child. Whenever I sensed this sort of presence, my heart would pound and the hair would stand up on my neck, and I would be careful not to pull off any leaves while they were there. I convinced myself that I couldn't see them, largely because I didn't want to look. Besides, I sensed that whatever it was, was very old,

and as a child I felt that I oughtn't to associate with my elders. The little clump of plantain was just about my speed.

As an adult, I ended up in the city and all my dealings with plants ceased for years, caught up in a cycle of poverty, single parenting, chronic illness, and general scrambling for a living in the concrete jungle. However, somewhere along the line a friend drove me some hours away into the country, and we visited a herbfarm. I was captivated, wandering around in a daze. The herbs seemed so much more alive, somehow, than the over-fertilized tame hybrid vegetables or plastic-colored bedding flowers or scraggly weeds that I'd known in my youth. (I had no idea, at that time, how isolated I was from nature, how isolated most modern people are.) They called out to me with those voices that were not voices, and I ended up frantically buying a dozen of them to bring home and keep in pots. The herbs weren't timid; it was as if they sauntered up and demanded my attention. From that day on, I would never again live without live herbs in or around my house.

I read everything that I could find about them, ransacking the public library for books. As I read, something echoed in me again and again: I'd done this before. Not the reading, but the growing of them, the talking to them, the harvesting and preparation and ... dosing? Yes, giving them to people who were ill. I'd known what to do then, although I got the feeling that while some of the information I got out of those rather general library herbals was common knowledge I'd had before, some of it wasn't. I'd known things that weren't written there, scraped up through trial and error and the advice of those who had taught me. I also noticed that while there were many herbs who would call out to me, there were many more who wouldn't. It was the European herbs that drew me in with those memories, and specifically ones from northern latitudes, or that had been naturalized there. I also felt that from some of the local North American plants in the ecosystems where I lived, but those seemed to be less about "I remember you – don't you remember me?" and more about "Hey, I saw you when you were a kid, talking to that plantain. Want to talk to me?"

I learned, now that I was older and wiser and no longer afraid to look large spirits in the eye (in fact coming to terms with the fact that I could see human ghosts helped me face the spirits of nature), that the Presences looming over me were the overriding spirit of that sort of plant. Devas, some New Age folk called them. I called them Grandmother Mugwort and Grandfather Plantain, Mother Dill and Father Comfrey, Master Fennel and Mistress Hyssop. They

sometimes looked human in my mind's eye, but I never assumed that this was anything more than the way that my mind interpreted their energy. Some didn't look human at all. Some were simply undelineated Beings. Some seemed to like me, some were indifferent or even hostile. Some helped me, offering advice. I found that when the Grandparent spirit was standing over them, the little plant spirit didn't mind giving up its leaves, and even the sacrifice of its entire being was not accompanied by negative feelings. The Grandparent spirit simply gathered it in, and I took its body to make medicine with.

For medicine they were. I was poor, and had no health insurance, and was chronically ill. Taking herbs saved me from wasting my meager money on doctors often enough to make it definitely worth my while. It was quite satisfying, too – I was getting one over on the Man. Every time I fought off a cold with garlic and elderberry, I was robbing a pharmaceutical company, a doctor's office, and the entire medical industry. I was walking in the ways of my ancestors, some of whom might have once been me.

I have lupus, and by the time I was diagnosed I was already allergic or resistant to all the front-line medications prescribed for it. *Go home and wait until your organs start failing, I was told, then check into the hospital and we'll give you chemo drugs.* I can do better than that, I thought. With acupuncture, massage, live food, staying away from as many chemicals as possible, avoiding allergens, and depending liberally on the aid of my friends the greenwights, I am still very much alive when by all predictions I shouldn't be.

And this, too, is an act of magic to change the world.

THE STORY OF HOW I BECAME A SHAMAN, how the Northern gods and wights came for me, killed me, brought me back, and trained me in the other parts of my job is a path that runs parallel to my dealings with the plants ... or Greenwights, as I began to call them after the cultural context of my practice congealed around me. When most people think of shamans and spirits, they think of animal spirits – the shaman's allies are Wolf, or Bear, or Eagle. (You'll also notice that the popular stories all have large impressive animals; you rarely hear of famous shamans using Rat or Sparrow.) While I did eventually get introduced to a handful of animals, it was always plants first for me. Instead of Wolf, I got Agrimony.

Instead of Bear, I got Burdock. The stories also tended to refer to the shamans as only having one or two allies; instead, I was expected to make some kind of alliance, however tentative, with every sort of plant that would talk to me.

Two plants in particular dogged my footsteps, and I began to refer to them as my watch-wights. Before I had learned that term, I just made sure to look for one or the other of both whenever I found a new apartment, even in the city. If I saw one or the other, it was a sign that this place would be important or useful to me. One was Belladonna, the other Elder. They were the first Grandmother spirits that I ever faced. Lady Belladonna was dark and sleek, languid and sardonic, sorceress and Black Queen, sharp and dangerous as a stiletto, the Mata Hari of the plant world. Even though she told me that she had been set to guard me by my patron goddess Hela, I have always been careful to treat her with respect and never turn my back on her. Dame Ellhorn, on the other hand, was a dignified grandmother, a wisewoman of noble blood who expected me to treat her with courtly manners. At first I thought that she had been set to guard me as well, but she told me that she had merely seen me once as a child and had taken a liking to me, which suggests that all my talking to weeds paid off.

One was Gerda, wife of Frey the god of agriculture, the Sacred Corn King. My wife is descended from Frey's festival-got children – her mother's maiden name was Ingerson – and we both called on his blessing when we began our small farm and the first vegetable beds went in, the first goats and sheep and chickens found their pens. It would be later that I met his wife. Gerda is a giantess-goddess, quiet and dark and heavy where Frey is golden and bright and laughing. Her name means *guard*, and she came to me as the Lady of the Walled Garden. Frey oversaw our farm, but the herbs were Gerda's place. Indeed, as the garden grew, she claimed more and more of it until the whole area within the stone walls and fences became her sacred place. She would come to me while I was weeding or digging – conveniently already on my knees before her – and talk to me about the herbs, telling me their stories. They weren't stories I'd ever read, and I don't know if they have ever been written down. The shamanic tradition of my ancestors was lost while they still had an oral culture.

Gerda introduced me to plant spirits that I didn't yet know. Some who had previously been indifferent to me stood up and took notice when I followed in the wake of her quiet dark-cloaked figure. She specifically introduced me to certain types of greenwights

– the Wisewomen like Mugwort and Yarrow, the Magicians like Fennel and Speedwell – who knew the gossip about other greenwights, and who ought to be used for what, and might be willing to teach. To this day, when I meet other herbalists, they invariably ask me who I've studied with. I know that this is their way of determining my credentials and methodology, but I always have to be honest and say, *The plants taught me*. Some raise their eyebrows, smile fixedly, and move away. Some smile more deeply, and nod.

Has there been a price for my involvement with the greenwights? Of course there is. In all worlds, there's no such thing as a free lunch. Some greenwights (like the Ancestral Fathers and Mothers) are bound to us as a species and are obligated to help us. Others simply like humanity and have a close relationship with it, or are healers of such power that they are spiritually obligated to heal when asked under the right circumstances. Still others are indifferent to humans and must be convinced to aid us. The greenwights have demanded that I be more aware of what I eat, especially plant matter; they would prefer it if I only consumed organic food, a deal that I can't fully consummate yet but I am sincerely working toward. Genetically modified food is out of the question, and overly processed food is also an abomination to them. I have had to be mindful of what I harvest in the wild and how; what I feed to my livestock; what I throw out and where it goes. A picnic at a park may become waylaid by a greenwight who wants to talk to me, right now in the middle of the sandwiches.

Another strange taboo they've laid on me, which will probably upset a good number of people, is that I cannot be a vegetarian for reasons of principle. If I required that sort of diet for health reasons, that would be one thing, but my body likes meat protein and does well on it. To the greenwights, saying that it is wrong to kill animals but right to kill plants would be privileging animals over plants, and a plant shaman can't do that. The carrot has as much reason to live as the cow, and is as necessary and worthy of respect when sacrificed so that we may live. Ironically, my involvement with plants has therefore also led me back around to supporting organic and cruelty-free livestock farming. (If you don't think that the two are related, go have a talk with Master Clover, or better yet, Frey.)

(And this, too, is an act of magic to change the world.)

AND YET, WITH ALL THIS NATURAL LIVING, I NEVER FORGET that my body is a product of modern technology. I'm an intersexual, born with an endocrine system poised between male and female that exploded into a double puberty at age 13. I was raised female and transitioned hormonally to male; I pass as male on the street, but between my legs and between my ears I am both male and female and always will be. I didn't understand why this was important to my future until I bled to death, quite literally, and Hela took me apart in an almost-hallucinogenic vision while I laying dying, and reconstructed me again ... differently. I can do things now that I couldn't do before, but none of those things are mine to use outside of the job that She has set me.

One of her most difficult orders was getting sex reassignment. I took testosterone, made by a large pharmaceutical company, and I will take it forever for the rest of my life. I don't like large pharmaceutical companies. To someone with my politics, they are a nightmare, and yet I'm bound to this path now. To pay for what I have to do, I made this vow with my first injection: *I will take this corrupt, poisoned substance into me, tainted with all the ill work that its makers have spread, and I will transform its substance. Like snake venom, it will be turned by my flesh and spirit. It will be used to fortify a life that will work to slowly prevent that ill work. Let this medicine be a tool against the source of its own taint, and thus be cleansed.*

And this, too, is an act of magic to change the world.

AFTER TRANSITION, I found myself passing fully as male... and I was told that I must wear skirts whenever I could safely get away with it, as a sign that I was still one of the Sacred Thirds. I am not allowed to choose one of the two ends of the gender continuum and stay there; I must claim the middle ground as my own. I can never fully be a part of woman's or men's space; I am the living anchor for the alternative – a space where all genders are welcome, but the Thirds know best. *You don't have to be like us to be here, but you do have to like us – and you do have to give up, however temporarily, the uniform and values of your precious War.*

I see the gender wars between men and women more clearly from this outsider perspective. In the Dineh myth of Turquoise Boy and White Shell Girl, the ancient quarrel between the sexes once grew so bad that they stopped speaking altogether, and only the two protagonists – both *nadle* people, the in-between sacred

transgendered folk – could talk to both sides. As they were the only ones who ever came down to the river that divided the two camps, they were the only ones who realized that its waters were rising, and that everyone had to be herded into the same boat in order to survive the flood and save the human race. They took the task on themselves, and thus saved the People. This is part of what we were born for, we who are destined to walk in both pairs of shoes. We are the sacred mediators, whether we like it or not. This is our job – to save humanity in spite of all the efforts of the men and women that make up most of it.

My skirts symbolize my nature as two-spirited, and they also hide the very real bodily fact of my nature. It's not a theory or an archetype to me. What's between my legs is some of both, and it will stay that way. My Goddess has forbidden me to surgically change my genitals to something wholly male-looking; even though the rest of me has been shapeshifted, that needs to stay Third. Even while I belong to neither side, I embody both in some way.

In a very real way, my sex reassignment – from almost-female to almost-male – is my truest embodiment of the Gandhi quote at the beginning of this essay. I live as both, and I love as both – not figuratively, but quite literally. My partner Bella is a male-to-female transsexual – are we heterosexual, or the same sex because we are both third? Who is the man and who the woman? My partner Joshua is female-to-male – we're definitely same-sex, but in whose camp? I lie between them every night; what does that make me – besides very happy? Our love bypasses all of those boxes and labels. We don't try to claim them so much as we show how incomplete they are, how irrelevant they are to our experience. You can only describe a rainbow with the colors of yellow, blue, and green if you are color-blind. We're a whole different part of the spectrum. *We are sacred, we tell people. Our path is sacred. Just watch what it does to the minds of those who observe it! That's how you can tell that something is sacred, you know. It's one of the reasons why sacredness is so often shut up into small boxes... for the safety of the people who might be changed by it.*

In our house, there are no sexist assumptions. No one is allowed to do something or refuse to do something on the basis of what's between their legs, or on their chest, or what they were taught that they could do or not do while growing up. We'd point and laugh at the very idea, and going into environments where this sort of thing is unquestioned – in any direction – often boggles

us. We're used to living in space entirely unbothered by gender-programming...but somehow, the price that we paid to get that space horrifies "normal" men and women so much that they don't even want to hear our stories of what it's really like to live this way. Still, we tell those stories, and we model this world, and we will continue to do so until we're dead.

And this, too, is a great and terrible act of magic to change the world.

THEN THERE'S THE OTHER BATTLE, THE DARK BATTLE. Once I won my sexuality back from gender dysphoria, I realized that it didn't look like most other people's sexual desires. I like the exchange of pain, of intensity. I like to be in control of other people, to run the show completely. I like terrifying my partners. Obviously, these urges could have been very bad had I allowed them to run wild, but I didn't. *All sexuality is sacred*, Pagans say... and does mine count in that category? Of course it does. There was the initial step of learning about BDSM, learning how to be safe, how to become a one-man adult haunted house that my lovers could use to go down into their personal Underworlds and rise again better for the experience, but soon this, too, became subsumed into my job. I became an Ordeal Master, designing rituals of passage for those who came to my door and requested them. The potential danger was, once again, harnessed into an act of redemption, potential poison used to heal.

I take people down into their own darkneses, and scour them clean. I show them that authority does not have to mean corruption, that pain does not have to mean wounding, that power-over does not have to mean abuse, so long as it is entered into with consent, mindfulness, and awareness of the sacred. It is a position simultaneously of great arrogance and great humility, a place of power roped into service to provide a place for ... service. And transformation, and purification, and honor.

For this work, I needed a deity who could understand – and embody – the place where my sexuality comes from. That force walked into my life on clanking hooves, and his name was Baphomet. I get the feeling from reading various accounts that the side of Baphomet that I experience is very different from the Baphomet experienced by ceremonial magicians and chaos-magic types. He swaggered into my life, a hairy, half-goat hermaphrodite whose job is ferreting out one's ignored internal rot and rubbing

one's face in it. He embodies a sexuality that is dark and intense, even sadistic, but that is always dedicated to helping people attain a stronger knowledge of their selves, including the deepest, darkest parts. And, of course, he embodies this in a form that is both male and female ... and highly sexual. Many androgynous deities are safely sexless; Baphomet is the opposite of both those words.

He is also ruthless about making sure that I face my own dark-nesses in a useful way. It is said that anyone who would play Shiva the Destroyer must have a Kali to throw him down and tear his guts out, and while Hela performs that role for me in the rest of my life, when it comes to my sexuality – the part of me that has the greatest risk of becoming dangerous to others – Baphomet does the Kali role with implacable beauty – mentor, dominant, teacher of humility and arrogance, Rex Mundi. King of the World, this world, the world of flesh and blood and humus, of rot and growth and the eternal cycle of life. He is Lord of Perversions, taking that which others reject as monstrous and turning it into a tool of healing. I am one of those tools.

And this, too, is an act of magic to change the world.

THE BEAUTY OF ALL THIS is that I didn't choose to do any of it to change the world. I chose every piece for other reasons, or the Gods chose it for me and forced me to comply. Changing the world is simply a wonderful side effect, and I think that this is the most effective change of all. There is nothing that cannot be used as a field of redemption, for yourself or for the world. There is no end to the Work of the Repair of the World, and this is a good thing ... for it is in this Work that we repair ourselves, and through our own repair that we do the Work. Macrocosm to microcosm. As above, so below... as long as you do it mindfully and with intent.

My friend Fuensanta writes poignantly about walking along Monterey Beach and picking up litter, and willing each act of stooping and removing filth to be not only a physical undoing, but a spiritual undoing of the ignorance and selfishness that created it. She likens it to undoing the stitches made with a needle: magically, it's not enough to clip the threads and pull them out. You must work the needle backwards through each hole that it came through, and this makes your work reverberate throughout the worlds. It's simple. You just live everything you believe, wholly and unreservedly, and most of all consciously, making everything that

you do a spell of change. *As I pull these weeds, I pull my own fears and hatreds, my own internal obstacles. As I pull these weeds, I pull the fears and hatreds of the human species whose world and genome I inhabit. As I change this hospice bedpan, I cleanse my own fears about my eventual aging and dying, my inevitable helplessness. As I change this hospice bedpan, I cleanse the social fears about aging and dying that imprison people away from the world where they do not have to be seen by the ones with the fears.* Be the change and make the change. You'll be surprised by how powerful you are.

That also means that there's plenty of work to go around. So enough with the posturing, the whining, the bogging down in irrelevant things! Get out there – or in there – and get your hands dirty. Shaman says it will be worth it. Promise.

**THE
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*You will find
no rest here,
no mercy.*

ADRAMELEK

THE FIRST TIME I SAW THE TOWER it appeared as a great black monolith beneath a grey and rumbling sky. It stood in a vast desert and I felt a cold breeze blowing from within its gate. The sight was terrifying and it can only be described as a radiating beacon of death. These are the words of a fellow traveller who, in his efforts to explore the worlds beyond the Tree of Life, came upon the Tower as an astral subject of initiation. It symbolises a journey, a battle, and the elevation from earth into air.

Initiation is the art of living to realise one's full potential, and that always entails a battle, a battle of cosmic proportions. This essay attempts to explore parts of the initial battle of becoming, and the symbol that has appropriately lent itself to these explorations is the Tower. As a mere architectural construction it describes a journey between top and bottom, but also elevation and the enhanced vision of one's surroundings. The esoteric Tower that will be the subject of this essay is an astral edifice, which has its entrance in the first Qliphothic sphere of Lilith leading through the tunnel of Parfaxitas from the Samael Qlipha to A'arab Zaraq, towards the Sun-sphere of Thagirion. The Tower is constructed as vehicle that facilitates the movement from *Tonal* into *Nagual* and the sorcerer who chooses to suffer its transport must rely on his own impeccable intent because he will find no rest here, no mercy.

The Vampire-woman has lead you here, to the tower of madness.

ADRAMELEK

The initiatory astral construct towers over the third Qabalistic world of Yetzirah, which is associated with the suit of swords in the Tarot. The Tower, XVI, in the world of swords is the Tower of formative madness, an ecstatic rage of battle. It leads the initiate through the difficult and emotional parting with the personal affects, which are no longer required. The tarot proclaims regarding the suit of swords that logic can only lead you as far as the first arch holding up the entranceway to the Tower, and after that, the irrational will have to be dealt with through the wisdom and gnosis gained from the divine insanity. This destructive process of slash and burn provides a fertile soil for the magical seeds that the Sun will then bring into bloom.



BABILIM

The base of the Tower is found in the lowermost of the astral Qliphas, and as an allegory for the Qliphothic sub-solar initiation, you enter the Tower through the gateway constituted by the Lilith Qlipha. According to the guardians of the Tower, the sorcerer must *drink from the mouth of the spider* to gain entrance to *Bab-Ilim*, the gate of the gods. The theme of venom or poison connects the tunnels, leading from the earth-sphere (i.e. Qulielfi), to the Samael Qlipha, *the poison of God*, suggesting a gradual flow of mercurial gnosis trickling down to be distributed by the arachnid denizens of the lower tunnels and shells. This perceived interconnection between shells and tunnels also illuminates a point, which is not obvious when studying the traditional schematic of the Tree of Knowledge, namely that the sub-solar spheres and tunnels are not ordered and aligned according to a logical Euclidian geometry. The Qliphoth is a coiling and winding web of interconnected labyrinths. It is probably partly on account of the extreme tendencies of the journey through these surroundings that this path is called *the Tower of Babel* by the spirits that guard it; Babel, from the Hebrew *balal*: to confuse. Also this is a reference to the mythical endeavour of the hero, whom through surviving extreme hardship and difficult tests stands victorious, only to be misunderstood by his peers on his return from his adventures. The Qliphothic initiate will face a similar ordeal as he enters his shadow and appear alien to non-initiates, as words will have new meanings to him as he has received a new view of existence from atop the Tower.

The imager of the spider as a distributor of the maddening poison denotes the astral nature of the Tower. The spider weaves the web that constitutes the astral realms, and she is Namaah, the demonic ruler of the Lilith Qlipha and the sister of Tubal Cain. Nimrod who descended from Tubal Cain is said to have built the Tower of Babel, but this myth is an indication of the angelic bloodline of the king rather than a reference to the history of architecture. Like Tubal Cain, Nimrod was learned in the art of the Nephilim, the sexo-magical beings which Kenneth Grant connects to the tunnel of Parfaxitas, and which are attributed to the shell of A'arab Zaraq, according to the Qliphothic Qabalah. The witchcraft of the Nephilim is the lycanthropic gnosis of the Tower, through which the sorcerer is enabled to explore the sub-solar shells via therianthropic power symmetries, sorcerous re-enactments of the demon-spawning union of spirit and earth.

The Qliphoth of Gamaliel and Samael make up what is called the Atrium of the Tower. This description implies not only that one



THE TOWER

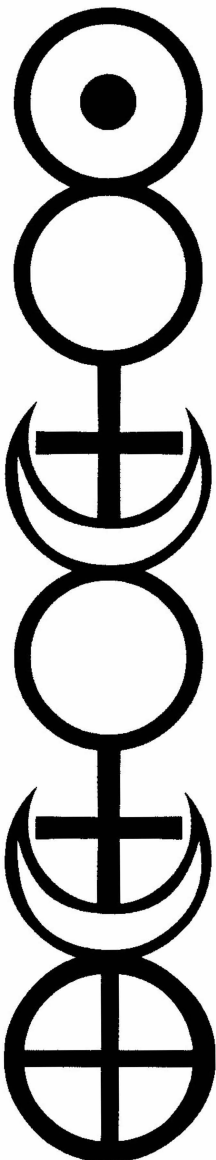
has entered into the initiatory structure, but it also connects the macrocosm of the Tree with the microcosmic esoteric anatomy of the sorcerer. The atrium of the heart and its significance for the circulation of the blood corresponds to the pooling and circulation of vital energy via the subtle channels of the energetic body. The vital energy, the Red Dragon, is a vibratory force, which like the heart, uses pulse and rhythm to induce movement and stimulate the flow of life. The Atrium of the tower is where experiences and gnosis pooled, to then be used as fuel to propel the initiate towards the roof and rampart of the Tower. Samael is the poison and Gamaliel is the accursed chalice that holds it.

The battle royal of the Tower ensues when the sorcerer reaches the pinnacle and has to face the goetic duke Dantalion who, according to the Qliphothic Qabalah, corresponds to the A'arab Zaraq Qlipha. At Dantalion's mercy, below the scorching rays of the Black Sun, the initiate here begins to comprehend the potency of the transmogrifying elixir, the transforming toxicity of which he began to partake of as he entered the path through the obfuscated astral realms. Since he has already passed the point of no return, the initiate does not have the option of capitulating. Bound to his fate by the pacts he has struck with the forces of the Tower he now stands on the threshold between Tonal and Nagual, left only to follow the ravens flight into the Sun. This stage of the journey is poetically summated in the oracular text known as *The Wisdom S'iba: Disintegration of Form in Madness is the Victory achieved by the Ravens of Dispersion. Pierce yet deeper until the very walls of mind crumble and fall.*

*The Cross and Skulls are the quartet of the Tower.
They whisper, like the snake, of the fruits of wisdom.*

YEZIDIC KEY OF QUAGARFEX

In *Nightside of Eden* Kenneth Grant makes a few very interesting points in regards to the Tower as the glyph of the tunnel of Parfaxitas. Via gematria Grant connects the Tower to witchcraft and crucifixion, but also to the Sword of Mars and the Nephilim, offspring of the fallen angels. All these elements are relevant as we expound on the gnosis of the Tower. On the Tree of Knowledge the Qliphas below the Sun resemble the tau-cross and if the Sun itself is included in the shape, a four-armed cross emerges with its hub in the tunnel of Parfaxitas. This is where the tunnel of the



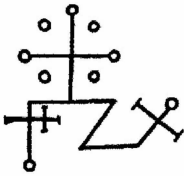
*Planetary tower:
constructed by author*

Tower crosses Saksaksalim, the tunnel of Art according to the Qliphothic Qabalah. The relationship between Tower and cross constitutes a moving inwards, and as the initiate allows his perception to pierce deeper inwards, his consciousness simultaneously expand to encompass more and more of his self.

The mystical process of the Tower is symbolised by the cross as a vehicle of magical transformation. The gnostic ascension of Jesus Christ and Odins descent into Hel by means of self crucifixion is represented by the crossroad housed inside the Tower, a gateway to initiation and the solar realms beyond, because the sacrifice of the old self and the shamanic transmutation is the ethos proclaimed by the fallen angels that tend to the Tower.

Esoteric symbolism alluding to the journey through the Tower and the tunnel at its centre can be found in the traditional structures surrounding the metaphysical architecture and the context in which it is placed in this essay. Consider the symbols of the planets that correspond to the relevant shells on the Tree of Knowledge. When examined in this light and sequenced to match the journey through the Tower they reveal a path of initiatory endeavours. The first crossroads lies in the Kingdom where the sorcerer decides to tread the perilous path of initiation and enter into the night of Lilith. Beyond the crescent of Gamaliel lies the first crossroads where one must consider the alternatives and enter the shell of Samael to strike a pact with its ruler, if the decision is made to continue. Leaving the mercurial domains equipped perhaps with the winged helmet of Hermes the initiate must soar across the battlefields of A'arab Zaraq keeping the Sun in view so as not

to loose his way when flying with the raven of dispersion. The composite planetary glyph of the tower also displays two aspects of the sorcerer; The lower aspect grounded in the earth sphere and the higher aspect which seems to be connected to the Sun. These two figures could be interpreted as the ego, acquired from living on the mundane plane and the more extensive Dæmon nature, the Shadow or the Other, aspects of ones self which will have to be confronted and dealt with in the Tower, but also the divine potential of the sorcerer, inspiring him to proceed.



Dantalion

Another synchronicity, which is less traditional, but all the more intriguing is the likeness found in three sigils derived from the exploration of the Tower. The first seal is from the *Goetia* and it is that of Dantalion, a teacher and revealer of secrets, he knows man and can change him and carries a book in his right hand. Analysing and comparing Dantalion's seal, in the light of initiatory experiences, to the oracular discourse of the spirits yields interesting perspectives. The most relevant part of the seal, to our gnosis, is undoubtedly the cross shape which is positioned on top of a horizontal line. The line below the cross could be seen as a metaphorical timeline where the initiate ascends, as portrayed by the shape of an ankh or cross on the left of the seal, through the cross and then transcends by means of its transformative powers. He is then propelled outwards like a bolt of lightning with newly acquired gnosis as represented by the crooked figure on the rightmost end of the line topped off by a circle. The theme of the lightning which radiates outwards instead of raining down from above, as is traditional in decks of the Tarot, is a characteristic found in the sigil representing the tunnel of Parfaxitas as drawn by Thomas Karlsson in his book *Qabalah, Qliphoth and Goetic Magic*.



Parfaxitas
Karlsson, *Qabala Qliphoth*
& *Goetic Magic*

Parfaxitas
Liber 231



This deviation is essential to the transformation facilitated by the Tower. The Tower represents the last outpost of the material world. It is the borderland between this reality and the greater; a reality beyond time and matter. In *Liber 231*, which Grant frequently refers to in his book *Nightside of Eden*, the seal of the Tower of Parfaxitas is surrounded by the words DEUS MUNDUS, God of this World and it is him, and the notion of his creation as an absolute Truth, which the sorcerer rejects as he metaphorically shifts his weight from one foot to the other and leaves some of his now useless, and perhaps worldly attributes behind as he proceeds to the top of the Qliphothic Tower. To some extent this discarding of old vices is a matter of magical and existential efficiency. The unrefined must be filed off for the sorcerer to achieve the Draconian Diamond state. This does not occur within the Tower, but it is rather here that the process of refinement begins.

The two other sigils mentioned previously along with that of Dantalion are channelled from forces inhabiting the Qliphas that make up the Tower. They are connected yet separate, but perhaps they could be viewed as complementary pieces of a puzzle; the first an explanatory map of the ethos, and the second a praxis or method of engaging the mystical principles of the first. The sigil



*Sigil of the Ethos:
channelled by author*

of the ethos' pictorial elements display the tau cross overlaid by a crescent moon representing the Tree of Knowledge, the night-side of the Tree of Life. Via a coiling snake, which represents the initiators, the fallen angels, the tau cross is connected to an equal armed cross surrounded by four dots. This sigil could be seen as the means of establishing first contact with the spirit guardians of the Tower, assuming you are already walking the path of the Tree of Knowledge, otherwise it would most probably have disastrous consequences. The sigil depicting the praxis of the guardian spirits consists of crossbones surrounded by four skulls. The cross, as we have explained previously, represents the Tower, and the four skulls are its chief guardians. When forming an alliance with these spirits, as minutely detailed by Johnny Jakobsson in his essay *Le Grand Grimoire: Pacta Conventa Dæmoniorum*, the sorcerer must approach them with utmost respect and the clearest intent if he is going to win their approval and protection. What they guard is not only an astral construct of initiation, but a whole tradition of witchcraft originating from within the Tower.



*Seal of the Guardians:
channelled by author*

The imagery of skulls and crossbones found in the seal of the guardians leads the imagination towards necromancy, a sorcerous art that is both diverse and misunderstood. The combination of cross and remains is not a rare one, but in this context it alludes to the most complex aspects of the journey through the Tower: initiation and transcendence through the transmutability of death. The guardians liken this core mystery to Xon, an astral principle, spoken of by Thomas Karlsson in a book on astral travel not yet available in English. The Xon of the Tower is referred to as a black star who carries within it all that could be by those who keep its secrets. Thomas writes that Xon is a portal that leads in all directions in time and space. Because it is beyond time and space it is the gateway to all worlds and places in time as well as space. According to Grant the tunnel of Saksaksalim, which constitutes the vertical axis of the Qliphothic cross, and that has a hanging man with his arms stretched out to form a cross in the middle of its sigil, is connected to the Hebrew letter *Shin*, the disintegrating principle of antimatter, and the Egyptian word *Khpr*, 'to transform', 'reverse', or 'regenerate the dead'. The necro-alchemical formula hidden in the reverse night (Nox-Xon) corresponds to the alchemical phase of nigredo, the blackening. This entails the dissolution of the sorcerer and the disintegration of the Sephirotic Tower as the initiate approaches the Sol Niger to be reborn.

The rune Hagal shares the same symbolism as the two sigils of the Tower and the seal of Dantalion, the route through the cross. It is the rune of Helheim, the world of Hel, to which Odin departed for nine days and nights as he sacrificed himself to himself through crucifixion on the World tree. Hagal contains all the other runes and thus represents the Odinic Xon provided by the fallen angels through the witchcraft of the Nephilim, because Hagal,

meaning hail, has fallen from the heavens like the promethean fire. According to Odinic runosophy, Hagal is the rune that holds the key to realising potential through ordeal, or wisdom through death, and by confronting his shadow and partaking of the transforming elixir of death through the esoteric edification of the Tower, the initiate will finally reach the coagula of the Sun, as indicated by the hail-rune, through the coagulation of the water of Briah, as he passes from the world of thoughts to the world of emotions.

Astaroth will try you on the threshold of the Lie.

He will place the poison of the oppose-word upon your tongue.

BELZEBUTH

It can take a lifetime to traverse the length of the path that is constituted by the Qliphothic Tower of Babel and the astral realm hold many traps and deceptions. What this short essay has tried to convey is that the Tower is a Lie uttered by the angels that fell and their accursed offspring. It is confusing and maddening to those who cling onto the Truth, but liberating and exhilarating to those who can surrender their superfluous notions of reality and self-importance in the quest for perfection and freedom. The keys are scattered about the labyrinths of the unlit worlds of the Qliphoth and they unlock the mysteries of existence as they render time and space useless as co ordinates of perception. The Tower is Tau, the way, the crossroads, and the Prima Materia that represents the initiatory crisis preceding the spiritual awakening caused by the destruction of the Sephirothic Tower. Through the coniunctio of the sub-solar spheres, combined with the arrival at Thagirion, the sorcerer is reborn and released from some of the fetters of spiritual childhood as he is freeing himself from creation to initiate his own destiny beyond the Black Sun.

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REY

THE END IS NO LONGER NIGH, THE END IS NOW. It is happening around us and it is happening within us. Our times are not merely interesting, they are outright apocalyptic. For these times there is one Goddess who speaks to us. Babalon, the city mirage image of Jerusalem, an infernal Roma, an Ephesus wormed with speaking catacombs and caves. She tells us not simply of the mysteries of sex and the battlefield of Love, but of War. It is high time to talk of war, as the storm clouds are spitting lightning whilst She dances.

Even if you have not yet heard Her voice, then you will have seen the evidence of radical change in the world. But perhaps you are reluctant to accept the signs? To confront the fatal architecture we have put into place? This is the initiation of our sweet XVI. Why should we be fated to pass over the Tower like a reluctant tarot reader? Why fold it back into the pack, or undermine the meaning, when it is stark in silhouette and devastating in application? I suggest that we should consider in our death postures, in our dismemberment and flesh melting meditations, the destruction of not only the Tower, but of the world by the resulting shockwaves. Few will dare to do this. Apocalypse is an idea mothballed with the Soviet warheads, with the Middle Ages, with the *Revelation* of John, in favour of the more comfortable illusions that flicker across the omnipresent thought-screens. Yet fire, as the alchemists knew, is a symbol of renewal, and this is what the Tower can bring us.

My research has come up with clear reasons for what I term *apocalypse denial* in the realms of psychology and brain chemistry, which in turn gives us methods to defeat these internal censors. Next by examining the world and career of that great magician, Dr John Dee we can orientate ourselves in a tradition of both apocalypse and revelation. Understanding how the events around us in the physical world have a hidden or occult meaning, we can take the brave decision to apply this to our own times, to read the omens of the stars and the tides that influence all men, and to traffic with the entities who lie behind them. To confront the Tower, we must first be able to apprehend it in ourselves and our lives, to get real, rather than engage in idle speculation on Daath, however prettily lit with effulgent violet light.

The inability to perceive impending disaster is what in psychology is termed *normalcy bias*. This is the clinical reason why when people even in obvious danger, such as when the Titanic is listing, or a tsunami is sweeping in, or a building is on fire, refuse to believe that anything is wrong. They do not run, they do not react, they do

not save themselves. Remember this when you next see footage of a disaster, riot, fire or war. Notice how many people seem unable to understand what is happening around them, then watch their fate. They are struck with police batons, overwhelmed with flood and flame, mangled by the machinery of war, faces marked with a look of incredulity even as they are erased. This is normalcy bias in action. Our brains are simply not good at processing new information, they tell us that if something has never happened before, then it won't happen now, and that it is not happening already. We are staring at the end of civilisation, the extinction of our species and the death of life on earth; and this will be the fate of the majority of mankind, not running, not reacting, not saving themselves. It is not simply cynicism that defends itself, all our memes seek to preserve themselves, and if we do not consciously take charge of them, they are quite capable of killing their host. The script insists that everything is ok. That Babalon is not here. That there is no tiger in the long grass.

We are especially vulnerable to slow moving well-camouflaged predators. The tiger is simply an indistinct movement in the distance, perhaps it is nothing at all. Our attention wanders back to our everyday routine. We go back to grazing, flip channels, type in another google search. As every magician knows, it is difficult to maintain focus without the forced discipline of structured practice. Even when the tiger erupts from the long grass and devours someone, normalcy bias councils us to lower our heads and keep grazing. To forget about it. To segregate it off as a single anomalous event. In our work with the Beast, we have discovered just how deeply set these behaviour patterns are. Man has a history of being prey.

Normalcy bias is a particular problem when dealing with more metaphysical threats to the species. A good example of this is climate change. Unless you live in a frontline environment, the threat is abstract. It is a tiger that has been utterly broken up by the mazy overlap of stripes and shadows. Normalcy bias blinds us to it. When a disaster does occur it is normalcy bias which makes it a single anomalous event. This is even easier if it occurs to people with different coloured skin on another part of our small globe.

The role of the magician is not initially to be the tiger, but first to see the tiger. To recognise patterns, to replicate patterns, and then to change them. An important concept here is the martial one of being open on all eight sides. A totem to consider for this work is the spider, useful in both moving and sitting meditation.

In Ninjutsu this awareness is called the eyes and mind of god. It was the only way to survive in the seeming chaos of the ancient battlefield, and is the way to be in our pattern crazed world teeming with jewelled tigers. We must be sensitive to the tremors in the web.

Our inbuilt normalcy bias is further reinforced by routine, social pressure, mass marketing and the media. We are rewarded for repetition, rather than risk taking. Our lives are built on small programmes which define what we eat and drink, how we dress, what we consume, and ultimately what we can see. In this way our deaths are hidden from us. The predators exterminated. The wars fought elsewhere. The diseases hidden behind screens. The Tower card never turned face up.

As magicians, we do not have to settle for this limited vision. It is not inevitable that we will all be lulled into the illusory world of the advertisers and archons. We do not have to confine our ideas to the hive mind of an office cube farm, we can extend them beyond our nine foot circles. As Gnostics we should be continually challenging pattern-making behaviour. We see this is the clowning of Nasrudin or Bill Hicks, in the taboo breaking of chaos magic or Crowley, and in the writing of outsiders such as the Marquis De Sade or Philip K. Dick. Yet we should not make the mistake of slavishly emulating these exemplars. We must design strategies against our own individual architecture. Though there are clearly universally applicable principles, the initiation of the Tower is ultimately personal. In our work with Babalon, sex, drugs and ordeal are the power tools we use to destroy the dormant state of normalcy bias. Yet we must be aware of replacing the patterns of normalcy bias with indulgence, addiction, and mortification. Magic is an art, and like war, one with a heavy casualty list. It is in both the small acts that mark daily practice and in the crucible of intensive ritual that power must be tested. There is no end to this process of transformation.

When the tiger appears and we have overcome normalcy bias and recognise what it is, our response changes. We are now in the realm of dealing with a stress situation. This is where, if our practice has been successful, choice enters into the equation.

Stress fatally slows response. It has been suggested that this is because when we were the prey of large felines and snakes, not moving increased our chances of survival. However this reaction can just as easily get us killed, which is why in the martial arts we train to alchemise the stress response into a pre-emptive or

intercepting strike. Often this involves taking on animal fighting forms such as mantis, tiger or dragon. However, this requires the practitioner to place themselves in extreme states rather than the complicit paired practice we find in many martial schools. We must train with intent and under stress, or we will be unable to respond to a real situation.

In our magickal work with Babalon and the Beast there is a similar shamanic process of embodying these chimæric predator forms. This internal alchemy and control of the endocrine system can lead to a state of breakdown, madness, or an awakened kundalini. Sex is not the starting point in working with Babalon, sex is the ultimate battleground, the final proving place of our alchemical prowess. Starting fires is one thing, harnessing them is another, and we make no apologies for the danger inherent in the practices we advocate both here and in *Seven Heads and Seven Veils*. This is the short path, and we are running short of time.

WE HAVE TO ACCEPT that we are both behaviourally and chemically designed to be apocalypse deniers. This is locked into the fight, flight and freeze responses. Responses which can be characterised in internal alchemy by the triad of salt, sulphur and mercury. All are valid responses, if we are able to apply them at the correct time, rather than being ever the victim of stuttering chain reaction states. This means gaining control of what are ostensibly unconscious processes. The intellectual development of Will is not enough. Physical practice is needed.

The chemistry is simple to explain. If we feel out of control in a stress situation the body drops cortisol. This leads to a flood of corticosteroids which effectively creates a short circuit in the brain. It blocks the ability to link changes in behaviour with desired outcomes. Flexible and responsive behaviour is replaced with automatic actions. The immune system crashes and the body folds in on itself. We are in essence preparing to be devoured.

By internal alchemy we can avoid being prey items by extending our control over stress situations. Meditation is one proven technique, and mastering the adrenal response through exposure to stress is another, I suggest we combine both. These challenges can be sought out in mountaineering, surfing, free-running and many other pursuits if they are carried out with intent. Or you can settle for being food.

If the tiger never materialises, but we keep picking up its heavy scent, then we enter a permanent state of underlying fear. We are drip-fed cortisol which can permanently change our brain chemistry and our physiology. The rounded shoulders, jutting neck and soft belly of homo urbanus signals a body in crisis. The immune system and sex drive crashes to be propped up with pain killers and cocaine. This is not the magickal body, it is the servile body, cowed by fear hiding within its folds of fat and seeking comfort. If magick is the science and art of causing change in conformity with will, then stress is the ultimate anti-magical drug. It shuts us down to the possibility of creating change, both in ourselves, and in the world.

We are living in a society which is itself a body strung out on chronic stress. A society working as slave labour. A helpless population of zombies who self-medicate with buckets of caffeine and warm milk to make up the cortisol deficit. Through low level Daily Mail (or Fox News) fear mongering, and big ticket terrorist spectacles we are driven to cling to routine. By reinforcing and rewarding normalcy bias the sheep have inherited the earth. Some erroneously believe that wearing animal print or black leather is enough to make them more than mutton. If you are in a McJob with an asshole boss, crawling after promotion, or craving cash then your magick is all out of kilter.

Opening our eyes to apocalypse is an antidote to life as a vulnerable isolated drone, the utilisation of a system of magick which can alchemise extreme states rather than being paralysed by them. We seek to develop what Colin Wilson calls faculty X rather than losing our faculties in the distractions of the X-factor. If we want to survive, we must be the still point in the storm rather than being frozen with fear. We must stop falling and learn instead to jump. We must instead ride fear like a tiger, or, as we prefer to say, a seven headed beast.

The result of our homogenised culture, with its underlying currents of fear, is that the creative, the confused and the just plain crazy, flee to energy oases like Glastonbury or Portland or simply hide in their libraries. But we are not safe even here from the ravages of time. The world is ending, embittered by the wormwood star. We have already lost more of than the third part of trees burnt up, witnessed that the third part of the creatures, which were in the sea and had life, died and more than the third part of the rivers and fountains of waters become poisoned, as *Revelations* # balefully predicts. There is nowhere left to hide.

Perhaps you find this too radical a turn? If so, ask yourself, why are you trying to hold on? Ask yourself, what are you trying to hold on to? This is the start of the meditation on pouring every drop of your blood into the grail of Babalon.

Though 2012 and the Kali Yuga are palatably removed enough for us to muse on, everything changes when we dare to say Apocalypse. To have the vision of Babalon drunk on the blood of the Saints is one thing. To see the West become a battlefield strewn with the corpses of our family and friends is quite another. You may wish to add this larger vision to your corpse meditation. This is magick, not in the abstract, but as close to us as a Lover, and it is happening now.

TO PLACE OUR TIMES in context I want to talk about the Enochian Angel magic of John Dee and how it dovetails into a Western tradition of both Revelation and Apocalypse. Enochian is often seen in the abstract, a complicated bauble to flatter the advanced magician who can make sense of the systems and squares. It was in fact a gritty and driven attempt to navigate through a world in utter crisis. It is a world which we have inherited today. We cannot hope to understand, (let alone perform) Enochian magic unless we realise that it is profoundly apocalyptic in both conception and action. John Dee was inundated with unwelcome visions. The Angel Murifri tells him:

The earth laboureth as sick, yea, sick unto death. The waters pour forth weepings and have not moisture sufficient to quench their own sorrows. The air withereth, for her heat is infected. The fire consumeth and is scalded with his own heat. The Bodies above are ready to say, We are weary of our courses. Nature would fain creep again into the bosom of her good and gracious Master.

Darknesse is now heavy and sinketh down together: she hath builded herself, yea (I say) she hath advanced her self into a mighty building, she saith, Have done, for I am ready to receive my burden. Hell itself is weary of earth: for why?

The son of Darknesse cometh now to challenge his right: and seeing all things prepared and provided, desireth to establish himself a kingdom, saying, We are not strong enough, Let us now build a Kingdom upon earth, and Now establish that which we could not confirm above.

The Middle Ages which birthed these visions were undeniably apocalyptic times. The Black Death of the 1400s killed 50% of the European population in four grim years. With bodies in the streets, people believed it was the end of the World. High and low born, saints and sinners were all stricken. Faith staggered under the impact of a disease which killed at will, and did not spare the pious. Despite blaming and burning Jews for terrorist attacks on the water supply, the plague raged unabated. It continued to stalk and ravage Europe until the 1700s with the Great Plague of London finally occurring in the numerologically correct 1666. Feudal society was breaking up, urbanisation was occurring, war was endemic and the Americas had been discovered (again). Everything was becoming molten.

These events were marked by turmoil in the heavens, and if the heavens were in turmoil so was the world of men. The word *dis-Aster* literally means ill-starred – and as Murifri says, the planets were indeed weary of their courses. The events that were to come for many fulfilled the prophecy of *Luke 21:25-27* which heralded the return of Christ.

And there shall be signs in the sun, and in the moon, and in the stars: and upon the earth distress of nations, with perplexity: the sea and the waves roaring; Men's hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth: for the powers of heaven shall be shaken. And then shall they see the Son of man coming in a cloud, with great power and glory.

On November 11th 1572 the astronomer Tycho Brahe saw something amazing with his naked eyes. A new star flaming into life in the constellation of Cassiopeia. For two weeks the star could be seen in daylight. At the end of November it began to fade and change color, from bright white to yellow to orange to a faint reddish light, finally fading away after 16 months. The only other star to ever appear like this was the star of Bethlehem. It was utterly unexpected. Johannes Kepler describes it as: *like an enemy storming a town, and breaking into the market place before the citizens are aware of his approach ... a secret hostile eruption.*

Scientific thinking was rocked. The event meant that the stars were not fixed in solid concentric orbs. Neither was this a mechanical and predictable universe. John Dee saw the same star. For him it strengthened the heliocentric ideas of Copernicus, but it

was also a sign of imminent apocalypse. This was a view shared by the masses and many of the intelligentsia. *Revelations* was printed 750 times between 1498 and 1650 as people sought to make sense of the events.

Worse was to follow. The baleful comet of 1577 further unnerved Europe. Tycho Brahe determined the comet was in the sphere of Venus, and saw it as a harbinger of warfare, pestilence, and extremes of heat and cold as well as changes in religion. His student Johannes Kepler said that it predicted the appearance in the north of Europe of a prince who should lay waste all Germany, and then vanish in 1632. This prophecy was fulfilled with eerie precision. Gustavus Adolphus of Sweden subsequently unleashed the Thirty Years' War and died in timely fashion in the year 1632. The scientific significance of the comet is that observations showed it was above the moon and the sub-lunar sphere rather than a meteorological phenomena as comets were previously thought to be. The Aristotelian model of the universe lay smashed. John Dee spent three days counselling the Queen on the comet's meaning. It is perhaps here that the lunar venusian cult of Elizabeth began in earnest. But Elizabeth, the virgin whore with her red hair, decked in gold and pearls and precious stones seems more reminiscent of *Revelations* than Dee ever acknowledged.

It is the stellar crises combined with social, religious and environmental upheaval which drove Dee after the angels and into the riddling symbolic language of the Biblical Prophets and *Revelations*. In 1581 Dee began working with the sayer Edward Kelley. The nature of the work was richly apocalyptic. When Kelley has his vision of the Watchtowers the colours of the directions are the colours of the four horsemen of the apocalypse. This has not previously been commented on, as where the original Greek which gives the colours of red, white, black and green, 'green' is mistranslated for the most part in English as 'grey'. When Kelley has the vision of the 24 elders, these are the 24 elders of the apocalypse. The world of the angels is an apocalyptic clock, counting down to midnight. Even in their alchemical work when they seek to turn lead into gold, it is because the book of nature is in a state of corruption. The world is disintegrating into decay.

For Dee there was the hope that these monstrous events presaged a new golden age. The angels were to lay out the battle plans which would produce a new Jerusalem. There was an urgency and a relevance to the angelic actions which grew from the conditions of the world Dee was living in. This is magick as it should be,

something which is engaged with culture rather than languishing in an inward looking subculture. Magic is practical, it is rooted in the here and now, or it is nothing, an idle pursuit of fantasists. Dee chose to act rather than become paralysed with cortisol inducing fear. He shifted from a position of eschatologist and commentator to an active angelic prophet in the line of Enoch. He saw the Tower made manifest in the world and the heavens.

In 1583 Jupiter and Saturn were to conjoin in Pisces, marking the end of a 960 year cycle. There were fears of the end of the world and at the very least the end of the Catholic Church. Robert Tanner announced that this conjunction:

...doeth marveilously agree with the famous prophesie of Elias, & many other places of scriptures, of the latter dayes of the worlds destruction to be neere at hande, & that the coming of our Lord and Saviour Iesus Christ to iudgement, will not be long.

Jupiter and Saturn would then enter the Fiery Trigon in May 1584 with a mass conjunction in Aries with every visible planet except for the Sun. The heavens were aflame with significance. Prediction and prophecy were rife. Both in England and on the continent, 1588 was pegged as the most likely date of the end of the world. Dee knew this. 1588 was the date of Dee and Kelley's radical sex magical cross-matching and their apocalyptic vision. His personal tower revealed not the Christ in the clouds predicted by the Gospel, but the cloud shrouded morning star, the Daughter of Fortitude. This is one of the Holiest texts for those seeking after Babalon and rife with apocalyptic meaning. 1588 was the last year Dee and Kelley worked together. 1588 was also the year of Elizabeth's triumph in the defeat of Spain's invincible Armada.

But the end of the world did not come. There was no return of Christ, no golden age, no Durer woodcut apocalypse. Dee dwindled into old age and poverty. Kelley (in legend at least) dies from his injuries escaping from captivity in a tower. Perhaps Dee was as deluded by the events of the heavens as by the intricate kiss-chase with angels and the intermeshing gears of stacked hierarchies and interlocking crosses?

We can read similar frightening signs in the skies above our culture, still just able to glimpse them through a mirror occluded with smog and light pollution. For our comet we have Hale Bopp, for our fiery trigon, the Grand Alignment. For 1588, we have 2012. For

our black death, we have swine flu, ebola and aids. For the crisis in the Catholic Church we have the loss of faith in the American Empire and consumer capitalism. Perhaps we are as wrong-headed as the good Doctor?

THERE ARE MANY PARALLELS we can draw between the world of Dee and our own. There are particular stories which seem to re-play, through the lives and actions of individuals. Kelley and Dee being retold in Jack Parsons and L. Ron Hubbard. The Daughter of Fortitude finally revealing herself as Babalon triumphant, casting off the veils of Inanna, Ishtar, Astarte and Aphrodite. Is there then an occult secret of eternal recurrence, of conflicts playing out in different costumes but with the same actors recast in the colours of their age? Are we players in the drama of Dee and Kelley, of Ishtar and Tammuz, of Babalon and Beast? Is the story ever more urgent? Is the frequency rising to a pitch that will dislodge the masonry and bring down the royal arch?

Or perhaps there is an apocalyptic longing, a thanatos which afflicts all ages, all men in all times? Matching the force which creates apocalyptic denial, perhaps there is an equal and opposing force which creates a need for apocalypse? A desire for the destruction of all things to parallel our own passionate drama of incarnation, love and physical death. A universal apocalypse to give our small and insignificant lives greater meaning. I would suggest that there is this longing, and it is for liberation. But utter liberation requires utter annihilation on the lightning path to enlightenment. Everyone will undergo this apocalypse, but only the few and secret will alchemise it into gold. I would also suggest that Dee was right. For the Gnostic, the end of the world is always nigh. Not in the sense of the sandwich board wearing paranoid, but rather an ecstatic awareness of life cuspung with death, living with fullness in the beauty and tragedy of every moment.

There is a further possibility, that the angels spoke truthfully and the end of the world was nigh in the middle ages. Now that terrible flower is ready to bloom in our midst a mere augenblick since then. Just as when we move to the heart of a rose the petals are more tightly furled, time is speeding up as we close on the mystery, the singularity, the omega point, the grail. Apocalypsis in the original Greek means the concealed revealed. An image not of chaste Mary or Isis, but of Babalon. The whore coupled with the seven headed beast. The beloved risen from Hell. I am absolutely

convinced that apocalypse is upon us and wish to share the proof of that with you in this writing so that you can choose to act, and live with passionate urgency. Time is running out for humanity.

In the West this story is often told in terms of the cultural symbols encoded in the *Revelation* of St John the divine. Being able to see through this text will not save us from the ensuing disaster, it is too late for that, but it can set us free from some of the traps. In the few scant years since writing *The Red Goddess*, the world has irrevocably changed. We are not at the end of history so myopically predicted by Francis Fukuyama, his normalcy bias expecting liberal capitalist democracy to be the final enduring Reich. Instead we are at the end of nature and the end of humanity, descending into a fascistic squabble to squander the last of our resources. When the Abrahamic god gave his people the right to exploit every resource on the planet, he neglected to mention that it was finite. We have literally burned our wealth. In our ugly greed for profit all we have to give to our children is loss. This is both the heritage of Christianity, and the agenda of the religious right and their business interests. It does not seem like rapture to me.

I want to talk simply about energy. Dee expended his on the quest for incorruptible gold. Our gold has been fossil fuels. We have dowsed for oil with remarkable efficacy, it has made the West rich, grown our food, heated our homes, flown us around the world, produced pharmaceuticals, pesticides and war. Our world is made out of plastics, from mobile phones to macbooks to credit cards to super-colliders. All these plastics are made out of this one magical substance, oil.

World oil production peaked in 1964. We now burn five barrels for every one barrel which is discovered.

Over the next 20 years we will see oil production decline by 40%. The world you see around you, the Empire, has ended. The life you currently enjoy is an illusion. It has literally gone up in flames. In the next 20 years we are going to experience almost unimaginable turmoil, in the next 40 catastrophe, in 250 years at the most, extinction of our species. As magicians we should have the foresight to prepare for this, not to stock our granaries, or build our arks, but to bring down the lightning.

Oil production is declining at a time when the population growth curve looks like a moonshot. In the last 60 years the world's population has risen by 2.5 billion. This has been fuelled by oil. Even at current population levels we need one and a half earths to sustain us. By 2050 there will be 9 billion people on the planet. This is

a disaster. The expert opinion is that we must double our food production right now. This is an impossible task. There is simply not enough farm land to accomplish it. Our soil has been ruined by ploughing and spraying leaving a mono-crop desert which surrounds a pestilent urban sprawl.

Our other major food source, the sea, is dying; pollution, hormones and algal bloom are terrifying enough. The final industrial slaughter of fish now occurring is perhaps worst of all. *Revelations* is wrong, there will soon be no beast or beasts rising from the sea. The Mitsubishi corporation are already stockpiling frozen tuna in preparation for extinction. Eating many varieties of fish is now akin to eating leopard, panda or any other endangered species. Fish just lack the poster-child looks of the mammals, and their drag-netted habitats are less easy to see than the clear-cutting of the Amazon.

Water, clean drinkable water is one of the resources that the wars of the next century will be fought over. Africa, the Indian sub-continent, Arabia and Australia are not wise destinations to hide out in. Glaciers are in retreat, headwaters contested, the war has begun. Europe and the US will blockade their borders, though the current strategy documents suggest that the poor will die before they can migrate in sufficient numbers to drink dry the already depleted aquifers of the rich nations.

I will not expound the whole holocaust. If there is one piece of alchemical arithmetic you need to take away from this entire book, it is this: *for every one calorie of food produced, ten calories of oil are needed to produce it.*

That oil does not exist. The result is stark: the population, that means us, will starve. This is hard science as precisely cut and stark as any medieval image of the four horsemen. Environmentalists such as James Lovelock, whose Gaia Hypothesis has underpinned neo-paganism, are predicting a 95% die off. As a magician I can also tell you that my familiars are telling me the same. Ask yourself the Gnostic question, are you ready to die?

Governments act selfishly and short-sightedly. They are bank rolled by corporations who have only the mantra of expansion to guide them. This does not require a conspiracy, or a particular political creed, it requires oil. Control of oil requires war and the oil to grease the wheels of war is running out. The pressure is on to despoil the last wildernesses of the planet for the last of the buried treasures. If we understand that our spirits live in plants, animals, minerals and the wider environment, we should aid them,

just as they come to our aid when we petition them. Curses are called for. We must not stand idly by as our supposed masters, whether you want to single out the Rothschilds or Bilderbergers, heads of industry or petro-chemical companies, rape the planet. Magick is about taking action and has long been the weapon of the oppressed from Haitian slaves to the witches sabbath. In the original tarot, XVI made kings fear for their lives, as it showed that all Towers fall, or can be toppled. If magick is about self-help, then this is it. Let us bring change.

Another vital piece of the puzzle is that neither wind power, nor solar panels, nor nuclear are going to save us. There is no technological fix for the predicament. Unlocking the carbon was a once only opportunity. Recycle all the plastic bags you want, we are plunging into the dark ages in a bloody turmoil, falling headlong, crowns cast off. The re-tooling of society and the abandonment of our economic system is not happening, the crisis is, and culture is preparing us for it, rehearsing it in films and best-selling novels. We have glimpsed the nightmare already. Perhaps you have seen fragments of it in your private dreams, written those troubled entries in your magical record. Wondered what it meant. The last time I met Madimi, she wept.

The result of this locust ravaged world is that ploughshares and starships will be beaten into AK47s. Freedom will come under increasing threat as populations riot and elites struggle to keep control. Hungry people who have lost everything and have no sense of community, are not a pretty sight. The first threat will come from the State, and you don't look like patriots from where I am standing. Your fringe beliefs, your practices, are not normal as the witch hunts and child abuse scares have shown. We must work to defend, express and embody our rights, whether that is expressed in terms of *Liber Oz*, or the *Gnostic Creed*, or as I prefer, more simply: Liberty.

Neither aliens, nor Christ, nor King Arthur are going to return and save us. We must. This is not a political issue, nor a call for another New Aeon Order complete with a murky past of grade paper fakery. It is well known that I am impatient with ten grade games, rather it is time to show them what we can do. We know how to fight among ourselves, let us turn our sights on another enemy. The time for false divisions in magick is over, our vaunted secrecy over flown by predator drones, read by email scanners, handshakes biometrically mapped, the dna database hacked. They know who we are. Finger-printed gods, rebel angels, antinomian

ne'er do wells, Lucifer's children. If we were sporting beards they would have come for us already. Thankfully we are diverse, already functioning as small cells and rogue individuals, but collectively it is time to give them hell. Brothers and Sisters, their sheer walls have narrow bases.

This is a good time to start that martial art class, learn permaculture principles, bushcraft, refine your goals, make art, live with beauty and in the wise words of Terrence Mckenna, *find the others*.

There is no time to waste. We are already at war. Let us bring down the lightning. We need a magick for these times. For me it comes from the courage to engage with the Goddess of Love and War who Solomon wonders after with these words:

*Who is she that looketh forth as the morning, fair as the moon,
clear as the sun, and terrible as an army with banners?*

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Apocalypticism,

Cultural Distortion

& the Clash of Civilizations

WHEN THE LAMB BROKE THE SEVEN SEALS for the seer of Patmos, the disastrous and cataclysmic route to nearly two thousand years of millenarian, eschatological radicalism was opened. The *Revelations'* refining fire also forged a particular linguistic bond: the habitual association of the word "apocalypse" with the spectacular and destructive imagery of the *Revelation* of John, branding Western civilization with an indelible Mark. It combined the eschatological, moral dualism of the ancient Persian Zoroastrians with the xenophobic fantasia and persecution complexes of the whole genre of Jewish apocalypticism. All subsequent visions of the End of the Age have paid their tribute to the chimerical apocalyptic Beast, occasionally bowing down and worshipping it outright. While "apocalypse" has become sweetly familiar on the tongue to most, it may nevertheless stir a bitterness in the belly and a similar discomfiture of mind in those acquainted with the origins and progress of dualism.

The civilization over which the Beast has reigned exhibits a similarly chimerical and fantastic origin to Christianity itself, described by English metahistorian Arnold J. Toynbee as "Hellenized Judaism,"¹ and like a chimerical creature whose dissimilar heads adorn an equally incongruous body, the "Western" civilization maintains a persistent identity crisis. It shares, in Toynbee's list of thirty world civilizations, its directional categorization with only one other, the "Far Eastern," with the rest of the civilizations being named by Toynbee for the peoples, regional cultures, or religious world-views which generated them.

The problems of Western civilization's origins, nature, and identity pertain not only to the genesis, persistence, and relevance of apocalyptic belief in its own context, but also to the many other civilizations influenced by apocalyptic, eschatological, or millenarian ideas, or even by widespread "Western" power and dominance. Thus, understanding the significance of the "West" and its self-conception is a critical project. Despite the civilization's Christian origins, it cannot have been labelled, or even considered, a "Christian" civilization since the Enlightenment, and amongst its elites, not since the Renaissance. Its prodigious colonialism would make calling it "European" civilization seem to be, at best, anachronistic. Additionally, while the consequences of that colonialism made Toynbee optimistic about speculations on its potential transformation into a civilization of global power, his

1 Arnold J. Toynbee, *A Study of History*, a new edition revised and abridged by the author and Jane Caplan (London: Thames and Hudson, 1972).

German predecessor Oswald Spengler held pessimistic determinism regarding its inevitable decline.² Spengler considered "civilization" to be the phase of outwardly directed, materially oriented decadence which signals the death of the creative impulses of a culture; the beginning of an unavoidable decline. He originated the name "Faustian" to describe the civilization that emerged from "Western" culture, referring to its insatiable drive to conquer the horizon. However, the name has the disadvantage of Germanic and chronological bias: "Western" civilization (and culture) had all of its defining features long before Georg Faust struck a deal with Mephistopheles.

While Toynbee treated Mesopotamian civilization, Islamic civilization, and Arabic civilization as distinct but related entities (and did not maintain, did Spengler, that civilization necessarily signalled the decline of culture), it was Spengler who first noted that these Middle-Eastern civilizations were not free of the ambiguities of religion and identity which persisted in the Western civilization originated by the religious preoccupations of "Hellenized Jews" (and, reciprocally, Christianized Romans; that is, Judaized Hellenists). According to Spengler's interpretation, denizens of the civilizations of the Middle-East, since the success of the Persian empire, would parallel the aforementioned post-Roman Judaized Hellenists as "Iranized Chaldaeans." This inspired Spengler to call their culture "Magian," after the mysterious Medean priests who appear to have converted to Zoroastrianism sometime during the establishment of the first Persian Empire. In Spengler's view, the "Magian civilization" suffered what he called a "pseudomorphosis" with the domination of the near and western middle east by the Byzantine Empire. In such a "pseudomorphosis," the creative impulses of a given civilization are distorted by the dominating influence of another, forcing outward conformity while simultaneously pressuring its process of self-preservation into unusually subtle forms. With this, Spengler contextualizes the rise of Islam, its later adoption by the Ottomans as a religion of empire, and – prophetically – the current relationship between the Islamic world and the West. Toynbee adapted Spengler's concept of pseudomorphosis to the whole process of Western colonialism and dominance, suggesting that, should Western civilization develop an imperial "universal state" instead of an organic, universalist global civilization, world-wide pseudomorphosis could result.

² Oswald Spengler, *Der Untergang des Abendlandes*, 2 vols (Vienna: Braumüller, 1918; Munich: C.H. Beck, 1922).

If Toynbee and Spengler are correct in the proposition that civilizations should be understood as distinct and independent organisms, it would better illuminate the nature of "Western" civilization to rename it more descriptively, either as "European," despite its present extension beyond those original boundaries, or as "Euro-Roman." Spengler and Toynbee probably rejected "European" for two reasons. First, it may be misleading, since the Classical civilization also had, originally, a European origin and identity, and there is no reason Europe could not give rise, or have given rise to, another or different civilization. Second, a main theme of "Western" civilization has been its *lack* of coherent European identity. Nevertheless, European at least does not have the numerous disadvantages of "Western," which seems to obscure the intended meaning as much as elucidate it. Israeli sociologist Shmuel Noel Eisenstadt prefers "European"³ as a designation for the civilization emerging *between* the Classical and the "modern," a new civilization he summarizes as being defined, in part, by the belief in "progress." This view appears compatible with the model of Italian esotericist Julius Evola, who held that the modern West differs from all its predecessors in promoting a "progressive" rather than the cyclical model of history, which resembles an "Eternal Return" more than a linear increase of technological advance.⁴ It was Evola who introduced the concept of Occult War into the wider discourse of occultism and esotericism, a critical event to be considered later.

In contrast to "European," "EuRoman," as a reference for the civilization generally known as "Western," is more precise. This is partly due to being a neologism, having the simultaneous advantage and disadvantage that the accuracy of its meaning depends on the correctness of the argument that I am making here: the civilization's original identity was defined by the combination of surviving Roman legal, political, and religious structures with "barbarian" tribal cultures of Europe. "Romano-Germanic" would be a specific and more obvious name, but the Celtic contribution was as prominent as the Germanic, particularly in France and Britain, making "Romano-Germanic" culturally biased.

3 S. N. Eisenstadt, *European Civilization in a Comparative Perspective: A Study in the Relations Between Culture and Social Structure* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987).

4 Julius Evola, *Revolt Against the Modern World* (Rochester: Inner Traditions, 1995).

After the collapse of the Roman empire, the continuation of select Roman organizational forms into the new context provided by migrating tribes made the emergence of a new society and culture inevitable. Therefore, far from being an indispensable parental element of the civilization, Judaeo-Christian identity (the result of a foreign religion no more inherently necessary to this cultural genesis than any of its competitors such as Gnosticism, Mithraism, Stoicism, and so forth) has been a cause of both pseudomorphosis and its consequence, cultural distortion. Toynbee provides many persuasive reasons why Christianity was victorious, and why competitors such as the ones I have previously mentioned failed to catalyze the genesis of a new culture and civilization, but this does not mean that Christianity was somehow pre-destined to form the best of all possible "Universal Churches" for the emergent "EuRomans." Similarly, it does not make the Judaeo-Christian influence any less distortionate than was the apparently inevitable dominance of the Eastern Roman Empire over the Middle-East, a dominance which contributed heavily to the pseudomorphosis of the latter's civilizations.

Even if the idea promoted by Spengler and Toynbee that civilizations can be considered to be wholly distinct entities is rejected,⁵ the modern "West" undeniably exhibits significant disparity from other cultural forms. If the "modern West" is taken as the ultimate consequence of the development of a unitary "civilization," it represents the total victory of that civilizational form over any culture (such as a European one) which may have preceded it in the West. One model offering significant contrast to Spengler is presented in William H. McNeill's *The Rise of the West: A History of the Human Community*, which argues for an interacting web of civilizations eventually coalescing in the dominance of Western innovation.⁶ In that model "civilization" itself is identified as the modernizing process which is generally associated to the "Western."

A way to combine these models would be to recognize the modernist version of the EuRoman civilization as a "super-civilization," reflecting its apparent attempt to go "global." A related concept would be that of the "meta-civilization," in the sense

⁵ For an in-depth examination of the history and current status of this metahistorical debate, see Johann P. Arnason, *Civilizations in Dispute: Historical Questions and Theoretical Traditions* (Leiden: Brill, 2003).

⁶ William H. McNeill, *The Rise of the West: A History of the Human Community* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991).

that modernism can be taken up by civilizations other than the EuRoman with varying degrees of ease. "Meta-civilization" as a concept can be related to Toynbee's idea of a Universal Church, but may be distinct in that the Universal Church often contributes to *creating* a civilization (as the Catholic Church did the EuRoman), but the meta-civilization would itself have the properties of a civilization, rather than merely being a civilizing factor. This suggests that the secularized, progressive civilization now called "Western" (which could be called Modern Secular) may be distinct from the "EuRoman," and have the attributes of a "meta-civilization." (Modernism might then be taken as a EuRoman "universal religion," with Marxism-Leninism as an example of a "Universal Church" based upon its tenets.) Eisenstadt traces the origins of modernity prior to the formation of EuRoman civilization to the so-called "Axial Age," midway through the last millennium BCE, which saw the emergence of Hellenic philosophy, Jewish monotheism, Buddhism, and related transcendentalist movements. He suggests that during the European reactions against Christianity, Axial transcendentalism was inverted into an immanentist, this-worldly form expressed in such phenomena as a concern with personal autonomy, rationalistic science, protest as a political mode, and the idea of universal human rights. This modernity seems to have expressed itself in two ways: the first is a direct imposition of "modern EuRoman" ideas and civilizational attributes on the rest of the world, as through colonialism, imperialism, and the aggressive spread of its modern socio-political and cultural ideologies; the second expression of this modernity, however, is fully meta-civilizational, allowing it to combine with anti-Western, anti-European agendas and ideologies. American political scientist Samuel P. Huntington, author of *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of the World Order*⁷ observes that non-Western societies are frequently able to accept modernity and its innovations, particularly technological, without accepting any of the ideological characteristics of the "West."

Concepts such as the "Axial Age" and "modernity" introduce distinction not only laterally – between civilizations and cultures – but temporally, between one phase of a civilization's development and another. Modern EuRoman esotericism, particularly in its "occult" form (distinguished by its attempt to engage with scientific

⁷ Samuel P. Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of the World Order* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1996).

materialism and modernity)⁸, has come to refer to the successive phases of cultural and civilizational development as *aeons*, in what seems to be a reflexive borrowing from its predecessor Classical civilization. *Aeon* originally referred to an unmeasured period of time, one meaning of which implied a "phase," but which was more popularly ascribed to successive divine emanations in the Gnostic cults. The association of the term *aeon* to historical periods, which can be correlated to astrological ages or theological dispensations (such as the Three Ages of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit described by Calabrian abbot Joachim of Fiore (1135-1202), a conception that later influenced the Rosicrucian movement), was significantly established by Aleister Crowley and continued by Carl Gustav Jung. Crowley gives no explanation for his adoption of *aeon* to refer to a two-thousand-year long divine dispensation, but Jung associates *aion* with the lion-headed form of the Demiurge apparently identified by the Mithraic mystery cult with Deus Aremanius, a "Satanic" God of This World. Perhaps this figure was being conflated by the Mithraic cult and other increasingly transcendentalist, Hellenistic syncretic systems, with the Iranian "Zurvan" figure, an ambivalent, Abraxas-like time god. (The name Abraxas enumerates to 365 in Greek *stoicheia*, in which each letter equals a numerical value. Thus he was an embodiment of the cycle of the year.) One explanation for this identification of a diabolical figure with the Zurvanic time god, is the similar associations of Saturn with time as well as death, restriction, and opposition. The Manichaeans, a Middle-Eastern transcendentalist Gnostic church, inverted the Zoroastrian devil Ahriman from a spiritually evil, world-opposing power to a materially evil Gnostic-style world oppressing "archon" figure. The Manichaeans were clearly influenced by Iranian dualism, and the Classical Greeks, as early as Herodotus, had identified Ahriman with Hades. The Gnostic milieu identified this physical cosmos with "Hell," opening several avenues by which the originally spiritually transcendent concept of the *aeon* could come to be associated with the world-ruling time god. Perhaps less anti-cosmic cults (like the Mithraists) considered the Demiurge to be (as in a Platonic interpretation) a lower, or even the lowest, "aeonic" manifestation, but not wholly inimical. Certainly the Basilidean Gnostics took Abraxas as an ambivalent and even useful figure, Demiurgical but a potential source of magical power, as demonstrated by numerous magical gemstones and

8 Frazer, *Access to Western Esotericism* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1994), pp. 326-330.

talismans ascribed to them. It was in the personality of Basilides that Carl Jung wrote the *Seven Sermons to the Dead*, in which Abraxas "begetteth truth and lying, good and evil, light and darkness, in the same word and in the same act."⁹ On whatever esoteric basis the association was made, modern occultism now generally identifies the *aeon* with the *zeitgeist*, and various aeonic models more historically sound than that of Crowley have been proposed. In the late 1970s, Peter J. Carroll, a founder of the Illuminates of Thaneteros (IOT), the influential magical order which was first to promote the "chaos current," presented a global aeonic model focused on the cyclical return of magical thought. At indeterminate date, the Order of Nine Angles (ONA), a significant group in the "Traditional" Satanic movement, elaborated a civilizational aeonic model concerning itself with the development of magical consciousness.

In *Liber Null and Psychonaut* (1987),¹⁰ Carroll presented a succession of five global aeons instead of Crowley's three (which were "Isis," the age of matriarchy, "Osiris," the age of patriarchy, and "Horus," the "New" Aeon of the "Crowned and Conquering" Child). Carroll rejected the ahistorical propositions of Crowley, which are reminiscent of an attempt to combine the theories of Swiss anthropologist J.J. Bachofen concerning ancient matriarchy and its supplantation by the patriarchy,¹¹ with the three ages of Joachim. In contrast, Carroll proposed a schema of aeons based on the interactions of magical world-views with religious and materialistic ones. The first aeon was animistic, akin to the "Dreamtime." A shamanic transition gave way to a polytheistic, agrarian aeon, followed by monotheism, rational materialism, and ultimately "chaoism," a return to the purely magical conception of animism, but upgraded by science and technology. Although it recognizes technological progress, the model is in fact cyclical, since chaoism will give way to a peak of pure magical dominance, followed by some unimaginable new priesthood, which will eventually achieve monotheist ascendancy and then be overcome by a return to rationalism, continuing a never-ending process.

Although he presents a doctrine of cycles, as do Spengler and Toynbee, Carroll's aeonic model seems more compatible with McNeill's conception of a progressively advancing global web of

9 <http://www.gnosis.org/library/7Sermons.htm>

10 Peter J. Carroll, *Liber Null & Psychonaut* (York Beach, Maine: Weiser, 1987).

11 J. J. Bachofen, *Das Mutterrecht* (Stuttgart, 1861), English translation available in 5 vols: *Mother Right* (Ceredigion: Edwin Mellen Press, 2002-2006).

civilization. Despite this compatibility with McNeill's global perspective, it would not be difficult to apply Carroll's model to different phases within different civilizations, such that the Islamic civilization would currently be between monotheist and rationalist, whilst some tribal civilizations are probably still animist or shamanic. A problem with this application, however, is the possibility that non-rationalist societies can make full use of "materialist" technology. Yet, such a multi-civilizational model also has an advantage, since it could explain how a technological society could experience a cyclical return to religion. Until a complete cycle can be observed on a global scale, however, such a model remains speculative.

The aeonic model proposed by the Order of Nine Angles demonstrates significant influence from Spengler and Toynbee, particularly with regard to its attention to the periodic rise and fall of civilizations.¹² The ONA's magical system is based on the seven classical planets (plus two more esoteric concepts, being the "acausal" dimension of consciousness and the chaotic "abyss" which underlies the totality of the whole system) and so it is "septenary." It has stellar correspondences and proposes seven aeons, each associated to a given civilization and its ethos, magical technique, and symbol. An "aeon" is understood to be a manifestation of acausality within the causal (ordinary physical) universe which lasts about two thousand years, giving rise after the first five hundred or so years to an associated "aeonic civilization" which is a "nexion," a "presencing" or gateway, of acausal power. Sentient beings are understood to be manifestations of acausality within the causal, and the more conscious they are, the more they presence it; therefore, aeonic civilizations represent further developments of consciousness. The aim of following the "sinister" way of the ONA, which opposes moral dualism and unconscious inertia, is the achievement of total acausal consciousness while living, freeing oneself of the limitations on consciousness particular to one's own aeon and its archetypes and patterns, and therefore becoming ultimately able to independently retain individuated conscious awareness in the acausal as an immortal being. "Aeonicly," the ONA promotes the furtherance of human consciousness into transhuman conditions suitable to the eventual achievement of space travel in a galactic civilization culminating the next aeon.

¹² References to ONA doctrines here are taken from a variety of ONA manuscripts, most of which are intermittently available online in a variety of locations.

There are similarities, but also significant differences, between the aeonic models of the ONA and the IOT. According to the ONA, the first aeon is called "Primal," symbolized by the horned beast and characterized by shamanism, originating around 9000 years ago. This Primal aeon resembles a combination of Carroll's animistic aeon and its shamanic transition, and it has no known associated civilization or ethos. The ONA's second aeon, called "Hyperborean," is associated with a civilization they designate as "Albion" and its henge culture. The chaoist model does not propose an intervening aeon between the shamanic transition and pagan polytheism. The third and fourth ONA aeons, corresponding to the Mesopotamian and Hellenistic civilizations respectively, do correlate to the pagan aeon of the chaoist model.

Carroll's model describes the current aeon as transitioning between rational materialism and chaoism. In contrast, the ONA presents the current aeon, which they call the "Thorian" and define as beginning a thousand years ago, as one of Faustian transgression similar in tone to Spengler's conception of the "Faustian" civilization. The ONA considers its ethos to be "National Socialism," based on their conception of honor, duty, and loyalty, and to which they ascribe an impetus toward a Galactic Empire predicted and promoted for the forthcoming aeon. Chaoist aeonics agrees with the prospect of an interstellar civilization but proposes its ethos to be in accord with the libertarian values and flexible belief characterizing contemporary post-modern globalism.

A source more chronologically and ideologically proximate than Spengler for the ONA's conception of National Socialist aeonic opposition to perceived Magian cultural distortion is American Nazi Francis Parker Yockey, author of *Imperium: The Philosophy of History and Politics* (1948). Yockey perceived the United States to be entirely corrupted by Magians, yet believed Stalinism had ultimately turned against Magian influence behind the Iron Curtain. He proposed that the greatest enemy of Europe was not communism but rather Judaeo-American capitalist power, and he desired that Orthodox civilization would overcome communism without foreign intervention, particularly if the Cold War ended in its favor. While that conflict's conclusion may have inspired Francis Fukuyama to proclaim the "end of history," it seems to have lacked the spectacularly "apocalyptic" eschatological resolution expected by Magian dualists. With the loss of ideological antagonist projections between the equally pseudomorphic Modern Secular Euroman civilization and the Communist Orthodox civilization,

the "Clash of Civilizations" continues unfiltered by the capitalist/Marxist dialectic. New configurations of dualist extremism and millenarian eschatological radicalism continue to emerge and threaten apocalyptic manifestation, perhaps even in the territory where the Magian pseudomorphosis propagated and the apocalyptic concept originated.

THE OCCULT WAR

DURING THE POST-WAR ERA leading into the Cold War, Giulio Cesare Evola (1898-1974) introduced the concept of *occult war* into esoteric discourse, beyond the milieu of reactionary political and racial conservatism. In that milieu, it was first introduced by Vicomte Leon de Poncins (1897-1976), an anti-Masonic, anti-Jewish French Catholic. De Poncins translated and published in French a work entitled *La Guerre Occulte* (1936), authored by Russo-Polish émigré Emanuel Malynsky, another ultra-conservative Catholic anti-Semite. The work elaborated the allegedly nefarious schemes of "International Jewry," later regarded as a primary arm of "Magian" influence by Yockey. Malynsky predicted that such schemes would first quash Russia's hope for world power and then culminate in the final destruction of socialism in Russia, leaving hegemonic Judaeo-American capitalism as the final victor. Such pessimism seemed suitable to the similarly deterministic Evola, who translated the work into Italian in 1939.

Evolian Traditionalism presents an aeonic model, but it does not exclusively refer to the world ages as "aeons." It rather adopts the archaic Indo-European concept of the Four Ages, implicitly accepting a Spenglerian, Toynbee-like proposition that individual cultures and civilizations are distinct entities, and thus refers mainly to the mythic concepts of its own cultural origins, informed by comparative reference to others. In the Indo-European model, after the Primordial Age of unfettered magical and divine consciousness, culture is described as having progressively degenerated from Gold to Silver to Bronze to Iron. The apocalyptic vision in *Daniel* 2:31 describing the statue fashioned of these four increasingly inferior metals descending to "feet of clay" indicates the reception of this tradition by Babylon from Persia, and thus its transmission to the Jews. That the *Book of Daniel* is the earliest known example of Jewish apocalyptic literature, and therefore a critical textual precursor to the *Revelation* of John, underlines

the key significance of the traditional model of degenerating ages to the heritage of the apocalyptic genre. This quaternary schema correlates with the doctrine of the four castes as maintained in India, with each caste or "estate," as they are called in the West, reigning over the corresponding age. According to this tradition, civilization is currently in the Iron Age, destined for rule by serfs and ultimately by slaves, leading Evola to a different prediction than that of Malynsky: the ultimate victory of Bolshevism over capitalism. Traditionalists could now propose that agents of capitalism have managed to cling to power somehow through further cultural distortion, that ultimately "state capitalism" will be more like Stalinist totalitarianism or "Chinese communism," or that ultimately humanity will be reduced to such a slave-like condition that the reign of the Fourth Estate will come about automatically. The final devolution of the Iron Age, the "Kali Yuga" in the Vedic terminology, culminates with the reign of outcastes, organized into criminal cartels akin to the infamous *thugees*. According to Traditional doctrines, the last avatar of Vishnu, Kalki, will purify the world at the end of the Yuga and restore the Golden Age. Some of the most pessimistic Traditionalists consider this redemption to be either contingent, or unlikely. Kalki is identified by some of the Traditional Satanic groups as a being called "Vindex," an inspired military leader who is predicted to arise and destroy the Magian-infested "Western" civilization. Some of the "aeonic magic" of these groups is dedicated to manifesting this being.

Evola's esoteric and occult history is complex. His early interest in nihilism and Dadaism led to a focused study of Hermetic, alchemical, yogic, tantric, and Vajrayana magical systems. Adopting a Traditional worldview, he supported the Axis powers, but tended to criticize their politics *from the Right*, often seeing them as insufficiently elitist, non-aristocratic, and too influenced by the characteristics of the mass movement. He condemned the Catholic Church and criticized Mussolini's allegiance with it. He preferred National Socialist Germany to Fascist Italy, yet his appearance of individualism and association with the type of aristocrats who later conspired in the July plot against Hitler contributed to the SS mistrusting him. They nevertheless enlisted his occult knowledge in researching Freemasonry. He criticized the materialism of National Socialist racial theory and was ultimately invited by Mussolini to expound an esoteric racial doctrine suitable to Fascism. Evola proposed that in addition to physical race, each person was endowed with a particular race of soul and spirit. This

classification method could be interpreted both inclusively and exclusively, in that although certain non-Aryans might have Aryan souls or spirits, many Aryans in a Judaized society would have Jewish souls and/or spirits.¹³ Evola probably intended these classifications to be used in the most elitist way, to *exclude* rather than *include*, though Mussolini may have seen the opposite potential. Despite his criticisms of Mussolini, Evola supported the German attempt to rescue him from Allied captivity and was there to greet him when he returned to Italy after his liberation.

Traditionalism totally condemns modernity and the concept of progress as entirely opposed to the maintenance of traditional values. As a Traditionalist, Evola advocated a "revolt against the modern world" in his work of that name published in 1934. When the revolt offered by the Axis powers failed, he attempted to elaborate a suitable strategy of resistance in *Men Among the Ruins* (1953). After setting out an entire socio-political program of deliberately reactionary aim, he defines the "occult war" :

The occult war is a battle that is waged imperceptibly by the forces of global subversion, with means and in circumstances ignored by current historiography. The notion of occult war belongs to a three-dimensional view of history: this view does not regard as essential the two superficial dimensions of time and space (which include causes, facts, and visible leaders) but rather emphasizes the dimension of depth, or the "subterranean" dimension in which forces and influences often act in a decisive manner, and which, more often not than not, cannot be reduced to what is merely human, whether at an individual or a collective level.¹⁴

Evola concentrates on the strategies and tactics of the powers that he considers to be acting on behalf of the "counter-initiation," whose proponents and aims are akin to the Traditional Satanic understanding of the "Magian." In his examination of their methods, he proposes that exclusively positivist explanations of history are promoted by anti-traditional forces in order to conceal

¹³ Julius Evola, *Sintesi Dottrina della Razza* (Milan: Hoepli, 1941). First English translation *Elements of Racial Education* (Quimper: Thompkins & Cariou, 2005).

¹⁴ Julius Evola, *Men Among the Ruins* (Rochester, Vermont: Inner Traditions, 2002), p. 253. First published *Gli uomini e le rovine* (Rome: Edizioni Mediterranee, 1953).

themselves. In instances when such obscurations are penetrated, Evola asserts that a *tactic of replacement* is used by the counter-initiation, in which some imagined, theoretical, or philosophically conceived agency or force is proposed as a cover. An example is the *tactic of counterfeits*, which presents subtly distorted symbols that would originally have been traditionally appropriate. These distorted symbols can then be attacked, criticized, and negated convincingly. Evola describes the concept of "traditionalism" itself as deliberately misdefined and promoted as an adherence to outworn customs, allowing *Tradition* to be similarly derided as anachronism. Another tactic he considers is the tactic of inversion, in which the opposite of a given value is presented in its place. The *tactic of ricochet* is related, utilized when traditional forces are manipulated in such a way that they attack other traditional forces, leading to disunity which can then be exploited. As a historical example, he mentions the consequences of regimes attempting to benefit themselves by promoting revolution against rival regimes and thereby ultimately undermining themselves. The *tactic of dilution* is a particular aspect of the *tactic of surrogates*, in which traditional forces are weakened by being led into the promotion of a return to previously vanquished forms that were already flawed, such as the profane "nationalism" opposed by revolutionaries but still in itself insufficiently Traditional. A direct tactic is the *tactic of misidentification*, in which unworthy representatives of a principle, such as monarchy, are attacked as the principle itself. Finally, he describes *infiltration*, in which members of a traditional organization abandon its spiritual foundation and allow it to be taken over by the counter-initiation from within. Evola considers "unconditional loyalty to an idea" as the only defence against occult war tactics.

By 1961, Evola had lost confidence in active revolution, and promoted a detached indifference to modernity, proposing that the differentiated man of Tradition should "ride" the momentum of the age, as in an Eastern aphorism in which one rides a tiger to exhaustion.¹⁵ Such may be a parallel to the Mithraic tauroctony, the bull being slain once its inertial energy has been spent. Evola regarded the forces of Tradition as primarily defensive against the aggressively distortionate "counter-initiation," which seeks to undermine differentiation and discriminating consciousness.

¹⁵ Julius Evola, *Ride the Tiger: A Survival Manual for Aristocrats of the Soul* (Rochester, Vermont: Inner Traditions, 2003), first published as *Cavalcare la Tigre* (Rome: Edizioni Mediterranee, 1961).

ÆONIC WARFARE

ESOTERIC AND OCCULT WARFARE, along with æonic models, remain a current concern of some proponents of various paradigms such as: Traditionalism; Radical Traditionalism; Traditional Satanism, with its agendas of anti-Zionism, anti-Capitalism, and anti-Westernism; Progressive Satanism, the neo-tribalist spinoff of the Order of Nine Angles;¹⁶ the Chaos Magic of the IOT, which originally promoted the use of sorcery for æonic warfare against the proponents of anti-magical aeons and totalitarianism; and Thelema, adherents of which frequently utilize martial aesthetics as they consider the God of War to be the presiding deity of the New Aeon, exemplified by the identification of members of the Ordo Templi Orientis as the “knights-templar” of Thelema. Significant mutual influence can occur between these systems despite their apparent and sometimes seemingly irreconcilable differences.

The common context of these disparate æonic models and agendas is essential to consider in order to coherently evaluate their strategies. While the social sciences include considerably more art than the hard sciences, and have in common with the magical arts an acceptance of an objective reality against which the “subjective,” acausal consciousness can be differentiated, they differ from “magic” chiefly in their being oriented exclusively toward that objective reality, and require no extraordinary consciousness to be practiced effectively.¹⁷ Although their more artistic characteristics make them thoroughly amenable to subversion by subjective perspectives like that of magic, and the personal and ideological aims that often accompany magical agendas, the difficulty of acquiring

16 See George Sieg, *Angular Momentum: From Traditional to Progressive Satanism in the Order of Nine Angles*, lecture given at Norwegian University of Science and Technology, Conference: Satanism in the Modern World, 2009. Draft version available at: http://www.ntnu.no/eksternweb/multimedia/archive/00085/Sieg_85617a.pdf. Formal publication of a revised and expanded version of this paper, and the others from the conference, is planned.

17 For what is probably the best summary presentation of the difference between science, magic, art, and religion ever presented in English, see Lionel Snell, *Four Glasses of Water*, in *Journal for the Academic Study of Magic*, Issue 2 (Oxford: Mandrake, 2002). A more elaborate, though older, presentation of a similar model is found in the same author’s pseudonymous Ramsey Dukes, *SSOTBME: An Essay on Magic, Its Foundations, Development, and Place in Modern Life*.

verifiable evidence and sufficiently eliminating the influence of the scholar or observer remains profound. It is, however, at least possible *in theory* that a historian (for example) could arrive at an objective historical conclusion about something. That the Normans invaded Britain in 1066 is no *more* objective a statement than that Napoleon engaged in his campaigns of imperial conquest solely motivated by an urge to compensate for his stature; rather, the latter statement is objectively wrong. This is not to say that a totally *subjective* statement cannot be made about history, or that such a statement could not have an effect (for example, a magical one). For example, the assertion that the Enochian conversations of Dr. John Dee was an instrumental factor in the ultimate ascendancy of the British Empire and the globalization of English would be a subjective assertion about aeonic history, since it refers strictly to the allegedly acausal influences of the angels. Its "truth," should it have any, is dependent on the *power* (either predictive or manipulative) that it gives (if any), rather than its *accurate correspondence to reality*. This is an example of Lionel Snell's observation that while both science and magic are useful because of what they *do* rather than what they *are*; the former case functions by providing *objective correspondence* and the latter case *subjective power*. That this power might be exercised in the causal, objective domain, or not, is irrelevant to the definition. To continue the example for completeness, an assertion that the Enochian God, Iada, is the supreme Demiurge and that Britain rose to global supremacy at his will (or even that the non-omnipotent but still mighty Iada defeated his diabolical rivals who sponsored Britain's catholic enemies, causing his victory to be reflected on earth), is a *religious* assertion, as it is both *objective* in its intent (Iada and his divine/diabolical enemies are alleged to be real), and *collective* rather than *individual* as is science (which depends solely on the single experimenter or observer, although his observations ought to be repeatable). These examples show how the "science" of history is perhaps more easily *subverted* by magic than would be a "hard" science which has experimental procedures for screening out the observer effect. It also shows why it is difficult for religion to dominate the hard sciences, since they are competing models of objective reality. (This, tangentially, suggests that a "true" religion would be one which could be unfailingly agreed upon by, or imposed onto, all believers collectively, without ever contradicting objective science, perhaps explaining the appeal of twentieth-century political religions.) Religion can more easily *dominate* the softer sciences

(explaining why even now certain assertions regarding historical events, even recent historical events, might be illegal in some nation-states, regardless of their objective accuracy or lack thereof), but it cannot really "subvert" them, in that religious (theological) arguments about history are nakedly so. (Religious "subversion" of history tends to be subjective and "magical" in its style, competently so or not.) These points may be more obvious when comparing history to art about history (art being subjective but collective, at least in how it is received and appreciated). Most people can intuitively understand the difference between, for example, an historical film and a history textbook; the very concepts "artistic license" and "historical accuracy" where these arts are concerned illustrates it nicely.

The foregoing suggests that while choice of æonic model is magical and subjective, its applicability and accuracy in a historical sense is an objective matter. As such, sufficient understanding of the current scenario and its historical causes and conditions should allow the effective evaluation of how these æonic ideas are being used and promoted, even if the historian cannot pass judgment (as a historian) on their aims or the worth of their magical context. An objective historical vantage point may, however, also allow a more useful comparison and contrast to be made between different magical, æonic schemes and their apparent historical relevance. Assuming one accepts that the post-EuRoman "super-civilization" will successfully globalize its post-modern, post-materialist, neo-liberal characteristics, chaotic æonics appear to be plausible. Considering the extent to which most Traditionalists, Radical or otherwise, consider "progress" so-called to be inevitable, their systems would also readily accept the eventual ascendancy of "chaos" æonically, although with less enthusiasm. As such, those who wish to consider an alternative to global post-modern super-civilization, whether as a historical thought-experiment or an actual æonic agenda, would be advised to consider what æonic models best fit with Toynbee's less deterministic, multi-civilizational schema. While the ideas of the Order of Nine Angles were influenced by Toynbee's concepts of civilization and empire, their sevenfold æonic pattern is clearly less so, since although it proposes that not all civilizations are "æonic," it still presents a linear and global view. However, "EuRoman" civilization, in whatever form, seems to have abandoned the more civilizational traditional path to totalitarian despotism in favour of global super-civilization.

Any attempt to evaluate magical æonics historically must take this into account.

If models of cyclical patterns in history are accurate, it cannot be clear before the fact that "super-civilizations" are subject to exactly the same patterns as ordinary civilizations. It does, however, seem apparent that there is no indication that cultural distortion corrects itself when passing from one civilization to another. Rather, it seems to *worsen* with transmission, given that *Christian* EuRoman civilization is objectively (according to the revision of Spengler and Toynbee's models being implied here) more "distorted" and pseudomorphic than any of the "Magian" cultures and civilizations. Therefore, any super-civilization progenated by an already distorted, pseudomorphic civilization will be even more distorted. The historical pattern of which we can be certain, barring cataclysmic/apocalyptic interruptions is that science and technology will continue to advance exponentially. The destruction of Euroman civilization could only interrupt its progress. The only "pattern" that can be expected in the transition to super-civilization is an increase in technological sophistication. All the aeonic models considered so far either specifically accord with this observation, or do not contradict it; this does not necessarily mean a continuity or increase in materialism.

Aeonics can then be historically re-considered based upon present uncertainties and possible responses and outcomes, given that according to cyclical, deterministic, local, and global models, there is agreement that the current "æon" or phase is nearing, but not at, its conclusion. It seems reasonable to accept this "æon" as a rationalist one dominated by the concerns of scientific progress, and reasonable to recognize that this development originated in the "EuRoman" civilization.

Modern EuRoman civilization might achieve global status, and assimilate or vanquish all of its competitors. It might, conversely, fail to do this. Such a failure will mean its death, its reversion to a non-imperial phase (perhaps avoiding globalisation would also prevent lapsing into a grandiose but probably terminal scenario of New EuRoman Empire), or its actualization of such an Empire on some non-global scale. Any of these cases might or might not continue to perpetuate the cultural distortion induced by the Christian Pseudomorphosis. Pseudomorphosis, *by definition*, is toxic not only to the distorted civilization, but also to other civilizations which it influences. Thus, the one concern which both "global" and "local" focused æonic magicians could probably agree upon is that to

the extent modern EuRoman civilization is distorted, it is inimical to them personally and to everyone generally. For those who are totally affiliated with or identified with it, or those who primarily value uninterrupted technological progress, this seems to present significant complications where the practice of æonic magic is concerned. From a metahistorical perspective, the most objective and rational æonic magical systems for *EuRoman people* will be those which act to correct the distortion to the civilization as expeditiously as possible. As this is neither possible nor significant to agents outside the civilization, such non-Euroman æonists would be likely to instead work to undermine, destroy, or oppose that society. Huntington's model of the Clash of Civilizations has relevance here, as does his implication that the *modern meta-civilization* of technological progress is *different* than the modern "*EuRoman*" civilization which may spawn it. As such, should this civilization appear to be doomed, it would be significant to those who value technology to *promote* global meta-civilization instead. The quicker EuRoman society overcomes its significant internal distortion, the more likely it is that it will be able to avoid or stave off its "imperial" decadence, or at least ensure that its level of technology is advanced enough to prolong its own Empire much longer than empires in the past have done. Similarly, if and when there appears to be a chance for the EuRoman society to continue developing in an un- or less distorted fashion, it is to its advantage if the aforementioned *meta-civilization* never fully develops, since there is no guarantee that competing civilizations will use advanced technology more wisely or well, and could develop or continue their own distortions on a grander scale as a consequence.

Having considered the broad themes of potential conflict, the prospects for changing one's allegiance from one civilization to another should be considered, since the practice of æonic magic may involve transition across not only political but also civilizational boundaries. Civilizations directly progenated by Universal Churches are the easiest to "join." (A Muslim convert is a member of the Islamic Civilization, even if that person is not affiliated to Arabic culture.) Totally ethnic civilizations are the most difficult to join. (Some interpretations hold that it is next to impossible, if not actually impossible, for *gaijin* to "become" Japanese.) The extent to which a person can join a "meta-civilization" depends on how far it has penetrated into their own original civilization. Joining a super-civilization seems to be a question of loyalty and allegiance, especially in its emergent state. Thus, those who attempt

to transform EuRoman civilization into a global world-order are in a sense already *part* of that "new world order." Due to its pivotal historical importance, the Jewish culture can also be considered in this list of examples. It is notoriously difficult to convert to Judaism, and even more difficult to be accepted as a member of the ethnic culture even once religiously converted. It is not, however, impossible by definition, as it might be to "join" an ethnic tribe which has not developed a religious form. The æonic role of an ethnic, tribal culture, however, is difficult for religious converts to adopt and promote due to their lack of cultural foundation in its context.

The question of Jewish identity and influence is directly relevant to the consideration of the Christian pseudomorphosis, its resulting distortion, and its consequence, the revelation of which pertains to the initial inquiry into æonic apocalypse. Philosopher Erich Vœgelin, in the first volume of his *Order and History*,¹⁸ examined Israel and its prophetic revelations, considering that the whole Jewish culture has been "in exodus from civilization." One of the reasons that consideration of its influence was absent in the work of Toynbee and Spengler is that they only addressed the significance and impact of peoples they considered to function on the civilizational scale. Due to its ethnic basis in a non-universalist tribal culture which nevertheless spawned a religion with æonic impact, Judaism has influenced other civilizations and their development, rather than developing its own. It might have, had civilization developed from the Kingdom of the Khazars, in which Judaism was adopted only as a religion, as if Judaism were a "Universal Church." If a pseudomorphic global super-civilization eventually annihilates all other cultures than the ever-resilient Jewish one, perhaps the resulting vacuum could allow the development of Judaism into a fully fledged civilization of its own. Aside from these possibilities, Judaism is no exception to the general rule that the influences of a foreign culture or civilization on another tend to be distortionate either when they are imposed by pseudomorphosis or insinuated for the deliberate benefit of their conveyers. This was the case in the "Hellenized Judaism," whose Apocalypse transmitted the ancient moral dualist distortion of the Zoroastrian Magi.

¹⁸ Eric Vœgelin, *Order and History: Israel and Revelation*, vol. 1 of 5 (Baton Rouge: LSU Press, 1956).

The symbolic patterns of the Apocalypse have been graven into the EuRoman psyche since the inception of its civilization, pseudomorphically distorted from its moment of origin. Programmed for a cataclysmic and catastrophic demise, the only "Golden Age" which EuRoman Christians have imagined for two thousand years is one ruled by the Messiah from the New Jerusalem.

APOCALYPTIC WARFARE

REVELATION'S ORIGINAL PURPOSE was probably to promote more intense eschatological dualism amongst early Christians, discourage assimilation into the Hellenic cosmopolis, promote martyrdom (in contrast to the Gnostic cults which eschewed it) and encourage continued Messianic expectation. However, it has been further utilized by millenarian dualists for a variety of extremist and radical purposes, despite a continued mistrust of the text by some Christian authorities throughout its history. The application of various forms of conspiracism, particularly Antichrist obsessions and the projection of the themes and imagery of apocalyptic onto political and socio-cultural antagonists, has frequently involved the use of "occult war" techniques as described by Evola. They can be clearly observed in the original Apocalypse.

By encouraging all events to be understood as part of the divine plan, Revelation *replaces* the possibility of understanding obscure forces at work in history (such as techniques of æonic manipulation) with a faith-based certainty that given events somehow fit into the eschatological salvation narrative. It presents a cultural *counterfeit* of the traditional "avatar" figure who ushers in the "Golden Age," by replacing it with the Messiah, a very different concept from a very different culture. It also refers to the tactic of counterfeits in its own text, by suggesting the Antichrist as a counterfeit Messiah. (This is one reason why for many centuries in Christian Europe, traditions existed that the Antichrist would have to be a Jew mistaken by Jews to be the Messiah.) The whole eschatological tradition of interpretation of *Revelation* could also be considered a type of counterfeit, since each episode of disappointed messianic, apocalyptic expectation makes the entire notion of patterns in history seem to be increasingly absurd. Such a process also contributes to what Vöegelin has called the attempt to "Immanentize the eschaton," in which Messianic expectation is projected onto immediate circumstances, resulting in attempts

to deliberately usher in the End of Days and the resulting utopia. Unfortunately, Vöegelin ascribed this to an inversion of Gnosticism, an untenable hypothesis due to Gnosticism's combination of anti-cosmism with transcendentalism. The idea that such immanentization attempts spring from repeated frustrations of millenarianism, in the same way that materialism can result from frustrated transcendental monotheism, appears much more plausible, especially given the millenarian structure of such modern materialist religions as Marxism. Tangentially, the phrase "immanentize the eschaton" has been adopted by occultists concerned with aeonics, principally chaos magicians. This suggests an unintended application of Vöegelin's concept: it is the global super-civilization which purports to replace, yet fulfil, the originally Jewish apocalyptic millenarian expectations of EuRoman civilization, which worldwide postmodernism promotes.

In terms of occult war, *Revelation* inverts the cultural significance of the symbolism of Empire and rulership, depicting it as diabolical and Satanic, while presenting destructive influences as salvific. Due to this inversion, Christian Europeans who accepted the book were encouraged to diabolize their own society and venerate what undermined it. This has led to considerable *ricochet*, especially in the conspiracist movement, as the imagery of *Revelation* is frequently re-appropriated for ostensibly European purposes, despite its obvious unsuitability to the task. As such, "Christians" as interested in defending their own society as undermining it, turn against those who they determine to be Satanic, or agents of the New World Order, or some similar diabolization, when in fact they may have a common purpose. Contrarily, even when those who are enemies of Europe are criticized by European Christians, such Christians will sometimes use the symbolism of *Revelation* in their attacks, thereby assuring that they are still actually attacking themselves by using distorted imagery already responsible for the pseudomorphosis of the entire civilization. This is related to the tactic of *dilution* through *surrogates*; in this case, the "surrogate Europe" of "traditional Christianity." Similarly, many attempts to establish new cultural forms, or correct the distortion, have been presented, especially by esoteric visionaries or occultists, through the imagery of the book. Attempts to found the "New Jerusalem" in America, or proclaim the New Aeon of the Beast 666, or the coming of the Christ, Antichrist, Messiah, or all of them (such as the bizarre Christian Satanism of The Process Church of the Final Judgment) have generally been vitiated by

relying on imagery programmed with eschatological dualism from its creation. Such scenarios frequently involve *misidentification of a principle*, since none of the self-proclaimed Messiahs and anti-Messiahs relying on this text have been worthy of the designation. The single tactic of occult war in Evolian terms which *Revelation* does not exemplify is the tactic of infiltration, since the eschatological fanatics and millenarian martyrs promoting it can hardly have been considered agents of Tradition to begin with. Contrarily, it might be considered that the promotion and adoption of the imagery and style of *Revelation* even among non- and anti-Christian esoteric and occult groups could be a type of textual or aesthetic infiltration. An esoteric evaluation of similar themes is presented in Donald Tyson's article on *The Enochian Apocalypse*,¹⁹ which argues that the Enochian system of magic is actually intended allow the demon Coronzon (the Enochian Satan) into our reality – to *immanentize the eschaton*. As Tyson has since taken the antinomian Gnostic view of Coronzon/Satan/Lucifer as the liberating serpent and friend to the Gnostic elect,²⁰ this inversion of position provides an opportunity to similarly evaluate ways of using apocalyptic imagery in aeonic magic. So far, *Revelation* has been construed to indicate that even if Satan wins, he loses, since the Empire of Antichrist is temporary, and the Messiah wins in the end. Tyson implies that the attempt to *immanentize the eschaton* actually disappoints the moral, transcendentalist, eschatological dualist, by creating a Satanic empire which then fails to die on cue. From the perspective of the techniques of aeonic magic, it is possible that the tactics of occult war described by Evola can be used defensively, pro-actively, and correctively, as well as subversively, distortionately, and corrosively. The Apocalypse may again provide a demonstrative example.

Replacement can work in reverse, as certain forces are reconsidered as effects of subtler causes, or even "acausal forces." Thus, as in Tyson's example, the dualisms of the occult war, and attendant pseudomorphosis and distortions, can be regarded as challenges for the civilization to overcome. Whatever undistorted conception of the Absolute prevails in the culture can be regarded as the ultimate origin even of that which opposes the continued survival of the civilization. Thus, the terrors of the Apocalypse can be regarded alternately as the primal, chthonic power source of an Imperial

19 Originally published in *Gnosis*, Summer 1996, but available online <http://www.bibliotecapleyades.net/bb/bluebook418.htm>

20 <http://www.donaldtyson.com/coronzon.html>

potential, or perhaps the angelic harbingers of only temporary doom, which does not ultimately destroy the civilization but makes it stronger. Even the imagery of the martyrs can be re-appropriated in this way. Similarly, the *counterfeit* can itself be counterfeit; thus, for example, someone acting on behalf of EuRoman civilization could falsely present themselves as a Christian, Messianic figure even when this was not the case. This would, ironically, simultaneously suggest the role of Antichrist. Diabolical, Satanic imagery can itself be *inverted* in a Nietzschean transvaluation of values. In recent decades, secular Americans have sometimes deliberately identified with "The Great Satan" in opposition to radical Islam, for example. *Dilution* and *surrogates* can also be reversed; thus, even persons aware of the pseudomorphic and distorted nature of both original and European Christianity, could still prefer its imagery to – continuing the previous example – an Islamic Europe. A subtler method of deflating apocalyptic obsession and eschatological dualism would be deliberate *misidentification* of various things, people, and events with apocalyptic imagery, and thereby depotentiating it.

These examples demonstrate "apocalyptic warfare" as a particular sub-category of the "occult war for the æon," in the sense that the possibility of immanentizing the eschaton, and doing so at a certain time and in a certain context, is a significant factor in the distortion, correction, survival, or destruction, of EuRoman civilization as a whole. Similarly, it is relevant wherever the Universal Church of Christianity has influence, and where the Universal Churches of Secular Modernity, such as Marxism-Leninism, have had influence. Thus, not only EuRoman civilization, but Orthodox civilization, Chinese civilization, and Islamic civilization (by its derivation from Christianity and its distortion by Byzantine influence), as well as much of the "Third World," are susceptible to the *apocalyptic war* exoterically and the *apocalyptic occult war* esoterically. Christianity as well as eschatological and moral dualism themselves are derived from what Spengler has called the "Magian" civilization, itself a pseudomorphosis. The *apocalyptic war* has continued throughout both esoteric and exoteric history, ever since Zarathushtra first proclaimed in prehistoric Iran that there was only one God, Ahura Mazda, that all one had to do to join his people was follow his Good Religion, and that everyone and everything outside the Zoroastrian system was under the dominion of the Devil. The diabolical enemy would be vanquished at the end of time, chained in the earth, and immolated in molten

fire along with everyone wicked enough, or foolish enough, not to do what Zarathushtra or his successors (on behalf of Mazda) told them to do.

Both Evola and Nietzsche, whose *Also Sprach Zarathustra* was an attempted *inversion* of the moral dualism of the original Zarathushtra, also shared conceptions of "Eternal Return." As the Magian eschaton was first conceived through a dualism presenting historical termination in contrast to eternal, cyclical recurrence, so its fulfilment would be similarly final and discontinuous. Whether such a disruptive apocalyptic event would have any effect on the extent of cultural distortion, or the progress of the "super-civilization," remains to be seen. So far, it appears that the Great Satan now enthroned in Babylon is merely a *counterfeit*. It may be that Europa will still arise out of the waters of the abyss, riding on a sea-beast, to confront another civilizing challenge, bearing the sacred grail. If she does not, the armies of Gog and Magog will doubtless continue streaming out of their deserts to fill the gaps in her wasteland, perhaps to one day set themselves against the holy legions of the Third Rome, as it has already survived the Revelation of Saint Karl via the angelic ministrations of Tsar Vladimir and Josef the Patriarch.

But *that* would be another *æon*.

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AS I WRITE, a socialist majority in the US Congress, led by our self-styled Community-Organizer-in-Chief, is embarked on a series of hare-brained schemes that would be laughable to one of even average intelligence, were they not so destructive of American liberty and inimical to global prosperity. Having observed the chaos such programs are bringing to Europe and Australia, they might think twice.

There is a vile threat to the 'rugged American individualism' that actually created the USA, by the bureaucratic crowd who want society to be a convict prison. 'Safety first' – there is no "social insecurity," no fear for the future, no anxiety about what to do next – in Sing Sing. All the totalitarian schemes add up to the same in the end. And the approach is so insidious, the arguments so subtle and irrefutable, the advantages so obvious – that the danger is very real, very imminent, very difficult to bring home to the average citizen, who sees only the immediate gain, and is hoodwinked as to the price that must be paid for it.¹

The trouble with democracy is that 50 percent of the voters are below average.²

But the goal of a tyrant is not to learn from the mistakes of well-meaning predecessors. The goal of a tyrant is control.

And what better means of control than a full-blown assault on the omnipresent engine of modern life – POWER? I refer, of course, to the fraud known as "Cap and Trade." Electricity is the well-spring of modern existence. From light bulbs to cell phones, refrigerators to hospital equipment, computers to traffic lights – there is not a single thing we can think of that is not dependent on electrical power (except of course during our camping trips – unless we bring a flashlight). Add to electricity the fuel that runs our automobiles, airplanes, trucks, boats, spacecraft, farm and construction equipment, and you have perfectly extracted the two things that separate our world from that of 19th century.

1 Extract from a letter written by Aleister Crowley to Karl Germer, dated March 8 [no year, but probably 1945], quoted in James Wasserman, *The Slaves Shall Serve*, NY: Sekmet Books, 2004.

2 Jeff Cooper, *Gargantuan Gunsite Gossip*, Volume 3. Tempe, AZ: Wisdom Publishing, 2010.

American neo-communists are targeting both. Meditate for a moment on the mind that would even conceive such a monstrosity. Imagine the swarms of bureaucrats required to administer and enforce “cap and trade” in a country the size of the US. Contemplate the billions of dollars in profits that would be reaped by those favored financial institutions, licensed by corrupt politicians, to administer the “trade” aspect. Think of the untold billions more ripped out of the productive sector of this economy. (All part of the goal in my opinion.)³

The second major target of the modern Marxist power-grab is America’s medical system. This, with the stated goal of providing medical insurance for some two to three percent of Americans who can’t afford it. Of the “forty-five million uninsured” touted breathlessly and relentlessly by media newsreaders and whining talking-heads, most are either healthy young people who choose to spend their money elsewhere, poor people who do not take advantage of the long established “social safety net,” or illegal aliens who have no business being here. Few Americans disagree that there are abundant opportunities to reform and fine tune medical insurance, and that the six to ten million people (of our three hundred million plus citizens) who do need some kind of medical insurance should get it. But while all this may be a fine talking-point, it is certainly not the real goal. Just think of the level of control they could reach if every single aspect of individual behavior fell under the mantra of “public health,” “cost-cutting,” or “risk reduction.” It is enough to make you sick.⁴

3 It was instructive to watch the circus created by the British Climate Research Unit hacked email scandal, as the process of creating “consensus” in science was unmasked. It was less amusing to learn that these agenda-driven, manipulative chicken-littles were providing the data to the UN and American Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to justify attempts to legislate developed nations back into the Stone Age. For “climate change” comic relief however, nothing outdid the spectacle of an American president scurrying back to Washington, D.C. from the Copenhagen global warming summit to avoid the blizzard that blanketed the capital in the record-breaking cold wave of the 2010 winter.

4 The January 2010 special election of a Republican as Senator from Massachusetts to a seat occupied by Democrats since 1953 has thrown a temporary monkey-wrench into plans for the nationalization of American healthcare. We will see how this plays out. Meanwhile, the Omnipresent Obama (who made 411 speeches during his first year; gave 42 news conferences; and did 158 interviews, 90 of which were televised) explained

Crowley wrote in *Liber Aleph: My Son, there are Afflictions many and Woes many, that come of the Errors of Men in respect of the Will; but there is none greater than this, the Interference of the Busy-Body. For they make Pretence to know a Man's Thought better than he doth himself, and to direct his Will with more Wisdom than he, and to make Plans for his Happiness.*

See if these words, quoted in *The Slaves Shall Serve*, do not perfectly illustrate AC's description of the busybody. Hillary Clinton, stating her objections to the idea of medical savings accounts, explained to Dennis Hastert in June 1993:

We can't do that. The first reason is with the medical savings account, people have to act on their own and make their own decisions about health care. And they have to make sure that they get the inoculations and the preventative care that they need; and we just think that people will skip too much because in a medical savings account if you don't spend it, you get to keep it ... We just think people will be too focused on saving money and they won't get the care for their children and themselves that they need. We think the government, by saying 'you have to make this schedule; you have to have your kids in for inoculations here; you have to do a pre-screening here; you have to do this' – the government will make better decisions than the people will make, and people will be healthier because of it ... We can't trust the American people to make those types of choices. [T]he second reason is, with a medical savings account, savings are [like] an IRA ... We can't afford to have that money go to the private sector. The money has to go to the federal government because the federal government will spend that money better than the private sector will spend it.⁵

Brothers and Sisters, we are sacrificing our liberty to these busybodies because they seem to *value* it more than we do.

voter dissatisfaction this way, "We were so busy just getting stuff done ... that I think we lost some of that sense of speaking directly to the American people." I would suggest the American people heard him quite clearly and were less than thrilled.

⁵ David Brock, *The Seduction of Hillary Clinton*, NY: Free Press, 1996.

Crowley described, over six decades ago, where things are currently sliding, on this side of the Pond at least. He also gave us advice on protective mindset:

As I think that totalitarian methods are already on the way to extinguish the last spark of manly independence – that is, in self-styled civilized countries – it seems to me that we all should regard with shrewd suspicion any plans for ‘perfecting’ social conditions. The extreme horror is the formula of the gregarious type of insect. Inherent in the premises is the impossibility of advance.⁶

What is a Magician to do? Why do we practice Magick in the first place? My answer has always been pretty simple. I practice Magick because I want to be Free. I entered the Path of Enlightenment after experiencing the First Noble Truth of Suffering at age eighteen. Sickness, old age, and death stared back at me like a shotgun muzzle between the eyes. My cocksure young manhood was pointed in the direction of transcendence, where I have been aimed ever since. I have used every technique I could find to maximize my liberty – meditation, ritual magick, sex, drugs, sobriety, philosophy, personal economics, career orientation. I fully believe that political liberty is an essential component of spiritual liberty.

Crowley wrote in 1938: *The establishment of the Law of Thelema is the only way to preserve individual liberty and to assure the future of the race.*⁷ I have taken those words to heart, and spent my life working to establish the Law of Thelema and spread liberty: in my individual magical practices, the raising of my children, my relationships, business activities, OTO career, conversations, writings, public appearances, and personal avocations.

Were I a negative person, surveying the modern world after my forty-plus year journey on the Path of the Wise, I might conclude my work had been a colossal failure! After all, look at the situation described in the first few paragraphs of this essay.

Yet I wonder what would happen if it weren’t for people like us. In the words of that other modern prophet George Orwell: *If you want a picture of the future, imagine a boot stamping on a human*

6 Aleister Crowley, *Magick Without Tears*, Laguna Hills, CA: Thelema Media, Letter 75.

7 *The Book of the Law*, York Beach, ME: Weiser Books, 1976, Preface to the 1938 edition.

face forever.”⁸ Is it possible that our magical and other efforts are helping to avert such a reality, at least in the West, long enough that a greater number of people may awaken and gird their loins for the battle at hand?

I don't know, but I hope so. As one who has attained the age of sixty-one, I realize it may be easier for me to talk about my willingness to die in the cause of freedom than it may be for many of you. But I would point out that some things are more precious than life itself. Honor, self-respect, and liberty are as necessary to a free man or woman as food, sunlight and air. Crowley wrote: *The vast bulk of humanity is obsessed by an abject fear of freedom; the principal objections hitherto urged against my Law have been those of people who cannot bear to imagine the horrors which would result if they were free to do their own wills.*⁹ I ask you instead to consider the horrors you would suffer if you were *not* free to do your own wills.

The seductive spells of the totalitarians are cast far and wide through the vast echo chamber they have erected to spread their dark magic. Turn on a TV, open a newspaper or mainstream media internet news report, walk into a bookstore. You will be assaulted by a cacophony of voices and siren songs demanding you relinquish control – either for your own good, for the good of your neighbor, or, my personal favorite, “for the children.”

I realize I risk being branded a “social Darwinist” by repeating this quote from Crowley, writing in the mid-1920s, but I do so for three reasons: one is to encourage all of us to think about it some more; two is to make clear that our petty modern tyrants are building on a foundation put in place by a long line of professional cry-babies; and three, that we do not overlook AC's council about helping those in need: *His neighbours do well to assist one who is weak by accident or misfortune, if he wishes to recover.*

We of Thelema think it vitally aright to let a man take opium. He may destroy his physical vehicle thereby, but he may produce another *Kubla Khan*. It is his own responsibility. Also we know well that ‘If he be a King’ it will not hurt him – in the end. We trust Nature to protect, and Wisdom to be justified of, their children. It is superficial to object that a man should be prevented from ruining and killing himself

⁸ George Orwell 1984, NY: New American Library, 1984.

⁹ Aleister Crowley, *The Law Is For All*. Commentary to AL. II: 53–58, p. 130.

... One who is unfit to survive ought to be allowed to die. We want only those who can conquer themselves and their environment. ... We respect the Will-to-Live; we should respect the Will-to Die. The race is auto-intoxicated by suppressing the excretory processes of Nature. Each case must of course be judged on its merits. His neighbours do well to assist one who is weak by accident or misfortune, if he wishes to recover. But it is a crime against the state and against the individuals in question to hinder the gambler, the drunkard, the voluptuary, the congenital defective, from drifting to death, unless they prove by their own dogged determination to master their circumstances, that they are fit to pull their weight in the Noah's Ark of mankind.¹⁰

4

I BELIEVE THAT A POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY designed to maximize individual liberty, must include recognition of the divinity inherent within each human being. In the immortal words of that great exponent of Thelema, Thomas Jefferson, "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights, that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness."

This statement is indicative of great spiritual truths that are fully compatible with the teachings of *The Book of the Law*.

Jefferson tells us that our rights come from our Creator. Why is this important?

In *The Slaves Shall Serve*, I spent some time elucidating the philosophy of the United Nations by quoting their source documents. I realize that everyone now mocks the UN as a weak ineffective parody of a world government, and scoffs at those of us silly enough to believe it could be a threat to human liberty. Let me remind you that Joseph Stalin, Adolph Hitler, and Mao Tse Tung were once helpless little babies in their mother's arms. It took time for them to grow into the mass murderers and tyrants Orwell described above.

The UN has stated its totalitarian goals in language so clear one can only marvel at their disdain for those they seek to control. And they are patient. The predecessor of the UN was the League of Nations, promoted by collectivist Woodrow Wilson and his cronies

¹⁰ Aleister Crowley, *The Law Is For All*, Commentary to AL. II: 72, p.146-147.

in 1919. As it was being rejected by the American Senate, Wilson's close friend and advisor Edward Mandel House and others formed the Royal Institute of International Affairs in London in 1919, and the Council on Foreign Relations in New York in 1921, to prepare the public for acceptance of international governing bodies. The UN was born in 1945, two and a half decades later.

The utopian pipedream outlined in the UN's so-called "Universal Declaration of Human Rights" includes a laundry list of "rights" – among which are the "right" to paid vacations and the "right" to hold opinions. The net effect of this gibberish is to so dilute the meaning of the word "rights" that the word "rights" becomes meaningless.

In addition – and this is the important part – every "right" granted by the state under the UN model is capable of being removed by the state for "good" reason. Therefore, it is not a right, but a privilege.

Article 8 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights identifies the exact origin of the rights recognized by the UN. It reads in full, "Everyone has the right to an effective remedy by the competent national tribunals for acts violating the fundamental right granted him by the constitution or by law."

For more evidence of the conditional nature of statist "rights," let's look at the wording of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights: "The above-mentioned rights shall not be subject to any restrictions **except** those which are provided by law, are necessary to protect national security, public order (*ordre public*), public health or morals or the rights and freedoms of others, and are consistent with the other rights recognized in the present Covenant."

Since every "right" is granted by the state, and every "right" is capable of being removed by the state, what the globalists actually offer is an assortment of alienable privileges – the conceptual antithesis of unalienable rights.

Jefferson, by contrast, makes no compromise. The meaning of "unalienable" is "incapable of being alienated, surrendered or transferred." Also, by identifying the source of our rights as God, the Creator, Jefferson places rights beyond the reach of some self-important bureaucrat monkeying about with UN caveats.

Who, in his right mind, would support a political system that intended to replace his unalienable rights with alienable privileges?

I HAVE SPENT MUCH TIME thinking not only about how rights are derived but what we, as initiates, must do to be worthy of those rights. Freedom is not free. John Adams wrote that the Constitution and the American system of government were designed for a moral and religious people. Only those capable of self-discipline may be free from the need for external tyranny.

Without a belief in a Higher Power to whom one is directly and personally responsible, it is debatable whether a person can live as a free man or woman. (One might question how someone who thinks as I do could subscribe to the statement, "There is no god but man." It is possible to understand the term "man" as applying to a being far more exalted than a semi-rational featherless biped. Psychology accepts the existence of an unconscious mind. I hold that human beings may access a "super-conscious" mind, which I would term "the beginning of God.")

The alternative to an ethically aware, faith-based political order appears to be the globalist, secular model being shoved down our throats at an increasingly breakneck pace. In the collectivist world view, the "realist" or "expert" has concluded that most people are not capable of governing themselves. Therefore, our more self-disciplined leaders must fill the vacuum by providing adequate controls for us – their moral, spiritual, and intellectual inferiors. (Not bad work if you can get it.)

Tyranny is merely a form of discipline designed to bring about the right ordering of society – in this case by external compulsion. It is not illogical in the least. Amateurs in the New World Order crowd may actually believe they are doing the right thing by attempting to manage society.

Human beings require discipline for survival. At the most basic and personal level, without the discipline provided by our bone structure we would collapse. On a more complex level, without the right ordering of human desires, society collapses into a morass of anarchy and violence so often observed in times of crisis.

In a free society that seeks to maximize individual Liberty, the self-discipline of a spiritually aware, ethically educated citizenry will be the key.

SOME 128 YEARS AFTER THE DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE, we were told by Aiwass in the very first revelation of *The Book of the Law* that: *Every man and every woman is a star*. Later he admonished: *... thou hast no right but to do thy will*. These two statements posit the following: in the first instance, an attainable celestial na-

ture at the root of the self; and in the second, that we each have a will to do.

The political goal of a society built on such principles must be the encouragement of maximum individual liberty for the most unfettered growth of the inner potential (the will). "Each individual must be left free to follow his own path! ... the original brand of American freedom – which really was Freedom – contained the precept to leave other people severely alone, and thus assured the possibility of expansion on his own lines to every man."¹¹

Crowley lists a series of rights in *Liber Oz* that constitute the political platform of the OTO in words of one syllable. It remains the fundamental expression of the politics of the Law of Thelema. Like those rights broadly sketched by Thomas Jefferson in the Declaration of Independence, and more specifically enumerated in the American Bill of Rights, the rights declared by *Liber Oz* are unalienable. They are the following (with my punctuation):

I

Man has the right to live by his own law: to live in the way that he wills to do; to work as he will; to play as he will; to rest as he will; to die when and how he will.

II

Man has the right to eat what he will: to drink what he will; to dwell where he wills to dwell; to move as he will on the face of the earth.

III

Man has the right to think what he will: to speak what he will; to write what he will; to draw, paint, carve, etch, mould, build as he will; to dress as he will.

IV

Man has the right to love as he will: *take your fill and will of love as ye will, when, where and with whom ye will.* – AL I: 51.

V

Man has the right to kill those who would thwart these rights.

I suggest that one may substitute the phrase "Man has the responsibility" at each occurrence of "Man has the right," without interrupting either the spiritual coherence or intent of *Liber Oz*. With that said, dear Reader, I remain yours in Liberty.

¹¹ Aleister Crowley, *The Law Is For All*, Commentary to AL I: 31, p. 37.

**ORG
YIN
MAT
TER
-HA
FIZ
-BA
TIN**

Wherever ye are,

Death will find you out,

Even if ye are in towers

Built up strong and high!

QUR'AN, SURA 4:78

THE PRESENT CRISIS IN THE 'CIVILISED' WORLD provides us with the opportunity to actualise our true potential for spiritual liberation. Furthermore, it is only by combating the current tendency towards materialism that man can hope to find harmony within himself and his environment. It is proposed this process of awakening can be instigated through exposure to events, which have the capacity to strike at the very core of one's being. This essay draws upon the plight of the Ismaili gnostic and demonstrates how, in the midst of his struggle for freedom, the application of esoteric symbolism in the Tower of the tarot trumps and exegesis of Qur'anic revelation can provide a means of understanding the true nature of liberation. Ultimately, however, this essay argues that, of the dwindling routes presently open for actualising spiritual potential, the medium of creativity as art in its divine form, free from the constraints imposed by the rigid infrastructure of society, is a potent weapon in this fight. And, since the degree of separation from divinity has limited man's potential for true creativity, the inevitable conclusion is a return from exile to the absolute point of origin; where creator, creativity and creation are one. Although spiritual warfare is the inescapable condition of existence for the Ismaili gnostic, he understands that all attempts to escape from the arena of worldly pain are in vain and that liberty can only won by pervading the physical orders and structures of relationships which exist between individuals, society and nature. Similarly, the simultaneous side-stepping of space and time becomes the modus operandi for his mission, achieved through penetrating the mesocosm of cosmic imagination, which resides between the sensible and intelligible realms.

The Ismaili gnostic today is one who, moulded by processes of pluralism and an esoteric interpretation of Islam within the West, finds himself in a unique disposition. His motivating forces for salvation have become synonymous with his Western occult brethren with whom he has forged alliances. The goals he sets himself are to be free from the slavery of the passions; from the errors of ignorance, the pains of fear and the anxieties of desire. For the Ismaili gnostic, any apparent conflicts with religious law are of no concern and he clings firmly to his maxim; eternally affirming that nothing is true and all is permitted. Part and parcel of this mode of existence is the active use of magic, which he has integrated into everyday existence. And in the context of jihad, which has been misconstrued by the ignorant on all sides of the equation, it is the spiritual battle or greater holy war, which is of sole importance

to the Ismaili gnostic. Julius Evola remarks that the relationship between the two types of jihad effectively mirrors the relationship between soul and body. And notably it is the lower self, the *nafs*, which must be subdued in order to achieve inner liberation or re-birth in unity. This struggle with the *nafs* assists in the ultimate realisation that although man is more than skin, flesh and bones, his composition is essentially analogous to that of his creator.

... arm yourselves for hard strife, but have faith in the wonders of your God!¹

Before going further let us recapitulate the symbols in the Tower of the tarot trumps as depicted in Tarot de Marseille (Camoin-Jodorowsky) pack. The emblem shows a lofty tower, whose crowned summit is being blasted by a zigzag of lightning. Red tongues of flame from heaven lick the three windows from which two figures, possibly the builders of the tower, are seen falling. These two figures can be interpreted as the destruction of dualism, the by-product of human logic and binary thought, which has the profoundest ability to create diversions where, in effect, none exist. Another interpretation of the Tower makes reference to its original name as the House of God, which in the Middle Ages was also the name for a hospital. The flesh colour of the building indicates the structure may symbolise the human body whilst the lightning flash striking the castellated tower may imply that man's reasoning faculties are being attacked from above. From a Kabbalistic perspective, the tower symbolises the Ruach or empirical ego. As Israel Regardie teaches, it is only through destruction of the 'glamorous bondage' that the light of the Neschamah can illumine the mind. The Tower is assigned to Mars, god of war, or, in Kabbalistic terms, to the divine wrath whose descending lightning is synonymous with the upward Path of the Arrow, the Middle Pillar on the Tree of Life akin to the 'Straight Path' (*Siratal Mustaqeem*) of the Ismailis. In its essence, the Tower resembles the Tower of Babel struck by the lightning of divine wrath, signifying catastrophe and downfall. It also bears similarities to the symbolism of the Babylonian ziggurat, whose base was considered as the navel of the earth and its summit in the sky. It was by climbing the ziggurat that one symbolically made the ascent towards heaven. The tower is that which man builds himself but, just as in the case of the Tower of Babel, it falls into ruin before completion. In this sense, the tower serves as

¹ Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy*.

a warning for man not to depend upon material existence alone, despite how secure it appears to be. The Tower represents the destruction such illusions bring. It signifies the moment of enlightenment, when the awareness of truth literally ignites the flash of light within. Furthermore, it highlights that reintegration with the true self can only occur with assistance from a macrocosmic force or perspective. Although the only towers man constructs today are those that reflect the triumph of might, the inescapable conclusion is that none can ascend to heaven via stone steps alone. The true tower must be built from within and liberation is only possible once the journey upon the spiritual staircase towards gnosis has begun.

Where is the lightning to lick you with its tongues? Where is the frenzy with which you must be infected? Behold, I teach you the Superman; he is the lightning, he is the frenzy..²

From the perspective of the Ismaili gnostic, the current deluge of ignorance seemingly threatens the present mode of existence for the human race. Having rejected out-dated forms of belief, man has ditched all aspects of the abstract and has mistaken his mechanistic, rational and animalistic self as a worthy replacement for God. Phoney wars undertaken by those who rule, staged under the pretext of ensuring peace and stability, systematically rape the utility of crisis for the sole purpose of sustaining the relentless beast of free market fundamentalism. Even more hideous and pertinent to our present high-definition LCD screen-dream is the fallout of toxic debt from recent bank failure, which has permeated the fiscal system and given rise to corporatism. The heroes of this doomed ideology, the atheist priests of high society, have traded their souls for endless credit, pledging allegiance to the agnostic practices of scientism and rationalism. Meanwhile, members of secular society, content to live in this cycle of ignorance with their heads buried in state-subsidised newspapers and mobile internet applications, feed their greed for accumulation and futile lust for power by dedicating every waking moment towards distraction in the hope of actualising earthly desires. It is within this spectacular orgy of matter that modern man concentrates all his resources, subduing the spirit and firmly implanting himself in anthropocentric existence. Meanwhile, the unseen but omnipresent enemy employed in strengthening the West's noble cause is the equally

Nietzsche, Thus Spoke Zarathustra.

flawed politicised Islamist who, through a misplaced reliance upon violence and a literal interpretation of submission to divine will, becomes an unlikely bedfellow in the surge towards material plenty and spiritual demise. In the Islamist's relentless fight against oppression from free market forces, the fear of death is reinforced in Western man, propagated via the constant threat of terror. The consequence of these machinations is that the sell by date for consumerism is extended ad infinitum. As a result of man's insatiable appetite for materialism access to infinite possibilities in the ineffable appear to have been temporarily denied. The cosmic head appears severed from the terrestrial body and humanity is no longer capable of entertaining ontological perspectives outside the illusory dimensions of space and time. Furthermore, as time has somehow become synonymous with money, man is constantly reminded that there is no scope for survival without the privileges either seemingly bring to everyday existence. But the question remains, which is the greater illusory force of the two?

In the past, we are taught, humanity lived in a state of harmony with nature, which in turn granted access to the cosmic and supra-cosmic dimensions of existence. However, as civilisation developed, this connection has atrophied. Although science and philosophy initially limited the degree of separation, the growth in demand for natural resources has put man in a situation where the combined need to survive and a will to power is being used to destroy nature instead. These processes of detachment and deterioration, which now torment man in his daily life, cannot go on indefinitely. Humanity has become impatient; seduced by rhetoric, it is eager and willing for change. Surely the day of judgement must be at hand? Ultimately, this realisation dictates resignation to the inevitable conclusion that death cannot be evaded through lifestyle choice or medical advances. And even though man anticipates it to take place in front of his very eyes, as Swedenborg reminds us, the final judgement takes place in the spiritual world, not on Earth.

One of the foremost misfortunes of modern man is the misconstrued concept of truth as the mindless regurgitation of information and a mistaken sense of transcendence through intellectual vanity. Concern with the external world and its sordid indulgences is hollow for the Ismaili gnostic, but it is through exposure to worldly pain that a process of intimate communication with the divine is instigated. This process, which has the capacity to climax in a feedback loop between creator and creation, becomes the mode by which merging with absolute truth becomes possible. Whilst the

divine employs the use of visible signs in the universe, it is man's potential for creativity, which becomes the means by which he is able to orientate himself on the rope towards the cosmic north via the Straight Path. Ibn 'Arabi, in *The Bezels of Wisdom*, divides men into two groups; those who travel the way they know and those who travel a way they do not know and of whose destination they are unaware, which is also the straight path. The Ismaili gnostic calls upon God with spiritual perception, whilst he who is not a gnostic calls Him in ignorance and is bound by tradition. In this sense, the path itself is also an illusion for man because in the absolute higher sense of his self he is identical with the divine. The goal of the Ismaili gnostic is therefore the total surrender of the self to the transmutation of the soul and its resurrection as part of the journey to its point of origin. This is the true meaning of Islam, not the distorted political fantasies, which the masses absorb through media speculation and propaganda. The attainment of liberty through annihilation of the outer form is necessary in order to behold the fixed and absolute, which lies buried within the temple of the self. The most wondrous fire for activating change is that which burns inside the heart of the gnostic and his ability to utilise his anguish as an immensely powerful catalyst for effecting change. In the case of the Tower, it is the destruction of materialism by fire. Fragmentary approaches to discovering and unveiling truth are worthless, only total annihilation of the tower can lead to enlightenment. From the perspective of the Ismaili gnostic, the inner search takes precedence over any exteriorised form of worship, which is often based on a static literal interpretation of historical and mythical events. This mode of being does not call for the abandonment of tradition, but concentrates instead on the allegory and individualised implication of practice, which both pre-dates and encompasses the basis of all religions. In this sense, the Ismaili gnostic stands outside time and can therefore be subsumed within any outward form, free from detection (*taqiyyah*).

It must be made clear however, that this process of breaking down the illusory veils, which have sheltered and sheathed man since his fall into matter, has to operate without interference from the intellect. Awakening does not come through contemplation of ordinary knowledge. Instead it is mystical knowledge, which leads to gnosis (*ma'rifat*). Furthermore, this is precisely how man's contemporary vision of apocalypse, viewed in the context of revelation, becomes the vehicle, which leads him towards his salvation.

With this in mind we can turn to the role of the Qur'an, in particular Sura 13 (*Ra'd*, meaning thunder), which deals specifically with revelation. As in the symbols of the Tower, revelation also leads the awakened searcher to truth via the allegorical and esoteric interpretation of external signs, which are visible in nature. In this Sura, it is written how the heavens were raised without pillars, leading the initiate to realise the futility of the material world, symbolised in the present context of the Tower. It is Allah, who punishes and rewards both those who have forgotten and equally those who have taken it upon themselves to change. Punishment becomes synonymous with the means of accepting grace for the Ismaili gnostic through the power of the lightning flash, which strikes by way of both hope and fear. As this process is indiscriminate, the heavenly thunderbolts hold the capacity to strike across the whole of humanity at the mercy of His will alone. Transcendence becomes possible through Him, becoming One with the One leads to liberation. However, a fundamental paradox remains: Is divine grace ordained only upon those who have taken it upon themselves to change and awaken from the slumber of their ignorance? If so, is it only through His Majesty that the Ismaili gnostic's fire can be ignited, shattering the tower of the human organism and submitting to the power of the infinite? In the *Book of Enoch*, lightning becomes the visual aid by which divine judgement is witnessed on earth. The accompanying thunder is the process by which these judgements are actualised into reality, emanating from the mouth (or myth) and erected as the tower. In Sufism, this brings to mind the technique known as *dhikr*, meaning remembrance or invocation. By calling the Divine into actuality through a process akin to erecting the Tower, man gives rise to the possibility for the simultaneous fertilisation of his own creation in a bid to become one with his creator.

Henry Corbin explains how the active or creative imagination is essentially the same as the organ of theophanies, because it is the organ of creation and because creation is essentially theophany. In this respect, the imagination is greater than the power of thought, which seeks to divide where no divisions exist. For the Ismaili gnostic, it is when the higher self knows Him, that the self can contemplate Him. And by knowing Him, the true self of the 'I' in turn causes Him to exist.



was a divine sign and therefore one of the most subtle of
 divine communications. In some respects the technology of the
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 machine is a symbol of the machine.

*I am the Truth! I am the Truth!
 we hear the God-drunk gnostic cry
 The microcosm abides in ME;
 Eternal Allah's nought but I!³*

The Islamic mystics teach that the platform for this creative exchange is found within the true or higher self, and that God is accessible through the creative or cosmic imagination. Fundamentally, this encounter doesn't take place outside the creator-creature totality. The process itself can be explained as a hermeneutic of symbols, involving the transmutation of sensory data and rational concepts into symbols e.g. the visual process of the lightning striking the tower of the illusory self, causing the liberation of spirit into dimensions outside of time and space. Furthermore, it is the process of the magical act, carried out by conception of a lightning flash, in which the mental power fixes the command of the goal.

It is proposed that the role of the magician (as artist) is to use these symbols to break the barrier down between himself and creator, activating the creative principle from within whilst channeling inspiration from the realm of cosmic imagination. Whether the artist draws down influence or creates it as a result of actualising the creative principle from within is presently unimportant. What is crucial however, is that this process undoubtedly equates to the true mode and role of art; that which acts as a channel for cosmic influence. Furthermore, this realisation supports the idea of man as a living god and true reflection of the universe as the microcosm. In this context we see the role of human beings as living poems with the ability to become poets, simultaneously driving and participating in existence in accordance with their own divine right. To assist modern man in overcoming his present inertia from spiritual evolution, art must turn towards the cosmic channel of influence and draw power from the mundus imaginalis (*'alam al-mithal*). This is believed to be one of the primary means by which man will be able to facilitate the surge towards a new creative order, combating the current state of fragmentation in the world. As David Bohm confirms, this strategy requires an extreme and sensitive perception of the orders and structures of relationships between individuals, society and nature. It cannot come from the void of post-Modernist expressions of art that occupy our public and private space with their immense sense of emptiness. A

3 *The Kasidah.*

ORGY IN MATTER

return to the true greatness of art would see no place for subservience to the banal ideologies of self-congratulatory art moguls who manipulate mainstream capitalist culture for their own material gain. It follows that this process of regeneration through art is crucial for the liberation and evolution of humanity. Furthermore, it is art that has the power to combat the seemingly endless advances of scientism (the by-product of an overdose on empiricism), which fuel the symbolic battle between spirit and matter in our own dark age.

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TWIN
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MANY MOONS, AND SEVERAL TAROT DECKS AGO, when I was first learning the ways of the cards, I was in the habit of doing several readings per day. On occasions this would extend into simply dozens of spreads, as each question answered prompted more questions, leading to a fractured, fractal expansion of queries – which is a good way to learn the cards, even if it's only how to shuffle them fluently. Early one spring morning in the 1980s I performed a reading for, and before, a long and significant actual and metaphorical journey ahead, the physical part of it being a drive of around one hundred and sixty miles to meet and study with my then magical teacher for six days – a hothouse week, if you wish. I then performed several other readings in an attempt to divine precisely what the teaching events of the week would produce, as I had been primed about how there was to be a formal initiatory experience involved.

The spread for the journey itself centred around the Tower. Perhaps distracted by the (in-parts confusing, but hugely promising) meanings of the cards which were then unveiled for the 'initiation' part of the week, I did not at that point fully apprehend nor appreciate the many and varied impacts of this card, The Blasted Tower as it is called in some historically older decks, and the central position in which it emerged in the spread in relation to the journey itself.

Sixteen minutes into my journey, on a busy motorway right next to a HUGE telecommunications tower, I burst a front tyre in the outside lane at top speed, completely lost control of the car, pirouetted several times while moving across three lanes of traffic in a lurching, juddering and sickening gyroscopic fashion and I came to rest facing the opposite direction as I sprayed gravel onto the hard shoulder of the motorway. I was uninjured and had injured no one else, and had hit nothing in the process but my wheels had drawn a swirling, Michael Bertiaux-esque manic sorcerous sigil in still-smoking black rubber across perhaps a hundred yards of the tarmac behind me. Somehow I had (just) retained bowel control but I was utterly terrified by the experience.

But what a perfect initiatory jolt! Several trembling cigarettes, and a lot of deep breathing later, the wheel (eight spokes) was successfully changed and I resumed my journey, considerably more chastened and thoughtful. Having had both a deeply practical and adrenal demonstration of just one meaning of symbolic card XVI, the Tower, I never forgot it.

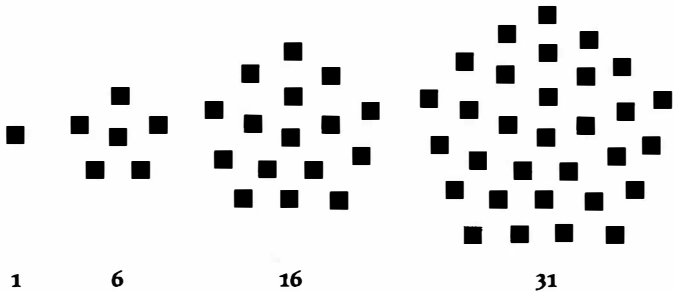
It is of course simple (and many folk have done it), to equate the Tower directly with the World Trade Centre in New York and the events there in the early 21st century – the events of just one brief and crisp, clear morning (although now endlessly replayed like a prayer wheel on YouTube) the consequences of which may yet actually define the rest of the 21st century. As a symbol it's easy – the Tower including as it does the astrological symbol of Taurus, and the sacrificial nail from the crucifixion of the Osiris wannabee (Jesus H Christ). The Tower is Shiva, feared and fearful destroyer of worlds, and for anyone who is a scientist, then sixteen is the atomic number of sulphur, what better a demonic element for this theme! But it's too easy, too impossibly lazy to link the twin towers in New York with the tarot card that predated the event by centuries, it is a smokescreen, an explanatory fiction, and no matter how hard you try with numerology, you just cannot make 11/09/2001 add up to sixteen (unless you simply cheat). Of course you can cheat and link Crowley to anything if you try hard enough; Peter Grey produced a spoof guide a few years back, *Aleister Crowley for Busy Journalists*. Here is an extract:

On no account read anything he actually wrote. Make sure you quote him on child sacrifices. The Evil Black Magic Satanist Crowley said: 'Male children, yeah mate, I kill thousands of them every year'... Then you can link him to any schizophrenic killers you want. Note: If a schizophrenic claims 'God' or 'Jesus' made them do it, *do not* blame Christianity. This is obviously the work of a lone nutter and not the fault of 'God' or 'Jesus'... You can't libel the dead. Just make up anything spicy, he's *bound* to have done it.

Indeed, just make it up. I'm not going to waste time here or insult the reader's intelligence by remotely addressing the nonsense-mongering of some who too readily link Crowley to the 9-11 event, or in some of the more hysterically paranoid cases who even *blame him for it*.

Now, invoking the man and his output more correctly, as a fabulous and inspiring magical source, Crowley's epic masterwork 777, being concerned with number in symbolism of course tells us something about sixteen. Some of it relates neatly to the Tower: "elevated... high". Also, significantly, "injury, war... fell". Also, "alas! – woe", further indicating the element of loss often attached to the card. Without becoming too inveigled into cabbalistic

dogma, 16×2 is 32: the total number of the Sephira and paths on the symbolic glyph of the Tree of Life, representing the completion of perfection, totality, union and utter unity, which is briefly touched on again later when discussing the authors of this piece, and their true-r identities. There are sixteen pawns and sixteen other pieces on a chessboard, and you can do lots of interesting and evocative magic on a temple floor laid with alternate black and white squares, as various traditional ceremonial magicians and the Freemasons will readily attest. Sixteen is in the mathematical form of a centred pentagonal number, which may sound nonsense or meaningless, but it works this way – a dot surrounded by five others forms a pentagon. Surround that shape with a successive pentagonal layer of dots, and you need sixteen to make the entire shape. Do it again and the next number in the sequence as the shape expands in layers is 31, a number so vitally and centrally important for the Crowleyan magickAL system. Further along in the sequence of expanding pentagons is the number 1891, which, delightfully is the very same year that Aleister turned sixteen!



As you might gather from this, levels of interpretation vary, much like reading a tarot spread. There is a universe that we see, the universe that we make, a universe that we believe (or in the case of chaotes, what seems to be multiple universes to believe in but is closer to one universe accessed *via* very many different tints of spectacle or tinctures of spectacular substances in the viewers) and the universe that *is*. Four universes, each with four aspects (earth, air, fire, water – or John, Paul, George and Ringo – or whichever determinative and personally meaningful classification system you choose) thus sixteen elements which we can access on a magical and psychic level.

Taking the intent of the tarot as a divination tool, the Tower is also a vantage point, but vulnerable since the obvious location of the watcher on high can thus also be seen by those who are being observed. Church towers in France in wartime 1944 were used as spotter hides and for somewhere ideal for snipers to lurk, and the Allied forces' rules of engagement were not to shoot at the towers with artillery, in a creditable, if rather old-fashioned in war, attempt to leave at least some of the French architecture and culture standing when they had finished. However there were many times when shelling of church towers was done to reduce the loss of life in advancing troops. See and be seen, that is the problem with the Tower – while it is a truly great and useful vantage point there is also vulnerability – and when in 'Tower' mode in magical work there is also this cleft stick problem.

I recall at a time of great, intense and prolonged practical magical activity in a home temple, I was introduced to a local magician who I had slightly heard of, but not previously met. We were introduced at a social gathering and he cheerfully said to me as an opening sentence, 'Ah, you live in XXXX (name of area and street in a nearby large and fairly anonymous town) don't you?' Somewhat surprised (since I was certain we had no common acquaintance who remotely knew where I lived, and this was long before the days when you could simply google someone and supposedly find out all about them) I agreed, and asked how he knew. 'Well, the huge purple-flamed strobe-flashing astral pentagram spinning out of your roof about 500 feet into the air is a clue!', he laughed, 'and you are carrying that same purple light with you now'. Purple light is Octarine, which brings us back to eight and thus sixteen again. We subsequently became friendly, and I later suggested a ritual method by which he could euthanise a terminally ill and medically vegetative relative using magical means to end their suffering, but that's another story, possibly for a book on magical ethics one day. The Tower is something to be avoided, but only by those who are avoidant of transforming themselves and those who wish to elude facing powerful events, thus dooming themselves to eternal stagnation. You will have people of this nature in your life, I can guarantee it. The Tower is a powerhouse, a generating station of force, fire and the phantasmagoric – the tower is Shiva, destroyer of worlds (and Apophis too). It is the reaper of negative habits; the bloody, the vampiric, regenerator and re-creator, possessed of both immense physical strength and the wisdom of strength in preparation. It is like a wise workhorse ploughing the rich and

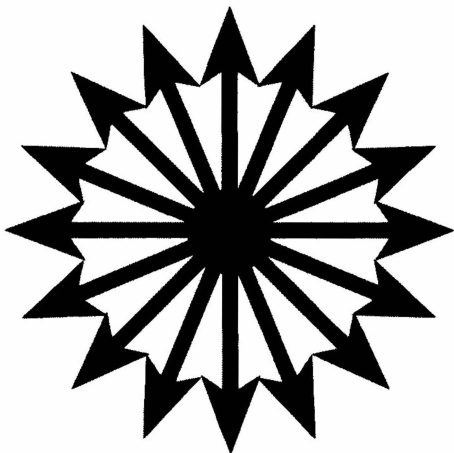
fertile earth, with the glinting eye of a wicked crow, always on the lookout for opportunity, the Tower is the champion race stallion, who leaves the others standing at the start, it is the warning twitter of the nightingale at midnight, or the morning Twitter of a friend, describing their symbolic dreams of transformation and death to you on the internet. The Tower is the world tree, the axle, the pivot around which the universe moves, it is the conductor's baton, leading and directing the cosmic harmony in the symphony of destruction and regeneration, a series of sounds embodied in the most apocalyptic classical music to be found on the planet, of which the excesses of Wagner are but a tame and tempting prelude, and the bassline is the dreadful throbbing of the machinery of war and genocide, as the mouth of death opens and closes in time to the beat.

THERE ARE NO BAD OR GOOD CARDS in the tarot, it is all merely a well-polished mirror. The Tower is neither a threat, nor a challenge, it is a signpost of things to come, and I welcome it appearing in spreads performed for myself. It says to me, *embrace the Tower, embrace change – face your fears, shatter illusions and see the world as it really is*. There is an element of horrifying realisation evoked by the card, which is why some will certainly fear the Tower; but on a psychic level it is more akin to an optician performing an eye test, and if required, one can then gain a new set of lenses with which to view the world in much more accurate and clearer detail afterwards.

So, the Tower symbolises the breakdown of rules, and the imposition of new roles. It is also an absence of order, pure and beautiful swirling chaos! Yet even uttermost chaos swirls around something... and that something is the Tower, the Axis Mundi, the thorn tree whose roots are so deep in the Earth that no excavation can reach their ends, and whose branches scrape the furthest reaches of the universe. It is a vantage point and a weak point, an initiatory fulcrum and the motivating force of considerable useful magick.

Sixteen is the age of carnal consent in many cultures, and the age of doing 'adult' things like learning to drive a car. It is a marker point, a sexual-cultural megalith, a stone tower nailed into the ground of the psyche that often becomes a monkey on the back. Losing one's virginity and the age of sixteen is a target for some, a liminal threshold for others. Sixteen is also twice the centrally

important number of chaos magic; eight, and this can easily be overlaid in the well-known chaos symbolism of the chaos star, by slight modification of the drawing



And this new symbol can be taken to mean that for every point of the chaos star, and for every categorisation of the magic therein, there is an inherent duality and polarity that can be added to it - thus sixteen points, not eight. Despite the *"belief manipulation is cool and scary and everything you know is wrong, hey do you like my black T-shirt?"* image, try telling hardcore chaotes about that. They don't like it. Tough. It's just one more paradigm shift to eat, digest and throw off the top of a very tall Tower, chaps!

Sixteen is also half of 32, and it's divisible by four, eight, and 16. It was at the age of 32 that we split into two beings, Francis Breakspear and Dave Evans, during an extensive period of ritual magic and the writing of a magical book that later became *If It Was Easy*.

Eight is a symbol of infinity, the double loop that ends in its own beginning, sixteen is thus double infinity... different sized infinities are a possibility, the very notion of which - although counter-intuitive - is a logical mathematical factual argument and marvelous magical contradiction of language at the same time. I don't have the space to go into it here, but when you call something

infinity, you are talking about something in whole numbers. If you start then delving into fractions or decimals beyond that, then you can have an infinity of infinities. Some of which are different sized to the others, depending on if you're using halves, quarters, or something smaller like an eighth. Probably this is sheer philosophical nonsense, but a wonderful exercise for a jaded mind, and it gets you into the realm of the Tower, by cracking consensus reality open, making some space for magic to happen. Different sized infinities, now that's a sticky mindfuck.

4

FRANCIS WRITES AND DAVID WRITES, and they both rightly retain the right to write different words and hold different opinions, all of which are, of course, right. Neither is sure who is writing this narrative (perhaps we're writing alternate words), so they have decided to mark this piece as co-authored to cover all eventualities, and to allow plausible denial by either person – if people don't like it, we'll blame it on the other! And as the Scarlet Imprint folk suspected or hoped at the time of planning this book, we would perhaps expose ourselves as really being just one terrifying (or terrified) chimera. We are an academic and a chaos magician, both of those and neither, plus twelve other things and we are never entirely sure who is dreaming the other. Possibly it is both of us dreaming simultaneously, and in truth neither of us therefore exist in any coherent or believable sense. This is something our patron deity, who sometimes appears to be simply Babalon hiding behind a cheap carnival mask and an ephemeral false name, has often indicated, while at the same point insisting that she also is a figment of someone else's imagination... so who can you trust? There are at least sixteen identities, as any good (or truly badass) chaote should have.

One of us has to wait inside the Tower, while one is keeping watch, and then we swap duties. It would be really very neat if the changing of the guard happened every sixteen months or sixteen days, but it's actually pretty random – sixteen minutes is often closer, or at the 750 microgram/180 beats per minute point in some entertaining and rave-shamanic cases.

The Tower is a powerhouse. The Tower is a cannon, mounted on end, pointing upwards at the furthestmost stars, ready to blast out the content towards the infinity of spaces, both outer and inner. The Tower is a phallus, the throbbing cock of the Great God

Pan if you wish, and the Tower is a fallacy. The Tower begs the symbolism of a staircase, and if that is, as the shape demands, a spiral stair it then tempts the reader into speculating on the symbolism of the DNA helix, the building block of all life and which was (allegedly) discovered by 'straight' scientists who were tripping their tits off on LSD at the time. Timothy Leary was probably the sixteenth Beetle. The Tower contains infinities and yet it is within another infinity – within an absence of points, Had within Nuit, world without end until that world turns itself inside out, rubs itself up against the thigh of the nearest remotely attractive stranger and spurts us all out into a new universe with the remaking of the world.

We started this sketch with a car journey, a Tower-related incident and a tale continuing onwards towards an initiation. That event was completely not expected – the burst tyre, the journey plagued by various other events, and an initiatory week that was nothing like what was expected, with the Tower dominating all of it. Divination. Divin8tion.

And like all good, true, empowered initiations, it never ends. Crowley used to advise 'invoke often' for magickal success. True. I'd also add 'climb the Tower often', whichever way you wish to interpret that, for magickal success. And, as Aleister wrote: *success is your proof*. Go on – the views from the top are impressive and the life changing risks and rewards of doing so are worth the extra effort, whether you choose to retrace your steps once you've had a look around, or simply jump off the top to see where you land, and- most importantly, to see who you are when you land.

THINGS FALL APART -STEPHEN GRASSO

*The Earth a kill you
if you try to kill it
your body heal you
if you discipline it*

KING MIDAS SOUND

REMEMBER HAVING A BLISTERING HANGOVER on the morning of September 11th, 2001. Towards the end of the 90s, we all looked towards the turn of the millenium with a jaded anticipation. Eschatonic narratives had bled into the mainstream and the media was saturated with images of grey aliens making shapes to house music and anally probing ravers with flourescent glo-sticks. Some people had convinced themselves that the Y2K virus was going to break all the computers and catapult us into a Mad Max scenario overnight. Visions of a big-haired Tina Turner lookalike presiding over Shoreditch and rationing out hairspray and spiky leather shoulder pads to feral hipsters. An unskilled and pampered generation liberated from the comforting slave-cocoons in which they had become ensnared, and suddenly forced to compete for food and shelter amid the blighted ruins of call centres and data processing offices.

The year 2000 came and went. It consisted of a few limp fireworks and the construction of a ghastly dome in Greenwich. Everyone felt it was a huge anticlimax, yet nine months later we had tabloid headlines proclaiming the apocalypse all over the front pages. That morning felt like a terrible CGI action film erupting into the real world. A shadowy criminal mastermind using passenger planes as missiles in a guerilla attack on the US. One minute I was browsing a row of sandwiches trying to decide what might best sort out my hangover, the next I was witnessing live television images of widescreen atrocity that seemed unreal, like horrorshow visions bleeding in from another reality. The worst bit was seeing the couples holding hands as they jumped from the upper floors to their death. It was hard not to project into their last moments. Making the cold calculation that jumping might be better than burning, and salvaging that fragile moment of human tenderness as they stepped off the building together.

The weeks that followed continued to get under my skin. The media fear machine was cranked up to eleven, broadcasting its anti-life equation at deafening volume. For a while it was as if the institution of news had been entirely replaced by a sadistic demagogue whose job was to broadcast a detailed account of all of the terrible ways in which we were all going to be killed. It was hard to shrug off, because much of it was actually happening. There were anthrax attacks in the US. Persistent rumours of a dirty bomb attack in London. Opportunist scum selling gas masks and bio-survival suits outside Victoria tube station, preying on the climate of fear to turn a quick profit. When you see this shit on the streets,

it's like your city has suddenly segued into a John Wyndham story overnight.

The headlines kept coming, and nobody knew what was going to happen next. Images of elated men and women cheering on Osama Bin Laden outside Finsbury Park Mosque as the towers burned made it difficult to think of this as someone else's problem. And worse, none of us knew what the ignorant fucking cowboy in the White House was going to do in response.

This could be the end of the world. This could be it. Huddle together in your little flats and take care of each other because tomorrow could see you or your loved ones caught in the crossfire. In the days immediately following the attacks, the ceaseless terror broadcasts got the better of me and I became paranoid about everything. I couldn't turn on a tap without wondering if someone had put anthrax in the water supply. I was constantly waiting for the next thing to happen, and woke up every day anticipating new horrors. In the US it was worse. Fox News whipping the populace up into a frenzy. Today is an orange terror alert. Do not leave your homes. When you are afraid, you are more pliable and suggestible, and that's exactly how we want you.

Where was magic in all of this?

THROUGHOUT THE 1990S I was very much the young chaos magician about town. Magic was a bit of a lark and I was up for anything. Most people in their early 20s think they are invulnerable, and would-be magicians more so. I had uncritically soaked up the notion of "immanentising the Eschaton" from reading Robert Anton Wilson and the literature of chaos magic – but I never stopped to think what that might actually mean, in real human terms. I was involved with a group practicing magic based on the fictional worlds of HP Lovecraft at the time, and we took it as a given that our purpose was to bring back the Great Old Ones and hasten some transformative global event involving squids and suchlike. It was all for a laugh really, and I think the return of the Great Old Ones meant something different to everyone involved. I sort of saw it as a transformation of human consciousness by incorporating atavistic memories into the contemporary moment, but I would be the first to admit that I hadn't really thought any of it through.

Oddly, one of our group was in New York State at the time of the World Trade Center attacks, collecting graveyard dirt from the tomb of HP Lovecraft; and whilst I'm certain that none of our extradimensional fumbblings had much impact on the trajectory of world affairs, such synchronicities do make you question exactly where you are putting your energy and attention. You want to immanentise the Eschaton? Well here it is in bloody technicolor with a bodycount in triple figures.

The whole experience of those few weeks made me re-evaluate my relationship with magic. How can you maintain any sort of plausible self-image of yourself as a magician, when you are given such a cold and uncompromising perspective on your own mortality and that of everyone you love? The magical ego crumples. If you are honest with yourself, it crumples. What is left is the fragile exposed core, and that's the component of oneself that needs to find its power as a magician. I couldn't go on playing these smug and self-satisfied games and calling it magic. If there was any point or purpose to persisting with the occult, I had to find something that addressed itself to the life or death challenges presented by the increasingly hostile world that I appeared to have been tipped into.

To some degree, the events of 11th September served as a catalyst for my drift away from chaos magic and towards a Voodoo-based practice. The magic I was doing at the time just seemed woefully inadequate to the circumstances that I felt might be up ahead. I didn't feel well-equipped with what I had in the bag of tricks, and I was determined to address these shortcomings while there was still time to do so. Voodoo is all about survival. It has stood resilient to the depravities of western slavery, endured concentrated efforts to kill its people and crush its spirit, and has been persistently demonised and belittled for centuries. But it doesn't die. It still stands tall. It's New World magic, that has stood up against the worst that the New World has to offer, but its roots run deep. At its core it is the magic of the ancestors, all of our ancestors, because it deals in the basics, as all old ancestral magic does. Food and shelter, health and sickness, life and death, love and passion, protection from predators and kinship with nature. It doesn't take place "up on the astral", where its efficacy can't be proven; but down here in the world, where it has to be.

My magic was largely recreational by comparison. Something to bring out on a wet weekend when I fancied getting up to a bit of weirdness. It existed in its own self-sustaining bubble and rarely ventured out into spaces where its integrity might be threatened.

It is easy to maintain an appealing image of oneself as an effective sorcerer when you don't actually take very many risks with your magic – rarely stress-testing it or putting it on the spot to see what it's made of in a live situation – but that bubble had already had a sword driven through it, and I needed to ensure that my practice could deliver whatever it might need to deliver in an uncertain world. It seemed to me that magic had become something of a hobby in the West, a dilettante pursuit for those with the leisure time and resources for advanced navel-gazing. In many circles, the purpose of occultism seemed to be a competition to see who could drive themselves horribly insane in the most elaborate manner, and then write about it at length – preferably in a hardback limited edition collector's grimoire filled with incomprehensible jargon. I'm not sure when our culture's conception of magic became so diminished, but there was an obvious dissonance between the dubious career path of the modern occultist, and the role of magician (or shaman, or witchdoctor, or houngan) as it appeared in accounts of our prehistory, and as it still appears in the various indigenous cultures that have sustained a place for magic in their model of reality. I wanted to get back to something like that, and the obvious place to start looking was within a culture that has maintained this role into the present, and which relies upon it being filled by an individual competent enough to address their magic to real world concerns on a daily basis.

I felt as if I was preparing for something. I kept getting persistent and disturbingly prescient flashes of a potential future where these skills would be needed. It gnawed at me. I didn't like what I saw in the visions. My city was devastated and suffering. I couldn't tell what had happened exactly, but I was older, getting about on a stick because of some accident. Bombed-out buildings, troubled streets. I'd escaped some sort of draft because of an injury and that's the only reason why I was still alive. There weren't that many people around, disparate groups trying to carry on as normal, but it was bad. Resources were limited and dwindling, the streets were dangerous, everything had gone down the pan. I was trying to do what I could within this landscape, both practically and magically, to look after the people in my community. Going door-to-door with my stick and lantern, delivering food and medicine, fixing up gris-gris, getting things done. Trying to get as many people through the night as I could.

As visions go, it was probably a load of bollocks. My subconscious mind throwing up a somewhat Hollywoodised narrative in

response to distressing news headlines and my ongoing efforts to better relate my magical practice to the world about me. However, as much as I tried to brush it off, the visions wouldn't let up. I kept on drifting back to this narrative in unguarded moments, and I couldn't seem to shake this deep-rooted sense of foreboding about the future. I carried this nagging apprehension around with me for some years, before I became astute enough in interpreting visionary experience to understand that a literal interpretation – whilst sometimes valid – does not always bear the most significant fruit. When you dissect this material, it is important to understand that you are dealing with the language of dreams, and what is being communicated is not always the surface play of images but the emotional content.

What was there, was the heart of magic. When you strip away the superficial post-apocalyptic action movie elements of that narrative, it is about magic administering to need. In these dark circumstances, there was magic. It got out on the streets, regardless of its own injuries, and brought the spell where it needed to be. It didn't matter how hopeless the bigger picture might have looked, or what the odds were or how much had been lost – the magician in that vision was on the ground trying to make a difference. The lamp was trimmed and burning. The doctor was in.

Looking at it in this way suggested something to me about the role of magic. However fucked it is, you find a way. When the whole world is ensnared in a web of horrors, and stories of doubt and despair swoop about like predatory beasts, the job of a magician is to imagine something different. Armed with fierce old stories, passed on from the ancestors, the sorcerer must tell a tale that is stronger than the narratives of fear and hopelessness that compete for dominance. The value of a magician is their ability to craft a healthy narrative that sinks in deep and conjures new worlds and new possibilities into fruition. My future post-apocalyptic sorcerer self was going door-to-door, taking care of practical things, black market medicine here and rootwork there, but all of that activity emerged from somewhere within. What he was really doing was casting a healthy spell in a sick world, and doing everything in his power to make that take root. He could have just as easily have been a stone age shaman, weaving similar narratives of survival for the tribe.

You don't need an apocalypse scenario to do that job. There is already enough sickness and suffering in the world, without imagining potential future dystopias to project into. It seemed to

me that the point of those visions was to locate that place within myself that I was operating from in the visions, and find a way of expressing that same spell in the world as it is now. We're not quite in that terrible mess just yet, and there is still time and potential to turn things around, but the job remains the same. You get up and do it, regardless of what is going on outside. Arriving at that position seemed to dispel any lingering fears about an upcoming apocalypse. Whatever the situation, the lamp remains lit. Certainly that grim future I perceived was a possibility on the table, but this waking moment is filled with potential and there is much that can be done in the here and now. You adapt your magic to the circumstances of time and place. The thing about prescient glimpses of possible futures is that they haven't happened yet, and the conditions for their fruition are often wholly dependent on factors that are currently in motion.

I began to examine more closely the ways in which I might be complicit in the conjuration of that potential grim future. What was I doing to hasten that trajectory? What was I *not* doing to slow or prevent such a course? Is that genuinely the only timeline ahead of us? Are there any alternative tracks that we could get on? What other possible futures might be conjured out of the raw material of the present? I became acutely aware of how I was, on a personal level, actively colluding with the driving factors of that dystopia. I had bought into the pornography of doom that saturated the culture and its media, and by giving worth and value to this masochistic narrative, I was effectively feeding and nourishing its bulging roots. Clearly the focus of my own attention was just a tiny fuel cell contributing towards its growth, but I was contributing to it, and I could stop. It was within my ability to withdraw my patronage of this complex of ideas, and place it somewhere else.

The apocalypse is a scam. It lures you in to its frame of reference and takes you out of the embodied moment. As soon as you begin to buy into the inevitability of an apocalypse narrative, you equally begin to step away from the living potentiality of the crossroads and give up a portion of your own power and agency. It sucks you in, assigns you a pair of boots, and sets you to work in its service. Whereas a magician should be poised at the crossroads, in a condition of awake awareness, interacting with the reality of what is, not enthralled by the phantasms of what could be.

THERE ARE CURRENTLY several prominent eschatonic narratives thriving within our culture and competing for attention, and I take a stance of hard opposition towards all of them. Loudest are the Christian fundamentalist belief in The Rapture, and the counter cultural yearning for a transformative event to occur in the year 2012. I see them roughly as two sides to the same coin. They both hanker for a future where our present status quo is turned on its head, and replaced with a version of reality that conforms to the prejudices of the believer. In both visions, those that adhere to conflicting ideologies tend to be disappeared KGB-style by a muscular Jesus or by a heavy squad of grey aliens or something. Both visions have a significant industry built up around them, and are fed and sustained by individuals that have managed to carve out a living by servicing these myths, putting out a series of books or DVDs to further the meme by which they financially profit.

The notion of 2012 is particularly insidious, not least in the way that its validity is taken onboard by so many occultists (who should know better) with little critical intervening thought. One of the primary sources for the significance of the year 2012 are the ideas of the ethnobotanist Terrence McKenna, specifically his Timewave Zero graph, which attempts to correlate the I Ching with the Mayan calendar in order to create a schema where various world events are predicted on a line graph which culminates on 21st December 2012. McKenna's ideas are problematised by the fact that the Mayan calendar doesn't necessarily predict the end of anything in 2012, its construction is more like a clock that gets around to 12 and then resets itself to zero to begin again. To the ancient Mayans, 2012 was an impossibly far-off date in the future, and it is difficult to do more than loosely speculate about what it may or may not have meant to that particular culture. McKenna's Timewave Zero graph has also received criticism for being extremely subjective, in the way it arbitrarily cherrypicks events from a particularly western-skewed reading of world history and assigns them to points on the graph, thus "predicting" various things that have already happened in accordance with its preconceptions. I don't really find it terribly convincing, but it is a compelling narrative and administers admirably to a certain apocalyptic need that many people seem to genuinely feel. It's not uncommon for 2012 adherents to scoff at the idea of a Christian rapture or the popular "Left Behind" mythos of the religious right, seemingly without apprehending that their own beliefs are essentially the same idea marketed to a different consumer demographic.

I think people just love a good apocalypse. A lot of occultists, especially, seem to have a hard-on for the end of the world. The idea that one's subjective magical work, performed in a Hackney bed-sit after the pubs have shut, could be a pivotal behind-the-scenes nexus for events of global magnitude is often irresistible to many involved in magic. When you indulge in an eschatonic narrative, it is like a panacea for feelings of insignificance and powerlessness in an uncertain world. It introduces a sense of certainty and simplifies the randomness and complexity of world events to an easily digestible plot line. It's oddly more comforting to believe that the Illuminati or the New World Order are behind the scenes orchestrating the trajectory of world events towards some mysterious agenda, than it is to accept that nobody is really in the driving seat and shit just happens.

If one's underlying beliefs function as a spur for concrete action towards a constructive goal, then little criticism can be leveled at your preferred working model, provided the fruits of that narrative are sound. But all too often, an eschatonic narrative is a license for complacency. The year 2012 is just around the corner, and we will all be booted up into a higher state of consciousness, so I don't really have to do anything. The black helicopters of the NWO are about to enforce martial law all over the planet, and nobody can stop it, so I don't have to do anything. Jesus and pals are going to magic us up to Heaven any day now, so I don't have to do anything. The details change from eschaton to eschaton, but there is a persistent theme of powerless and inevitability. One's individual will and personal agency are sublimated to the demands of a supernatural being, or a powerful conspiracy or an aeonic progression, as is one's responsibility to create transformative change at a personal level. The notion of rolling up your sleeves and getting to grips with the often decidedly unglamorous daily slog of working for a better future is substituted for an appealing fiction. The individual could not conceivably make a difference in the face of such cosmic churning aeonic tides, so there is no longer much compulsion to consider oneself responsible for what is collectively dreamed into being; and into this vacuum of meaning is poured a comforting sensation of privileged knowledge. Everything is pre-ordained and nothing you do really matters, but it's OK because you are one of the chosen, or have uncovered the conspiracy, or understand the mysteries of the aeon, or are imminently about to be beamed up by aliens, or angels or ascended dolphin masters or something. Who exactly does this serve?

Narratives of the apocalypse often seem to plug into a weird masochistic desire for punishment. Some of us might perform a song and dance that suggests otherwise, but deep down we are painfully aware of our shortcomings as a species. It is at least theoretically within our means to live sustainably and in balance with all other species on the planet, functioning as stewards of nature, but instead we have shaped the environment into something increasingly toxic to our continued survival and that of many other forms of life. At our stage of technological development, it is not inconceivable that we could eradicate poverty and ensure plentiful food, shelter and healthcare for all, but some people have to satisfy their bellies with handfuls of mud and lose children every day to conditions that we know how to cure. We are imbedded in this labyrinthine tangle of problems, with tortuous roots that weave back through generations of aggrieved ancestors, sordid unresolved histories of blood and conquest keeping us at one another's throats. This mess is part of our inheritance, and our lives feel like a tiny window onto the problem. We are aware of our responsibility – as living flesh and blood – to correct these imbalances and bequeath a better legacy to future generations, but we feel powerless in the face of insurmountable opposition. Our best efforts are a drop in the ocean, too little, too late. Wracked by feelings of existential impotency, we tell ourselves stories about the day that the buck finally comes to rest. The end of days when we all finally get our comeuppance. Grubby fantasies of jackboots stamping on a pentagram necklace forever. Who benefits?

It is incredibly arrogant, but all too human, to assume that you are living in the end times. Every generation seems to do it, and is thwarted when life tenaciously carries on regardless of fevered prophecy, but we never learn. An Assyrian clay tablet dated around 2800 BC states:

Our earth is degenerate in these latter days. There are signs that the world is speedily coming to an end. Bribery and corruption are common.

Hippolytus fancied the end times in 400 AD. The year 1000 AD saw an unprecedented millennium fever. Pope Innocent III predicted the apocalypse for 1284. The anabaptists anticipated it in 1533. Both Charles Wesley, founder of Methodism, and the Shakers predicted 1794. William Miller pitched it around 1843. Like a gambler that won't leave the table on a losing streak, the Jehovah's

Witnesses have so far predicted the world will end in 1874, then in 1878, then in 1881, 1910, 1914, 1918, 1925, 1975 and finally in 1984. It's easy to scoff, but when you observe the competing eschatonic narratives of our present age, it would seem that our culture as a whole is equally incapable of learning these lessons of history.

There is always an apocalypse just around the corner, but it never quite gets here. However, that said, it is increasingly difficult to look at the current global situation and deny that there is a certain momentum to current events. Whilst apocalyptic thinking is nothing new, no previous generation has been quite so spoiled for choice in its possible manifestation. We live in interesting times indeed. Leaving aside potential nuclear, chemical, biological or even supernatural doomsday scenarios – the combination of catastrophic climate change and peak oil could well do the trick, if left unchecked. On our current trajectory, it does seem more than likely that we are headed for – if not an actual apocalypse – then certainly a difficult adaptive change to a more hostile and less hospitable planet. The collective will does not currently seem to be there to change course, and denial is largely the default setting for most people. Despite my resistance to self-defeating narratives of apocalypse, I can still read the writing on the wall. A sorcerer pays close attention to signs and portents arising out of synchronicity and the ebb and flow of life. Nine dead crows at the crossroads is rarely an optimistic omen. If a mirror shatters in your temple, it is a sign of disturbance. If a valuable physical totem of your power were somehow taken from you or damaged, whatever the context, it would be pure denial to place a spin on the events that failed to question the rectitude and integrity of your personal practice. Such things function as a wake-up call and an opportunity to question the hazardous or destructive track we may inadvertently be following, and correct our problematic behaviour before it is too late.

The fall of the World Trade Center is such a perfect contemporary image of the Tower card, that it is destined to find its way into tarot art for generations to come. Ten years on and the US is still reeling from the augury, as people often do when it shows up in a reading. The Tower is not a difficult card to interpret when it falls. There is not that much room for ambiguity in its message. It is the fall of a power structure built on poor foundations that has built too high, become too unstable, and must now inevitably topple. It's rarely a very cheerful presence when you get it in your cards, but it is a process of life and it does play out in nature, throughout

history and in our day-to-day lives. The tarot can be quite portentous at times, when it drops ideas such as this onto you, but all of life is there in its dance. The worst thing you can do is get paranoid about the occurrence of a difficult card in a reading. The oracle is trying to show you something, not just gloating. The Tower always points to a situation already in a very advanced stage of its natural life cycle, something that has been built beyond its sustainable limits to the point where there can be no forward motion while it stands in its current form. When it comes up in a reading, you generally know fine well what it refers to. It can be a shock, and it is constructed to be a shock, but its power to disturb is exclusively in its confirmation of something that you already know but have so far been unprepared to admit. When you witness the universe deal out the image of that card as physically and viscerally to western culture as it did on September 11th 2001, many of the same admonitions apply to its interpretation.

In her New Orleans Voodoo Tarot Deck, published in 1992, Mambo Sally Ann Glassman renamed the Tower card as the Deluge, and depicted a breaking levee causing flood waters to sweep away a car, a house and a road. As an illustration composed by a priestess of a city built below sea level and surrounded by water, it is an obviously resonant local image of the process of *Atu XVI* in motion, but her painting does now seem alarmingly prophetic following the terrible aftermath of Hurricane Katrina in 2005. The horrors that befell New Orleans, and the shameful neglect of its survivors by the then-incumbent Republican government, is another heavily symbolic image that is now indelibly imprinted upon the US psyche, and by extension, that of the western world. During the 2008 US election, it was frequently suggested that the visible mismanagement of Katrina's devastation by George W Bush – along with the US-led global economic meltdown – was one of the key drivers that swept the GOP out of the White House. It seemed inconceivable that a highly developed country such as the US would sit back and allow so many of its people to drown, for days on end, before coming to their aid; and the demograph that was most severely effected – predominantly African Americans on low income who lacked the resources to evacuate the city – functioned as an ugly reminder of the social and economic disparities that underwrite much of Western culture. If it is our normal practice to look for omens in our day-to-life, and attempt to scry a deeper significance in the seemingly random play of events unfolding within our orbit, what happens when we witness such blatant representations of an

oracle played out so chillingly on a colossal real world scale? It's more than a bit ghoulish to try and read esoteric meanings into the suffering of others, and picking over corpses in this way for a nugget of magic to bolster your ego is contemptible and never rings true. What is essential is to understand that nothing takes place in a vacuum, and to engage with the cold reality of what is on the end of your fork, rather than attempting to drape it in comforting illusion.

At the time of writing, an estimated 200 000 people have died in Haiti following a devastating 7.0 earthquake that struck the beleaguered nation on 12th January 2010. It is anticipated that many more will suffer and die as a result of the current appalling conditions and shambolic efforts to get aid where it is needed. Every day seems to bring worse headlines. The events of September 11th and the impact of Hurricane Katrina are dwarfed in comparison to such a horrific death toll, as they were by the casualties of the Indian Ocean tsunami of 2004. If we are in the business of interpretation, what paltry messages can we read into tragedy on this scale? The televangelist Pat Robertson made news headlines shortly after the earthquake struck by asserting that the people of Haiti had struck a deal with Satan to overthrow French rule in 1791, implying that the earthquake was God's delayed reaction punishment for their alleged infernal dalliance. What he was presumably alluding to was the Haitian folk tale of Bois Caiman, in which a Vodou priest called Dutty Boukman conducted a ceremony for the Lwa on the eve of the Haitian revolution. According to the tale, a pig was sacrificed to Erzulie Dantor, the fierce protective mother of Haitian Vodou, and prayers were made to the ancestral African powers to help the people overcome the rule of the island's brutal slave owners.

It worked. The Haitian people accomplished the only successful slave revolution in history and established the first post-colonial black-led republic in the Caribbean. The act of Haiti freeing itself is often downplayed in its role as a driver of the abolition of slavery, but it sent shockwaves among colonial slave holders and slaveholding countries. If this could happen in Haiti, it could happen literally anywhere next, and where might a chain of events such as this lead? If the reasoned argument of William Wilberforce was a well-meaning carrot, the recent vivid memory of Haiti was a blood-stained stick. Haiti, and what it meant, could not be permitted to inspire others. There was nothing more terrifying than the thought of Haiti's revolution happening on a global scale. It

was the bogeyman in the night, the depth of fear it struck can still be heard in Robertson's comments about a deal with the devil. Of course, if your idea of the devil is a force that overthrows slavery and the unjust treatment of your fellow man, it does raise a question about which god it is you actually serve.

In order to keep the example of Haiti contained, the West made concerted efforts to undermine the emergent nation that had so audaciously challenged its global hegemony. No other country in the world even recognised Haiti as a valid nation for the first 30 years of its existence, until a treaty with France was finally signed in 1825 that acknowledged its independence in return for the payment of crippling war reparations. France demanded 150 million francs from Haiti, an amount equivalent to tens of billions today, in order to remunerate former slave owners for the loss of revenue caused by the island's freedom. The imposed debt was reduced to 60 million francs in 1838, but it took 120 years before the debt and interest was eventually cleared in 1947. Already ravaged by war and its agriculture devastated, the payments bankrupted the Haitian treasury and permanently effected the island's ability to prosper. During the recent media coverage of the earthquake, Haiti has frequently been described as a "failed nation", but did it ever have much of a chance to be otherwise?

The strength of the earthquake that struck Haiti was not an anomaly in size. The planet sees an average of 18 earthquakes of that magnitude each year. The depth of the disaster was exacerbated to such a degree due to Haiti's vulnerability as the poorest country in the western hemisphere, and even the most cursory study of the nation's history points to the underlying causes of how it came to be in that predicament. Everything has its roots and nothing happens in a vacuum. The desire to pin the blame on Vodou is a game of denial, where the uncomfortable facts of the situation are substituted for a more palatable conspiracy theory that absolves complicity. Similarly, in New Orleans following Hurricane Katrina, several gaping mouths piped up to interpret the natural disaster as a judgement upon or result of the city's famous traditions of Voodoo, but the facts are far uglier and more prosaic. Louisiana gets a lot of hurricanes, but the wetlands that previously afforded a natural protection have now been decimated by excessive drilling for oil. Sarah Palin's catchphrase, *Drill, baby, drill*, becomes especially repugnant in the face of such gruesome facts. Further, a recent Supreme Court investigation into the breach of the levee that led to the worst flooding has found that the

structure should have withstood the force of the storm, and likely would have done, if funds intended for its upkeep had not been skimmed off as a result of the political corruption that is endemic in the region. There's no reason to go looking for a supernatural cause, unless you stand to profit in some way from concealing the very glaring and very human failings that directly created the mess.

Haiti itself has suffered badly from hurricanes in recent years due to similar unrestrained deforestation that has reduced the island's woodland to 3 percent of its majestic former presence, leaving the towns and villages dangerously exposed to the elements. If you wish to view any of these natural disasters as symbolic portents of an upcoming apocalypse, then it pays to look at the historic background and real world cause and effect, because imaginative occult conspiracy theories are unhelpful when the basic truth of a situation is so vital to understand and respond to. The Tower can refer to a crumbling ideology, belief system or way of being, as easily as it can refer to a business or government or physical structure. So which tower is falling down in this picture? The Haitian earthquake was caused by a ruptured fault line, but the level of devastation was caused by centuries of unjust punishment and neglect. The suffering and loss of life was caused by falling masonry and lack of medicine, but the contemporary circumstance has its roots squarely in the repercussions of the transatlantic slave trade. Hurricanes cause damage, but wrecking the natural environment where you have settled, and taking a chance with the lives of the poor to further line your pockets is what sinks a city. Only fundamentalist nutjobs fly passenger planes into buildings, but that degree of extremism cannot be bred without a climate of perceived grievance and injustice. If we are to interpret any of these events as physical manifestations of The Tower, the distinct actions and behaviours that appear to be calling down the lightning are neither occult nor occulted.

THE TOWER IS BEST UNDERSTOOD as an unfolding process of life rather than as a single fetishised event or series of events. The Tower is always being struck by lightning, as the Sun is always shining and the Fool is always stepping off a precipice into the unknown. If there is a reason why we continually take on board an eschatonic narrative, generation after generation, it is because the experience represented by the Tower is a fundamental condition of our being. It is present in the microcosm and macrocosm of our lives and we confront it on a daily basis. If something resembling it can be identified in the terrorist atrocities and natural disasters that befall the world, it can equally be identified at play in our internal world, as previous ways of being can be built to a point where they are unsustainable, and must be pulled down to ensure further healthy movement. Sometimes we build our lives out of balance, ignore all the warning signs that things are untenable, and carry on building until the structure collapses from its own weight. When things fall apart, and we rebuild, we must do so with an understanding of what caused the previous structure to collapse. All things grow organically and have their roots and branches, and the Tower is no exception. It is one key of understanding within a procession of keys, that must be understood in its proper context.

The tarot card immediately prior to the Tower is the Devil, which speaks of both wild energy and the chains of matter. A circumstance can become unstable when too much is poured towards it, and with a terrifying zeal it builds up and up. Adam and Eve find themselves chained to matter, experiencing naught but the condition of their chains. It is the figure of Exu that is holding the chains, and Exu is the crossroads, the mystery of choice. The chains are loose and could be taken off, but they remain in place by choice. What could challenge this condition or break the heavy self-imposed links but a bolt of lightning from the sky to rend them asunder?

St Barbara, the patron saint of artillery and miners, was locked away in a tower by her father, who thought she was his property. He imprisoned her so that she might be secluded from the world and be his entirely, until such a time as he could sell her on to become someone else's wife in return for a tidy profit. In her prison, she received a vision of the Divine, like a crack of thunder in her head, and she was miraculously transported to a wooded glade. Through duplicity, she was recaptured by her father, imprisoned once again in the tower and mercilessly tortured for days, but she

did not give up her faith in the vision of the Divine that had filled her. Each night, when her cell was dark and the torturers had gone home to bed, there was a light that bathed the room, and upon awaking each morning her wounds were healed. Instruments to cut her, could not cut her. Torches sent to burn her were extinguished upon contact with her flesh. All the many devils sent to maim and mutilate could not do her any harm. Finally, in a fit of rage her father took his own sword and cut off her head. His daughter, the rose of his heart, so precious that he has imprisoned her within a fortress for her protection, is cut down. Black clouds roll in. The air is electrified. A bolt of lightning rends the tower in half, reduces her father to a pile of ashes, as Lady Barbara is sainted and delivers her sword of justice to the deserving.

The ancient city of Babylon gave us the mystery of the Tower of Babel. In the language of Rastafari, Babylon is the corrupt and oppressive force that stands in opposition to the Divine way of things, a condition itself synonymous with a mythic Africa or Zion. The Kingdom of Shango was never conquered by the Black Iron Prison. Babylon is temporal power. Police in riot gear beating a news agent to death outside the Bank of England. It is all that which imprisons and oppresses for the benefit of the few, and its myriad prisons may be gross or they may be subtle. Our Lady remains present in Babylon, as all the places of the world are rightfully hers, but there she is called a harlot, spat upon and degraded. Her mystery is not served and her beauty is not accepted. She is thrown out of her temple and forced to sell her pussy to survive in the night. Her once grand boudoirs and bedchambers are reduced to the stained mattresses of the Seven Sisters Road. The magnificence of nature in all her beauty is coldly dissected on a table as notes are made in ball point pen and a report is filed. The pulse of life is bricked up and enclosed behind concrete with only a single window through which to peer out into the meadows and copses below.

Babylon will always build such a tower as a monument to itself. 30 St Mary's Axe rises up from the ashes of the crumbled Baltic Exchange like a proud and overbearing cock in the landscape of London. The Tower is a symbol of power, and where there is a tower, there is potential for injustice and oppression. I'm Tony Montana. I own nature and I own you. The Axe of Shango is double-headed because this image describes the mystery of power, and the balance required to wield it justly. His colours are red and white, to balance the fire of passion with the coolness of

compassion. The Devil follows Temperance, and is the inevitable upset of that equilibrium. When its energetic force builds itself to a point where it believes it can imprison and enslave nature itself within a tower of its own construction, the Axe of Shango falls from the sky and brings it to the ground. The Tower is split asunder in a flash of lightning.

There will always be another Tower, as the Wheel of Fortune keeps turning, but for now there is One Star in Sight. The debris of our past mistakes are all about us. Nothing but bricks, broken bottles and sticks. If we look up from this wasteland of shattered form, we witness the unveiling of the company of heaven. It is a failing for a magician to fetishise and obsess over one condition of being, dwelling upon the cracked walls and crumbling masonry, caught up in an endless slow motion fall to earth from a blasted turret. All mysteries must be placed in their proper context if they are to be understood. If Temperance loses its balance to create a Devil; and that Devil builds a corrupt Tower of Babel that inevitably must fall; the next card in the tarot sequence, the Star, is the guiding light that remains when the dust has settled.

Z'etoile is a symbol of our highest aspirations. It leads us through the arid desert to the birth of the Divine within matter. One in a taxi and two in a car. Herod and all Babylon in wicked pursuit. Police and thieves in the street. Nestled among the beasts, with cow and piglet for nursemaids, chicken and donkey for midwives, and all of creation for a kingdom, new possibility opens its eyes and takes its first breath of awareness. A tiny glimmer of light begins to flicker in the darkness of winter. It is the ancient role of the Magi to follow the Star to this point of first becoming and administer to the holy infant while it is vulnerable and the possibility it represents is still nascent. It is an error to fetishise this tale and reduce such a process of existence to a single historic event or to the birth of a specific real life personage, just as it is an error to limit the mysteries of the Tower to the events of September 11th or any other physical iteration of its pattern. All of these matters allude to conditions of being, and their contemplation should open doors to understanding, not consign one to a cul-de-sac of fatalism.

One of the first things you hear in the career of magic is that *Every man and woman is a Star*, which is a lovely thought, but difficult to keep in mind when the gravity of matter weighs you down, and life is a daily scrabble to put food on your table and keep a roof over your head. There is often heavy cloud cover, and the neon light of advertising hoardings and storefront windows can

blind us to the luminescence that is above and within. The esoteric image of the Star suggests further occult concepts such as the knowledge and conversation of one's Holy Guardian Angel; or the process of discovering one's True Will and accomplishing it. These ideas are often mystified, and understood at several steps removed from one's basic day-to-day human experience. It is a tendency of many magicians to try and wall magic off in a Tower of its own, without paying due attention to the axiom *as above, so below*. The Magician in the tarot is making this symbol with his hands. It couldn't be more obvious, but still it is missed.

The choices we make in life, what we permit within our immediate orbit, and how we choose to live should be the crux of a practice; but are often sidelined as mundane affairs inconsequential to the peak experiences of a spiritual life. The idea of discovering one's True Will is frequently misappropriated and described in terms of a somewhat fascistic will to power, but for me it is simply about healthy growth according to one's true nature. Knowledge and Conversation of one's Holy Guardian Angel sounds like something that might occur with a great fanfare, flashing lights and dramatic ceremony – but I see it as more of a growing awareness of and dialogue with the truth of ourselves and the core of our being that can subtly emerge from a committed practice. Certainly there are programmes of work designed to stimulate this experience, such as the Abramelin operation and its derivatives, but I'm not sure how helpful it is to frame such a process as a single event, though this is the way it is often pitched. Aleister Crowley claimed to have finally attained knowledge and conversation of his HGA when he was halfway up a mountain, after various failed ceremonial efforts, which suggests his own understanding of the process contained considerable flexibility.

If there is a single biggest pitfall of magic, it is perhaps deciding that one has become enlightened or has attained to some elevated or higher state of being following a peak experience, because peak experiences are ten-a-penny in magic. What matters is how you relate the fruits of that peak experience to the nitty gritty of your everyday life, and you stand or fall as a magician based on your propensity to do this. The phrasing *knowledge and conversation*, to my mind, describes an ongoing process of dialogue, not one unique event, and it's what you do every day that matters.

In Haitian Vodou, you find the concept of *connaisance*, which is a spiritual understanding that emerges from introspection into the mysteries. Gradually, intuitively, you come into contact with the

nature and powers of your own being through the course of your practice. In Vodou, it is believed that each of us has a *Meté Tètè*, or master of the head or patron Saint. It is a concept similar to the western idea of a Holy Guardian Angel. The spirit of your head is the *Lwa* whose mysteries most closely express your innermost nature, and the daily knowledge and conversation of this power enables you to best fulfill your full promise and potential in the world. Developing a healthy relationship with your patron Saint is equally an introspection into your own true nature; and the closer you come to your Saint, the more you act in accordance with the core of your being. The parallels with the Western magic concept of contacting your HGA and the Thelemic idea of accomplishing your True Will should be immediately apparent.

All of these ideas appear to express something of the mystery of the Star from the Tarot. It is that process of witnessing the glimmer in the night, and following where it leads. The Star is a condition of being, and akin to the Tower, it manifests in both the macrocosm of global events and in the microcosm of our day-to-day experience. When shadows and doubt, fear and uncertainty, press in from all sides, *Z'étoile* is that which endures. A pinprick of hope in the night. Distant, but bright. Inextinguishable. The lamp which burns without oil. The spark of potential that led fish out of the waters onto dry land, and caused great apes to strive towards the mysteries of fire and language and toolmaking. It burns still, and contains within its furnace a blueprint for a better future than the one that would have us scrabbling to survive in a blighted post-apocalyptic wasteland. Just as you feed and nourish the poisonous roots of that grim future by gleefully investing in the pornography of doom and its eschatonic freefall, so do you contribute to an alternative vision by seeking the Star and following where it leads.

Any magician with a bit of acuity can go out into nature, confront the voice that speaks in wild places, and receive a vision of humanity living in equilibrium with our ecosystem. On this sort of visionary level, it is clear that our dominant global culture is at error in considering our environment to be an inanimate commodity to be brutally pillaged and exploited without consequence. When you begin to enter more of an animistic relationship with nature, through a magical practice, the message that repeatedly comes through is that all life exist in a codependent relationship as facets of the same great organism growing in the fluid medium of time, a structure that could be characterised as a tree of life or tree of being. It's not really that mystical or difficult to swallow as

a concept, and is essentially just a constructive way of looking at the process of life and growth. When you take that sort of vision on board, even as a metaphor, the problem factor at work seems to be our species' refusal or inability to apprehend this sort of macro-understanding of our place in nature, which leads us to act from various faulty hypotheses and endanger the habitat that sustains our survival and that of other species of life with which we share the planet. Nobody likes to admit to an error, or accept that their Tower has been poorly constructed, so the building work continues until something in its unsound structure finally gives. We lack the courage to admit failing or ignorance, and instead take on the trappings of an old man stumbling towards the end times; as such a self-image is more gratifying to an inflated planetary ego than the humble admission that we could well be more like a child stumbling over its first steps.

If you eradicate the validity of magic from a culture – belittling its hidden processes as delusion and bunkum, misinterpreting its surface form, and failing to accurately understand what you are observing – you equally eradicate our species' primary means for opening such a dialogue with nature. Without the language of magic, we are limited in our ability to viscerally and emotionally fathom these matters, and fall prey to ideologies that permit ecological destruction and mistreatment of life itself. Magic is narrative, and narrative shapes action. When a culture embraces the pernicious narrative that other forms of life are inanimate commodities to be exploited, the door is opened to contemporary atrocities as varied as soaring CO₂ levels and the horrific impact of the transatlantic slave trade that has directly shaped the current predicament in Haiti. Narrative is also the tool required to dig ourselves out of this hole.

Venturing into magic and encountering this sort of vision is the easy bit. Whatever the depth and validity of these experiences, they are flatly pointless, solipsistic and self-indulgent if no action is taken as a result. Yet faced with the scale of the seemingly insurmountable problems that press in on all sides, and the mess of conflicting ideologies that restrict forward progress, what can a single human being hope to accomplish? Our most courageous efforts often seem futile and hardly worth attempting, like chipping away at an iceberg with a spoon. There is something of the mystery of the Devil in this predicament. Chained in limiting narrative and conditioned to believe that we have no power, agency or choice – but every choice matters. As above, so below is the crux

of magic, and it's the smallest things that count. The decisions we make every day, how we choose to live, all that we conjure into being, what we are prepared to accept, and what we refuse to accept. This is the heart of magic. The mystery of the Star suggests a perspective beyond the narrow scope of a single human lifetime. If we accept the vision of a tree of being, with its roots in our ancestors reaching back to the primordial beginnings of life, we must embrace this bigger picture. What we do now impacts on the future, and any work we put in today is not for our own benefit, but for the benefit of the entire growing organism that is life on Earth. Just as we stand on the shoulders of our ancestors, our every action today conditions the support and foundation we will provide to future generations. The Star provokes utopian visions of our species fulfilling its potential, overcoming the challenges and obstacles in its path, and attaining equilibrium and perfect growth. Yet none of this is going to happen overnight, in our lifetimes, or in that of our immediate descendants. We're conditioned by our culture to expect instant gratification from our actions, but that's not how nature works. The Star is not a single event or series of events, and there is no end point when the work is done. It is an ongoing process of becoming that manifests in pivotal global events, from the abolition of slavery to our first fumbling out into the solar system; just as it is present every time we make a choice to live better, and do better by those around us and by the planet. It is in these small human moments that a spark of potential can be enflamed to a radiant Sun.

**FAL
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The world is on fire.

And are you laughing?

You are deep in the dark.

Will you not ask for light?

BUDDHA

The Dhammapada

WE WERE NOT BUILT TO LAST. Our lives are fragile and tenuous things, a passing parade of fragmentary phenomena, doomed for the dust of extinction ere we are conceived. It is an inescapable fact of nature. Our eventual dissolution is certain. A bullet on the battlefield. A brain flooding blood burst. Microbes multiply, ruining the body. Cancer cells replicate and assume dominion over what we thought was ours. Cars crash and crush a family of five in the click of a second hand that will never move again. In the most peaceable of places, we wear out and give way to decay. And we are hardly in the most peaceable of places.

The final key always eluded me, and I decided that my search was as sterile as the alchemist's search for the philosopher's stone. I decided that it was an error to think in terms of some secret key or formula...The secret is that there is no secret...But I was wrong. There is a secret now in the hands of ignorant and evil men. A secret beside which the atom bomb is a noisy toy... And like it or not, I was involved... I had already ante-ed my life...¹

I

MODERN LIFE HAS BECOME an international assault zone and the conflict between nations is reflected in the most microcosmic of the environments we occupy. From the urban hive to the living room to those portions of our consciousness which shift into shadow, the spears may be seen shimmering. All the while our nervous systems are aglow with a defensive tension until the wires crackle and burn out.

We come into this place, this highly relative perceptive field we call "reality," stamped with and sealed within terminal mortality. A snip of the umbilicus and we're sent running by the crack of a gun. The race is on... and into the labyrinth we plummet.

How we come to terms with this varies immensely from person to person. We find ourselves flung into the fray, set up from the start, and yet doggedly driven by a primordial urge to evade the scythe and survive. We adapt to adversity and keep moving until our feet are cut out from beneath us. Seldom do we *go gently into that dark night*. But even the most protected person, the most charmed life, cannot escape the fate of its temporal nature. We

1 William Burroughs, *The Conspiracy*.

are therefore vitally concerned with reconciling ourselves to this basic truth.

A sprawling array of perspectives and proclamations are formulated to confront the inevitable. We fashion gods and heavens-or reincarnational routes through the hereafter. We conceptualize the more bleak and foreboding alternatives within intellectual frameworks, allowing the mind's momentary mastery to eclipse our helplessness in the face of fact. Some, finding even this approach too agitating to apprehend, detour into drunken diversions, extended visits to the Vanity Fair, distraction and debasement of the Self to the point of idiocy. Sometimes clever, sometimes desperate, we become painfully aware of our predicament and seek a solution. Our lives not only realize experience but evoke and grapple with how to process that experience, especially as our portion of consciousness grows increasingly self-reflective. In short, we seek meaning.

The world is on fire and, as denizens of the dense globe, we are ourselves aflame. Before we are utterly consumed within our circumstantial conflagration, some of us will stretch through the smoke and into the heat, reaching for reconciliation. We try to grasp the purpose, plan or point whereby we might free ourselves from fear. Faced with the utter certainty that we must, willingly or otherwise, relinquish our grasp on all we have known, valued and cherished, we attempt to understand and find our place. We create contexts, developing (if we are not satisfied with simply inheriting) a worldview. If we are bold enough to face facts, we are forced to question, to try and shatter those explanations which merely pacify and comfort.

The world is on fire and we don't want an anesthetic. We want the real deal. If there is a superior way to confront the crisis and discover our way, we are ready to rush through the flames to find it. Rumi wrote:

Your old grandmother says,
Maybe you shouldn't go to school.
You look a little pale.
 Run when you hear that.
 A father's stern slaps are better.
 Your bodily soul wants comforting.
 The severe father wants spiritual clarity.
 He scolds, but eventually
 leads you into the open.

It is in this spirit that we will ask for light. We will ask. We will demand. And we will do so without shirking the cost. Even if that cost proves to be our very lives. For, most assuredly, it shall be nothing less.

II

*My mother groan'd! My father wept
Into the dangerous world I leapt...*

William Blake, *Infant Sorrow*

BLAKE'S MEMORABLE VERSE describes our condition from time immemorial. We are forced from the Lethe-waters of the womb to wake blinking in a battle zone. A sharp slap on our shimmering skin and a bullet is chambered for the child.

"No one promised us a rose garden" but we get one just the same. It is a vast unfurling vision of wonderment into which we are cast, but one ringed with thorns. The roses lift into the scalding and merciless rays of the sun. Our world is beautiful, bewildering, blasted and blown. If we've truly "asked for Light," we will have found ourselves being brought into a keen awareness of what is symbolically conveyed to the modern Freemason who seeks after the same: The Lodgeroom's "Mosaic Pavement," a checkerboard of black and white tiles, the Game of Good and Evil played out in never ending patterns and forms.

Masonic initiation will lead the Candidate to the "Blazing Star" in the center of the chessboard tiling. However, before we arrive at the Gnosis of this all-important glyph, we must understand and traverse the terrain which surrounds it. The Mosaic Pavement is none other than Blake's "dangerous world." It is our inheritance as human beings and its perils demand our utmost attention.

III

AT THE TIME OF THIS WRITING, the World would seem to be in a disordered dance, ever escalating in its mad momentum. The latest update is but a click away. Ten minutes of exposure to the News and we cannot tell which is threatening to ruin the race more rapidly: Nature or Man? We might retort to the influx of second-hand horror: "What's new? When have we NOT been antagonizing, assaulting, imposing upon and destroying each other? Is there any atrocity which isn't an echo from the most ancient times?" Infanticide. Patricide. Genocide. Suicide. These run through the blood-glutted gutters of our history.

Despite the proverb, *there is no new thing under the sun*, we might feel that we are on the verge of an unprecedented crisis. We are still mortal, still prone to nature's entropy and caprice and still vulnerable to the ill-will of our fellow man. Yet there is something shivering through our subconsciousness, something menacing to more than our Bodily Soul. One is reminded of Yeats classic poem *The Second Coming*:

*Turning and turning in the widening gyre
The falcon cannot hear the falconer;
Things fall apart; the centre cannot hold;
Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world,
The blood-dimmed tide is loosed, and everywhere
The ceremony of innocence is drowned...*

From mothers murdering their own children to the Twin Towers of the World Trade Center collapsing in a mere moment, we are witnessing behavior never seen in the so-called "lower" animal kingdom. Appalling, outrageous, nauseating. It is as if the stirring of our highest aspirations and potential is mirrored in some depraved and demonic depth. The Mosaic Pavement of the Soul is brought into into a stunning magnification. We can witness in the churning upheaval all the portentous predictions of the past made manifest in literal blood and fire. St. John. Nostradamus. Aleister Crowley.

The philosophic mind which apprehends its own mortality also surveys the scope of history and time. Rising above the immediate concerns of one's individual life, one looks to the grand drama of the species as it procreates its path into futurity.

From this larger perspective, can we find a pattern unfolding? We trace Trends, Epochs, Kalpas and Yugas. Aeons. Our own era is saturated with many such models, molded from myth and symbol. The Age of Aquarius. Aeon of Horus. Kali Yuga. End of the Mayan Calendar. Eschaton. Ragnarok. The Second Coming.

The so-called New Millennium was surrounded by apprehension and anticipation, like a firework that failed to go off. 2012 is right around the corner. Will it see the End of All Things As We Know Them? Capitalizing on curiosity, credulity and keyed up nerves is an ancient game. Could it be that such portents of doom are actually distracting us from a more subtle and less entertaining threat?

It is the present author's view that these models are not absolute. Rather, they embody modes of processing and contextualizing in an attempt to coalesce chaos into a manageable form.

This is not to dismiss a seemingly patterned progression of Ages and Times with their own dominant characteristics. The Aeonic schema of Aleister Crowley, for example, is particularly compelling in this regard, indicating an orderly pattern of unfolding in human consciousness and culture. There are several vital points in Crowley's work which make his approach not only relevant to the immediate concerns of the present age, but to a larger and trans-historic viewpoint as well. He addresses both the Zeitgeist and the power within human beings to utilize their temporal conditions and rise above them. Time and Eternity are not a dichotomy in Crowley's vision but are as if two lovers, held apart by ignorance and yearning to conjoin.

The falcon cannot hear the falconer. The child has broken from the parent's grasp and the Old Aeon of control is crumbling, catastrophically. Shall we lament this sorry state? In times past, death and dissolution were cause for sackcloth and ashes. In Crowley's "new religion" of Thelema, the mourning has been replaced by the "Greater Feast." What is seen by some as death or fearful finality is now being viewed as a vital expression of life whose nature is perpetual change.

Yeats felt an impending sense of doom rising with the modern age and expressed it well in his poem. He continues:

... I know

*That twenty centuries of stony sleep
Were vexed to nightmare by a rocking cradle,
And what rough beast, its hour come round at last,
Slouches towards Bethlehem to be born?*

One cannot help but think of Crowley when reading these lines. Yeats had met the young Englishman when both were members of the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn. Unimpressed with Crowley's theatrics and bid for authority, his words regarding the young magician were few and dismissive. It would seem that Yeats was hardly troubled throughout his life by the memory of this upstart.

Crowley, on the other hand, would soon identify himself with the "Beast" whose hour had, in fact, "come round at last." Contrary to Yeats, he did not envision this as a position of enmity towards man. The forces being unleashed upon the human race during the coming century he saw as birth pangs, a necessary tilling of the soil for a new and essential seeding.

The falcon could not hear the falconer but Crowley sought to hear the falcon. Thus it was that the Hawk-Headed God spoke through the medium of his new bride the words which were to color the rest of his life, *Liber Al Vel Legis*. Crowley also felt that this text was to color the lives of every human being on the planet... for the next 2,000 years.

IV

THE VISION OF LIBER AL, is decidedly apocalyptic. For a man who emphatically identified himself with the number 666, his Holiest of Holy Books evokes an atmosphere reminiscent of that set forth by the historic originator of (and, one might observe, antagonist towards) the symbolism, St. John of Patmos.

St. John's vision is both Christic and comprehensive. It is a book of symbolic sequences and spiritual stages. He foretells of future tribulation and an ultimate redemption and reward. Crowley follows suit, anticipating the chaos, violence and upheaval of the last century, while seeing "The Reward of Ra Hoor Khuit" as potential through the damage and destruction attendant to the incoming age.

Crowley's conclusion to the global shakedown is not the anticipated arrival of some messianic being or fantastic deity. The redemption and reconciliation he envisions is ready for delivery in this life, on this earth and in this moment.

The Reward of Ra Hoor Khuit is imminent. To seriously examine this approach is to make our way towards the "Blazing Star" of the Freemasons. Or as Crowley himself put it:

One Star in Sight.

V

PRIOR TO THE RISING OF THIS STAR in the sequence of images comprising the Major Arcana of the Tarot, we find a stage in the Great Work identified as The Tower.

In traditional packs, this card depicts an edifice being struck by lightning issued from above. One is reminded of the Biblical Babel and Judgment made by a Divine Being upon the hubris of his own creation. This is radically altered in Crowley's revisionist approach to the Tarot, assisted by the artistry of Frieda Harris.

The image we find in the Thoth deck of Aleister Crowley is more magickal than moral. The tower is cubist and yet serpentine. It is not only an emblem of the virile phallus; it is the phallus in orgasmic dynamism. This suggests a much more positive and creative interpretation of what was a two-dimensional image of destruction.

Human sexuality is intrinsically linked to human procreation. Just as the rising and falling of the phallus is cyclic, so is the individual life it begets, a cycle of endless birth and death.

Picasso, also expressing the pulse of life in cubist form, observed that "Every act of creation is first an act of destruction." Every moment we breathe sees the birth of possibility into manifestation through the death of all that has gone before. Our dissolution and departure from physical form also takes its place in this endless process of creation.

The Tower is not a Gateway to the Mysteries of Death per se. Universality of mortality has already been dealt with in Atu XIII. So, what does The Tower tell us if it is not solely an emblem of the entropic or catastrophic, both of which lead us to the stasis of a rubble-heap? How is this downfall also an uprising?

VI

THE TOWER DOES HERALD BREAKDOWN. It is clearly a marriage between the ideas of the established edifice and the frenzied force which can tear it asunder.

The moralistic reading of this symbolism sees God Almighty hurling a thunderbolt from Heaven to remind Man that he cannot hope to lift off from the parapets of his prison nor slide between the bars on the cage of creation. This oppressive and imprisoning Deity is a core theme in Gnostic thought. The thing worshipped as the "Supreme Being" or "Grand Architect of the Universe" is viewed as a false god, a demented and senile creature who fashioned form to bind the True God in a dismembered and broken state. Schools of Gnostic thought have risen from this premise to conclude that our earthly lives are an imperfection to be risen above, setting mortal life at odds with the ideal of eternity.

This is not particularly helpful. Should we entertain such a view, we find ourselves trapped in duality which maintains division as its keynote. We are still lost in the "Mosaic Pavement" and subject to its vicissitudes.

Crowley does not deny the existence of God. Rather he gives the world a wholly different definition of the word:

There is no God but Man.

If this is so, we find that it is MAN hurling the thunderbolt upon his own creation. It is self-destruction. We divide ourselves into the figures cast out from the structure. Male and female, we create *ourselves*. Seeing the image from this perspective, we can take responsibility and engage with life.

The Existentialism of the last century brought this theme to the fore. With God dead, we were left with only ourselves. Therefore all responsibility for our lives became our own and, from a more magical mindset, our Great Work.

Herman Hesse addresses many of the Existentialist themes and concerns in his great novel *Steppenwolf*. Its protagonist, Harry Haller, is a genius, a man of incredible refinement, sensitivity, intelligence and passion. These qualities find him alienated from his fellow creatures who (in the words of *Liber AL*) "...are dead...they feel not."



THE RISE OF RA HOOR KHUIT

Haller lives life on his own terms and tailored to his own tastes, always on the outskirts of the fashionable and fake. He is not a happy figure. He is ill at ease amongst the human herd with which he must, as a member of society, contend. He confronts what others avoid and, in his relentless pursuit of the ultimate, grapples with the basic problem of mortality. He decides that the most authentic course of living must take personal responsibility for even this phenomenon. Therefore, Haller determines that he must not leave his death to the caprice of nature. To do so is the route of those who evade this fundamental fact. Therefore, Harry Haller has set the time and date of his own suicide.

Is this an act of courage, bravery or authenticity? Haller seems to think so. He has also fashioned an image of himself as half man and half wolf (hence, the title of the book, *Steppenwolf* or "Wolf of the Steppes.") He understands that he is both ultra civilized and ultra bestial. His fellow man seems to be neither: lukewarm, unfeeling and already dead.

We might find in Haller's self-image a type of Crowley's "Beast." There is an emphasis in Crowley on this creature being not some archetype of evil, inimical to the human race, but rather having "the number of a man." It is a peeling back of artifice to embrace what lies beneath. "Authenticity" and "True Will" may be regarded as interchangeable terms.

Despite this "advancement" in the personality of Harry Haller, his view is soon to be found wanting, despite the sense of superiority he carries (and perhaps commands). Haller will meet an enigmatic and charming woman named Hermine who will become the "Babalon" to his "Beast," exemplifying his need for a counterbalance. Isolation and alienation are not to be understood as synonymous with self-sufficiency. Although settled on the course of his "final initiation," Haller is in desperate need of what Hermine holds. She upsets his suicide plans by mocking his aversion to dancing. So willing to confront the Great Unknown and yet afraid to "cut the carpet" with a pretty woman. It is a wonderful curveball thrown at the would be "home run swing" of the *Steppenwolf*.

The sequence of events which follow find our hero, momentarily abandoning his self-assigned death date, meeting Hermine for lessons in dancing and becoming enraptured with her. Hermine, however, has entered Harry's life for purposes more profound than leading the "stray wolf" into domestic bliss. Hermine is Babalon, whose name indicates the "Gate to the Sun." The solar disc is the heart of a universal dance, a cosmic whole which

has yet to be understood. Haller's view of himself as "Man" and "Wolf" will ultimately give way to a cosmic vision where he realizes the horribly deficient nature of his "dual-personality." Haller has tapped no great truth in seeing himself through this dualistic lens. Ultimately his being will realize an unfathomable myriad of manifestations, a genuine "Cosmic Consciousness" which serves as his true initiation.

This is a vital revelation for it not only unveils the true nature of the "self" but indicates the relation of the "self" with those from whom it has been alienated and therefore antagonistically inclined. To evoke this Gnosis is not only to "find our place" but understand the value of everyone (and everything) else. If every human being unfolded this latent potential, there would be no more antagonism towards each other. And there would be no antagonism toward ourselves.

VII

WE LIVE IN THE ULTRA-HIGH FREQUENCY OF THE MODERN AGE. Rhetoric bombards our consciousness and infiltrates our linguistic patterns acting on them like a virus. We have heard enough of the "War on Terror" to feel that "Terror" is a tangible thing, lurking around every corner. The words "weapons of mass destruction" elicit a deep dread. The imagined image of an Atomic Blast, a mushroom cloud or nuclear detonation brings us into an awful awareness of the *Matthew* 10:28:

And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.

What meaning does this hold for our age? William Burroughs wrote, in *The Western Lands*:

Can any soul survive the searing fireball of an atomic blast? If human and animal souls are seen as electromagnetic force fields, such fields could be totally disrupted by a nuclear explosion. The mummy's nightmare: disintegration of souls, and this is precisely the ultrasecret and supersensitive function of the atom bomb: a Soul Killer.

Jaz Coleman spoke of the same harrowing power unduly unleashed in the Killing Joke recording *The Courtauld Talks*, a threat unlike any fashioned by nature of its own accord. Over two decades later, *The Courtauld Talks* remain raw and vital, and the reader is encouraged to "hear them out". The pulse and pattern described in Coleman's impassioned words has only wound up more tightly. In reaching for the stars, we have evoked exploding suns. Again, the Tower appears before our sight, collapsing and inverting as:

...the confusion and hypocrisy surrounding the potential employment of these weapons lunges into life.

Do we wish to debate and conjecture? These weapons exist, built upon the discoveries of genius and appropriated by the simian soul. We cannot help but feel unease, or vomitous anxiety, in the Mexican Standoff between Nations we find ourselves in. Like deer locked into oncoming headlights, we can simply freeze and take the impact.

Or we can wake up and deal with the danger.

But we have heard the voice of Buddha, have we not? We long for Light. And this Light flows from Fire, the opposite of icy immobilization. We are blood, fire, passion and Light. Disaster assails us but we refuse, however, to be herded, counted, led and sacrificed. The falconer no longer holds sway. Therefore we shall dive downward at angles oblique to the routes which would fain lead us to slaughter.

VIII

HAVING SURVEYED THE SITUATION, we may hear the calling of the Star through the conflagration and din. Our environment is inimical to this, and the road beset with hostility and obstruction. More than belief or faith in some idea, we require a *way of action*, a personal *bushido* to move us according to our highest and deepest impulse. The Blazing Star is not understood in terms of accepting an idea. Its radiance is revealed in the deep certainty of its truth.

These rays extend through the Dark Nights of the Soul as we press ever onward. Yeats observes:

*The best lack all conviction, while the worst
Are full of passionate intensity.*

We seek the opposite of this state. We want the best to be possessed of total conviction (Gnosis) and full of passionate intensity (Power and Action). Joining these two energies, we make our lives into a dynamic engine. *Liber AL* scorns the "professional soldiers" and extols the merit of the True Warrior. This does not imply an embrace of violence as something heroic or noble in and of itself. Rather, it points to the Art of our combat, our striving, and our coming into conflict with opposition. In the words of Carlos Casteneda:

The basic difference between a warrior and an ordinary man is that a warrior takes everything as a challenge while an ordinary man takes everything as a blessing or a curse.

Crowley wrote in *Magick in Theory and Practice* that when one has aligned with the True Will, one is assisted by the "inertia of the universe." Yet we find, in our day to day life, that deciding upon the course of Will and acting in accordance with it, can summon tremendous opposition. Some, embracing the assurance that success is your proof, seemingly flounder into failure. But success and failure are often value judgments colored by societal approval. *Liber AL* says "Ye are AGAINST the people." The populace will not necessarily regard, let alone applaud, our Path.

Still, we are called to realize "success" where we stand, in the present moment. Entertaining notions of posthumous praise or anticipated effect is wholly speculative. We maintain that by fusion of the Gnosis-fueled Will and its translation into Action, the word "Nay" is abolished and the most perfect of actions may be accomplished perfectly. The Universe is gathered around the event, every phenomena moving in accord with it and this motion becoming the full embodiment of the spiraling pulse of the cosmic bloodstream.

IX

CROWLEY SERVED AS THE REVELATOR AND DEVELOPER of a "New World Religion," replete with all the classic characteristics of any cultus: his prophetic identity, a series of divinely inspired texts, commentaries, organized systems of teaching, initiation, worship, even strategies for conversion.

The founding document, dictated by a "præternatural intelligence" announces a rending of the veil and denouncement of all previous religious systems as defunct. It is interesting in this regard to observe Crowley's comments on Taoism, a religion belonging to the "Aeon" previous to last (as did the Egyptian culture through whose symbolic lens the revelation came). Writing to his "Magickal Son" in *Liber Aleph*, Crowley states:

Thou knowest well how I keep from me all Taint of Fable, or of any Word unproven or undemonstrable. First then I speak of Lao-Tze, whose Word was TAO. Hereof have I already written much unto thee, because His Doctrine hath been lost or misinterpreted, and it is most needful to restore it.

This theme of "restoration" is vital in Thelemic thought. Buddhism, Hinduism and Islam all lend influence to the development of his philosophy and the symbolic forms which embody it. Even Christianity, viciously assaulted in both *Liber AL* and Crowley's subsequent writings, is understood as potentially restorable as a "Solar-Phallic Religion" for the Present Aeon.

With these and other observations, we find the violent overthrow of previous religious thought depicted in *AL 3: 49-56* to portend a cleansing or purification stage in a global human alchemy.

The Tower of Temples testifying to these falsehoods is also the clay body of Adam, awaiting the life-bestowing breath of the Most High. It is torn down and reduced to dust that it may be summoned to rise again in its "restored" or "spiritual" state. This is one meaning of the Christic Resurrection. Again we may turn to the astoundingly original image created by Crowley and Harris to depict the Tower. It's visual rhythm and movement depicts the structure in such a fashion to make it fall and rise simultaneously.

Each subsequent tearing down and building up is a moving OUTWARDS, propelled by an evolutionary yearning in the direction of its destiny. For the falling and rising arc as Yin and Yang

and the Tower itself is the Tao which Crowley continues to comment on, determining that:

...this Tao is the true Nature of Things, being itself a Way or Going, that is, a kinetic and not a static Conception. Also He taught this Way of Harmony in Will, which I myself have sought to shew thee in this epistle. So then this Tao is Truth, and the Way of Truth...

Having moved into this understanding of trump XVI as a dynamic and never-ending flux of energy and growth, we may see ourselves as "Tao-ers," "Living Stones" being built into an ever evolving edifice, a moving castle, a Starship fashioned of the very substance into which it sails and riding the arc of its spiraling outflow.

X

WILLIAM BURROUGHS PENNED A SHORT STORY called *The Conspiracy* which continues events set into play by his classic novel, *Naked Lunch*. The book, as it ended, left its protagonist, the junkie-writer William Lee, fleeing from the law, having been targeted for criminal activity far beyond his possession of narcotics. Strangely, the interest in Lee was focused on the things he had written, mind-crimes of an unknown but particularly threatening nature.

When *Naked Lunch* was first published, the book aroused tremendous controversy for its so-called obscenity. Decades later, we find it on the shelves of chain booksellers. Was its content vindicated or simply assimilated?

Modern American culture has broken through censorship of "offensive material" to the point where, with adequate financial backing, *anything goes*. Yet information still remains repressed and our attention is continuously diverted down drainpipes, built about our brains like the bars of a cage.

William Lee flees to the home of his friend Mary and the following conversation ensues:

"Scientists have perfected the anti-dream drug, which is, logically a synthetic variation on the junk theme... And the drug is habit-forming to a point where one injection can cause

lifelong addiction. If the addict doesn't get a shot every eight hours he dies in convulsions of oversensitivity."

"Like nerve gas."

"Similar... in short, once you are hooked on the anti-dream drug you can't get back. Withdrawal symptoms are fatal. Users are dependent on the supply for their lives and at the same time, the source of resistance, contact with the myth that gives each man the ability to live alone and unites him with all other life, this is cut off. He becomes an automaton, an interchangeable quantity in the political and economic equation."

"Is there an antidote?"

"Yes. More than that, there is a drug that increases the symbolizing faculty...

...the symbolizing or artistic faculty that some people are born with-though almost everyone has it to some degree as a child-can be increased a hundred times. We can all be artists infinitely greater than Shakespeare or Beethoven or Michelangelo. Because this is possible, the opposite is also possible. We can be deprived of symbol making power, a whole dimension excised, reduced to completely rational, non-symbolizing creatures..."

It is precisely these sort of "human cattle" which stand on the opposite side of the cosmic vision embodied in the mind of Harry Haller at the phantasmagoric climax to *Steppenwolf*.

Naked Lunch assaulted hundreds of years of societal aversion to its own dark underbelly. It is a significant work of literature but only one amongst many with regards to the unseemly subject matter it gives voice to. Crowley foresaw the rise of such dark forces from the collective unconscious, impinging on the species with catastrophic consequence. Indeed, *Liber AL* paints a picture of conflict and conflagration, "labor pains" shaking the earth as the Child is born in blood. We can count the contractions in the radical upheaval of the last century with its unspeakable horrors and the unthinkable breakthroughs that have risen in its wake. We would be sadly mistaken, however, to think that we have erected

an edifice of liberty on the ocean of gore flowing through the years since Crowley received his revelation in Cairo. Where repression has given way to permissiveness and indulgence, there remains a Voice vehemently against the people. More than ever this Voice is needed as Power and Control have remained in place and, when threatened, must retaliate.

As Burroughs expressed in his fiction, the nauseating potential of the Atomic Bomb to kill the very Soul finds its reflex in the Soul's potential to obliterate the forces in command of such devastation. The increasing dissolution of our deeply held fears towards sex, death and all subsurface energy beyond rational comprehension is calling up what Michael Bertiaux calls the "Transcendental Id," a force which can only be embodied in the "Monstrous Soul." The reaction to the rise of this Beast is not consciously structured. Tales of the Illuminati masterminding global dominance smoke-screen the real opposition, operating beneath the stratum of the conscious mind.

XI

WE HAVE SPOKEN OF THE UNIVERSE being in a state of growth, movement and transformation from our vantage point in the Timezone. From a transpersonal and trans-spatial angle, events perceived as sequential may now be understood as simultaneous. In other words, the past and future are not places we may access by techniques of time travel resembling motion in a vehicle, from point A to point B. Rather, our time traveling machines are the particular set-ups we find useful for evoking consciousness transcending these ideas of temporal and spatial distinction. When this is attained, we may then "condense" our focus and find it landing at a given juncture outside of our personal calendrical consciousness.

The topic of esoteric time travel points to the nature of contacts which have been and are being forged with what we shall call Extraterrestrial Intelligences. Such contact forms a critical element in constructively confronting our catastrophic age. This view is given particular emphasis in the Typhonian Order and has been pursued over the past half century by Kenneth Grant as OHO of this collective. Critics have dismissed such focus as a laughable flight into fantasy, a seeking of solace in the notion of

pretend friends from beyond who might sweep in and save us from ourselves.

This could not be further from the case. Thelema is a Way which emphasizes personal responsibility, gnosis in the moment and the realization that there is *No God But Man*. We are not seeking salvation from some saucer in the sky. We are not turning to telepathic teachings which might replace tapping our own wells of wisdom nor are we "bowing the knee" to imagined "Superior Beings." Crowley cuts to the chase when he states:

Mysticism is getting into communication with individuals who exist on a higher plane than ours. Magick is the raising of oneself to their level.

It is our Gnosis which facilitates the "getting into communication" with these entities. Our path of warriorship is our Magick, raising us, step by step, to that level. We are, from this perspective, becoming alien. Or, perhaps better put, we are realizing the part of ourselves which is alien, which is fashioned from star-stuff. One modern writer on Buddhist thought observes:

Life... is a subatomic thing. The heavier elements in the human body – all the ones heavier than iron – are derived from supernovae, giant exploding stars that lit the heavens eons before our own solar system was born. Supernovæ, then, are integral to the existence of the human race. They seem so far away, so ancient, yet they are one with us.²

The Star is not only a primary symbol in Thelemic writing but one of the most ancient of images embodying our innate longing for that which is Beyond. Its resurgence as a significant idea in *Liber AL* is not merely metaphor. It cuts to the heart of what we are. Aiwass did not appear to declare that, despite the unthinkable atrocities rising upon the surface of the globe, we are all "special snowflakes." The New Aeon is not New Age. Starfire courses through the bloodstream of Every Man and Every Woman, linking our lives not only to the forgotten past but the future, as well.

² Woody Hochswender, *The Buddha In Your Rearview Mirror*.

XII

THE BLAZING STAR OF FREEMASONRY is a pentagram, long associated in conservative circles with a lurid and prejudiced view of witchcraft, Satanism or the occult. For this reason, many modern Freemasons take pains to disassociate this prominent symbol from its historical, philosophical and occult origins, ascribing to it a purely "moral" meaning.

This image, however, is one of many in the Lodgeroom which speaks to Freemasonry's deep reach into the wisdom and knowledge of the past as it relates to the most progressive and modern views on science and spirituality. Fusing symbols from a great diversity of such sources, Masonry utilized the past to aim at and springboard into the future.

Albert Pike, known to have borrowed liberally from Eliphas Levi in his reworking of and commentary on Scottish Rite ritual, did not gloss over his treatment of this symbol. Ultimately he connects it to the Dog-Star or Sirius.

Pike lived through the American Civil War, serving as a Confederate General. UFO phenomena was not a frequently documented event during this time. The association between Sirius and the so-called Greys had yet to emerge. After years of deep study and research in the areas of world religion and occult literature, Pike would view Sirius as a vital component of the ancient mysteries, an element to be restored to its proper place of significance in the modern world by means of the Fraternity's influence.

In his extensive commentary on the ritual work of the Scottish Rite, Pike interprets the astro-mythos of Sirius in terms of Anubis assisting Isis in her quest for the severed pieces of her husband's body.

Sirius-Anubis thus embodies a key agent in a profound unification, first of the Self (Osiris) and then of the divided sexes. This union will ultimately evoke Horus, who speaks through the praeternatural intermediary of Aiwass.

Anubis walks between Life and Death. It is therefore unsurprising that his Star has served to open a Gateway between human and extraterrestrial minds.

Just as Isis and Osiris, aided by the Dog-God, may realize the birth of Horus, the link between the human and transhuman function, to unleash the Aeonian Current manifest as the hawk-headed God. Every Man and Every Woman is a Star. A Sirius. An Anubis.

We are all potentially the point where the eternal and temporal may join in a mystic marriage, begetting the Child who partakes of both worlds.

The ordeal of the Tower, now seen as the shattered body of Osiris, is meant to lead us further through the tarot keys, whereby the Star shall rise and find the ideal field for its manifestation.

It is my opinion that a denial of any other intelligent life form in the cosmos is both arrogant and ignorant. Few, if any, of us are in possession of the technological apparatus whereby we might approach "contact" in the physical sense of the word. As Magicians, however, we are not overly driven in this direction. The Beings we have alluded to do not reside on the far edges of our known universe, inhabiting a planet similar to ours. Their distance may be unimaginable and yet we have opened a door of communication by means of a factor distinct from physical considerations.

The extraterrestrial is the upsurge of the futuristic potential in human consciousness, realizing itself in the present.

The Star is MAN and this is given special emphasis in Crowley's Cultus. We are, in our most primordial origins, made of star-stuff. Every star is a SUN. Sirius has been known as "The Sun Behind The Sun," the future Star behind the present Self. The emphasis on entities in Space seems to be a mythic projection of ourselves outside of TIME. Thus, the occult techniques of "Space Travel," such as the utilization of the "Mask of LAM" as interdimensional exploratory space-craft (see Kenneth Grant's *The Lam Statement*), are a guise for transcending the self-identification of our temporal ego (via the Mask) and evoking awareness of the potencies of the future (Maat-the "future Aeon") that they may be more readily realized in our present. The emphasis remains humanistic yet it is in the area where the human being is turning the next corner of evolutionary development, one in which we may not simply participate but cooperate.

XIII

HOW DO WE GIVE OURSELVES A FIGHTING CHANCE in the Labyrinth of Life? Forced to move ahead through time or perish, hounded by death-dogs and bombarded by forces meant to dehumanize and assimilate us, what weapons can we possibly wield? Where is our *hope in Hell*? A very valuable key is found in Kenneth Grant's *Outside The Circles Of Time*, where he cites Michael Bertiaux:

...become a monster and escape that pathway, that alone is the doorway of the Daathian portal of total darkness. I have told you that all avenues of escape are blocked, but in truth there is the doorway of becoming a monster, by becoming the beast, so that thereby you can escape by the very door they came through. Know, also, that this door is always open and that ingress from beyond is a constant threat...by this means only the magician can escape from this universe into the next system of worlds.

This imagery may sound fantastic but as we examine the environment in which this scenario is cast, we will find vital importance in these words.

The Tower is struck by lightning but is itself a volcanic phallus from whose pinnacle the forked and flaming fluid flies. If the darkened canopy of starless heaven would drape and dissolve this edifice, it rises up to rend the veil of night which would fain cloak its vital life.

The blanket of this devouring darkness is the Assaultive Abyss into which we thrust and plunge. This night CAN tear each and every brick of our being into a swirling dust devil. Conversely, it may become the field of possibility where our dissolution is willed for the purpose of a grand transmutation which we, ourselves, have set into motion. The bottomless pit becomes a cauldron, an alchemic vessel in which the cosmic creation moves forward.

The Oath of the Abyss is now seen as a type of Babalonian bushido whereby the bornless babe is conceived. Babalon, we know, is the gate of the Sun but the Sun (Tiphareth) is also the gate to Babalon.

We must conjoin the supreme sanity of Adonai, the Holy Guardian Angel, its perfect balance and solar light with the insani-

ty, dispersion, darkness and off-kilter imbalance of the Abyss until the "twain become one flesh" and this "flesh begets the Word."

The key to this magical union lies in the Oath of the Abyss which is not simply a declaration, but the *method* to realize the *goal*. We might even say that mastery of the method is itself the only goal which will ultimately prove efficacious to the whole of the operation.

I will interpret every phenomena as a particular dealing of God with my soul. This act begins the process of total assimilation of all forces and factors in nature and our experience of it. So, one may ask, how does this differ from a complete ego-centering of the self?

Here Crowley adds his own symbolism to the original ideas of the Golden Dawn, finding the fulfillment of this ordeal in the single and last drop of blood drained into the "Cup of Babalon."

The entire field of experience has been apprehended without the selective process whereby we favor one event over another. Having obliterated this division between "sheep and goats" we will have found that even our complex minds have become subject to the process. The ego, in this sense, has used itself as a reference point for the purpose of eradicating itself.

One does not physically die (and it might be argued that physical death does in no wise automatically augment this initiation!). One does not forget one's given name or "Drop out of the World." Rather the world is embraced in its totality and by world we may well use Wittgenstein's definition, "that which is the case." Or all that is the case, all that could ever BE the case.

Power and control works with the management and manipulation of categories and divisions. The Abyss unites the divided world in such a manner that the impinging forces of any one polarity hold no more sway over the magician. He prefers no one event over another and thereby becomes one with the event behind all events.

This supreme state births the new creation which then reincarnates in time as a particular vehicle of the oversoul. Just as we have utilized our esoteric starships to access the transcendental spheres, the power and intelligence resident therein now infiltrates and directs our flesh forms as a vehicle for its awakened activity in the Timezone.

As Above, So Below.

XIV

THE CEREMONY DESCRIBED BELOW was generated as part of the author's studentship with Rev. Michael Bertiaux. The task at hand entailed reworking and developing a Mass, a ceremony employed by "Bishops of the Inner Order" whereby the presence, nature and energies of the Egyptian deity PTAH are called forth and incorporated into the magickal body of the priest.

The usual conventions of such a ceremony were dispensed with in favor of an intrapsychic experience whereby the Eucharist would be astrally established and imbibed in conjunction with the activated energies of kundalini.

The dynamics of the ritual bear some similarity to the LAM-Serpent Sadhana, developed by Michael Staley (see Starfire vol II issue I). Having performed an adapted version of this ceremony several hundred times, it seems only natural that it would influence the present rite. The rite may be freely modified by the magician who wishes to experiment with it. However, we would like to offer the following observation. The repeated and continued use of methods found to be efficacious in establishing rapport with a given Intelligence not only develop its "Cultus" on Earth but establish "recognition signals" within the Intelligence in question. Hence the mantra OLALAM IMAL TUTULU not only effectively rent a veil between human consciousness and LAM, but has grown into a vital Key whereby we may more readily evoke response from this transdimensional force.

Should a supportive cultus be found wanting, our own repetition of ceremony will find it being molded to experience in a manner that will ultimately reveal its key potencies.

THE MIDNIGHT MASS OF PTAH
A Rite of Atomic Power

This ceremony is ideally performed in solitude, in full wakefulness, yet reclining in bed, preferably with arms crossed over the chest. The room should be completely dark and precautions taken to avoid disturbance. Ear plugs may be used.

The substance of this Rite is the Bread of Darkness and the Wine of Silence which are the sacraments sacred unto Ptah. These Elements shall be transmuted by our Art into the Light and Word.

The Magician shall establish his Pyramid and the Path leading to the subterranean tomb over which it is erected. Once this is adequately built up in the imagination, he shall then descend into that selfsame Tomb, where he will lie in repose, mummified and enclosed in a Sarcophagus.

There is no light in this tomb nor is there any sound. The Magician shall rest in this void for an eternal moment and then rise through the below described transfigurations, which are the God: PTAH

The body, laid horizontally, now rises to a vertical posture, mummified and erect.

Above this body, below it and to the four quarters appear six golden orbs of intensifying light. Tendrils emerge from the orbs above and below, snaking around and covering the space they describe, which shall be in the form of an Egg.

The Magician is now Ptah and shall identify himself as such. He is one with the staff of Ptah, which may now be understood as follows:

- 1 *Djed*: the column of the spine
- 2 *Ankh*: the hemispheres of the brain
- 3 *Was*: the projection point between these two centers which may move in 1 of 2 directions:
 - a the Ajna Chakra, or Third Eye
 - b the Sahasrana Chakra, or Gateway to Cosmic Consciousness

The purpose of these two Gateways is, respectively:

- 1 Exploration of the Transmundane Zones, with specific emphasis on the Sirius star system (Set).
- 2 Complete fusion with the Cosmic Mind and saturation in its Gnosis.

As this rite is a "Mass," we shall focus on the second objective. The base of the spine, which is the seat of the Kundalini or Fire Snake, is now envisioned as a metal disc of gold which shall be set into motion, turning 3 1/2 times.

These revolutions shall release a column of Light, extending up the spine and flooding the skull. Here the hemispheres shall melt into a singular globe, all components and particles dissolving into a unified sphere.

Within this space, darkness and silence are one. They evoke supernal Light and the Word and all four elements combine. This is the union of the cosmic cross and is the awakening of the Ankh upon the staff of PTAH.

Let this conjoining be accomplished by virtue of the infusing Spirit and Intelligence of --- & ---. This shall be inwardly articulated. Here the Magician, as Chela of the High Priest of ---, becomes one with the Master. The High Priest is the embodiment of cosmic consciousness and the Magician is the embodiment of individual consciousness or the temporal ego self. Herein the Eternal Word becomes Flesh. The Master --- and the Magician are now one and, as such, embody the Lord PTAH. When this fusion is certain, the Magician will proclaim unto the ends of the Universe the word of power and is wholly possessed of and one with PTAH.

The Magician will remain in this posture and state for an Eternal Moment, the Celebrant perfectly one with the Sacrament. This Form of PTAH is the Immortal and Spiritual Body of both the Magician and of all living beings. It shall begin to hover horizontally over the mortal body of the Magician in the tomb. Slowly it diffuses into, and thus empowers, the body and mind of the Priest.

The six globes of Light begin to absorb the "wrappings" which have formed the surrounding "Egg." These orbs move and join with each other into a great shining Sun above the heart of the Magician and then are absorbed therein.

At this point, the rite is concluded and the Magician may rise, his mortal form and temporal mind having fed upon this great cosmic energy and Intelligence. Impressions, Illuminations and Insights shall all be noted in the magical diary.

Postscript

The Names of those august entities evoked in this rite are excluded from this present document, as is the "Word of Power." This should not leave the reader feeling that the ritual is incomplete.

The entities evoked are manifestations of the author's personal Guru and belong to the dynamics of Guru Yoga. Anyone wishing to experiment with the above ceremony should utilize those symbolic

potencies which embody the Guru Mechanism in their own sphere of experience and initiation.

Likewise, the Word of Power should be of personal significance to the psychonaut. Its function is to "rend the veil" and as such should embody the energy within the magician's mind most closely aligned with the cosmic current.

XV

AS THE READER CASTS HIS OR HER EYES over these concluding words and back to the world at large, everything described above awaits. The minute hand has only to circle the clock within the space of a few breaths to bring about events of monumental impact. New life and sudden death. Between these great gateways, billions upon billions of seemingly insignificant events are called into play which will chase the tumbling dominoes of cause and effect toward the most radically transformative scenarios. We are in the thick of this Cosmic Happening. We are the Eye in the centre of the hurricane. Will we open to the fullness of what we are and become the Eye in the triangle? Incarnate in our primate bodies, we are subject to a myriad of influences, including our inbred and hard wired mammalian instincts, fear and inclinations.

And then there is the star-self rising, the eye opening and shooting forth Light even as it receives it. It may emerge as the destructive bolt which shatters the Tower. But see now the King and Queen plunging from its pinnacle. Shaken from separate thrones, their established positions of dominion are now beheld as nothing more than a tenuous hold on darkness of mind and denial of their true nature. Bereft of their ability to "rule," they fall to the earth and must come to terms with what they are. This necessitates coming to terms with what the other also IS. In this there is union. One flesh. One throne. From this marriage a new Tower rises. A Tower and a Temple whose stones are living beings.

The Tower is signified in the Tarot by the number XVI. This number is also a crucial key in understanding and unlocking the "metamathematics" of Michael Bertiaux's Voudon-Gnostic writings. It occurs time and again in his voluminous writings and a clue as to why is found in his lesson on *The Genius of IFA and the Oracle-Metaphysics: Beginnings of the Great System* from the *Voudon Gnostic Workbook*.

It is within this series of lessons that Bertiaux attributes the massive collection of lessons and papers known as the *Monastery of the Seven Rays* to the influx of the Gnostic Powers of IFA. IFA depicts a hyper-logic, a metamathematics, which, although belonging to extradimensional realms of thought, is never the less immersed in all immediate and physical experience. It is a system of Gnostic thought and power which unites Heaven and Earth as one realm. The changes we observe rising and falling in our experience relate to its pattern and complex of relationships. Order and Chaos fuse into a synergistic whole in this system which Bertiaux calls "the highest form of Gnostic Magick". The word *Itself*, Bertiaux notes, indicates the *Grand Chemin* which means the Great Way. Similarly, one of the popular interpretations of the word tarot is Royal Road. Crowley also states that LAM, in the Tibetan tongue, indicates The Way. We know the Tao is also The Way and a way of consciously interfacing with our mind and environment in its never ceasing pulse of change. Thelema points to the "Tao Lama" who is extra-terrestrialized, heralding from a future Aeon. This future Aeon is not to remain a speculative portion of the imagination - it is the real and crucial potentiality of our present human existence. Accessing this zone of energy and intelligence is to form a link, bridge or tunnel whereby *That Which May Be* is in dynamic communion with *That Which Is Becoming*.

The Key Number in the Gnostic IFA system is 16. It is an extension of the perfection and symmetry of the four-fold cross.

We cannot evade Chaos. It is the substance from which all things emerge. Nor can we relinquish our Will to dispersion. We are not solely magicians, effecting change in a perpetually changing field of experience. We are warriors whose warriorship is based on actualizing an art of life, our feet firmly fixed on the Grand Chemin. We embrace this Way in life and guide it through the Portals of Death. We are casting forth shining seeds which shall take root in future times. Our mortal eyes may never know this flowering yet it shall assuredly delight the great eye which beholds all. We may share in this delight only as we become the eye ourselves.

The students of the *Monastery of the Seven Rays* are introduced to 16 "entities" called Syzygies, whose form and intelligence comprise the body of Abraxos, the Grand or Cosmic Man. These 16 areas of energy and gnosis work together to hold the forces of Chaos from disrupting and wiping away the world. It cannot be over-emphasized that this scenario is not one of wishing to eradicate Chaos (as if such a thing were possible). The 16-fold system of the

Syzygical Matrix is the active counterbalance to Chaos, whereby the two forces may be seen as the perpetual movement of feet upon the Great Way.

We walk this Path. What, then, is "walking?" It is a continuous throwing oneself off balance and a continuous reestablishment of balance, driven by intent and volition. The two actions are felt as one. It is the Going of Hadit in the *Book of the Law*. LAM, as Crowley observes, is "he who Goeth," depicted by the Egyptian Ankh or Cross.

XVI

IT IS THE FINAL IMAGE OF THE TAROT which depicts the most vibrant and ecstatic union. A female form, lithe and lovely, perfectly poised in her command of the venomous serpent power. The All-Seeing Eye of which we have spoken sheds its supernal light upon this union.

I had wondered for some time at the astrological attribution of this card to Saturn. Saturn is a planet typically linked with limitation, contraction, binding, and restriction. Some writers on the science of the stars have sought to redeem the ringed globe's bad reputation by taking a positive view of the challenges and setbacks we are presented with in Life. However, as we come to the grand climax of our voyage on the Royal Road, as we behold this most magnificent image, both sensuous and cosmic, we have to wonder how it relates to Saturn, to Father Time, to the cannibalistic devourer of his own progeny, the image of heavy laden sorrow.

I had never quite understood this beyond twisting ideas around to force a fit. It was only when my own Guru assigned me to work with this particular energy and Intelligence that I broke through intellect and entered the gnosis of Saturn.

In classical astrology, Saturn was the outer ridge of our known universe. The association of this planet with restriction was quite apropos as it was the gateway between our ordered universe and the Chaos which surged beyond. If Saturn functioned as a barrier (and subsequently radiated its restrictive qualities into our everyday affairs), it also partook of what was on the other side.



The physical planet is characterized by an extraordinarily intense climate, raging windstorms moving across its surface at incredible speeds. The substance of the Void, untamed and all powerful, is condensed in this framework, cosmic energy honed into a formidable point of focus and application. The infinite meets the finite at the gates of Saturn, which functions as a titanic transformer and occult transmitter between the two.

Serving as the outpost of outermost space, the orbit of Saturn moves along the contours of the body of Nuit. As the container, binder and restrictor, Saturn embodies the cosmic Will manifest in the singularity of action in any given moment through the Will of the Magician.

Saturn is also the lover of Venus. In their union, the two fuse into Kali, black goddess of time. Between her dancing legs are the fires of the crematorium which are also the fires of Eternity. These flames leap about and lick the Tower, tearing it down, building it up, absorbing its energy and bestowing it with life.

The Tower first shows us the crisis and then indicates the way in which we are to walk, the Tao behind the appearance of conflict. If the Tower is our Illumination, then the arcana known as The World is that which is fully illumined.

Will you not ask for Light?

The source of this light is the invisible fire. Into its omnipotence and omnipresence we fall. The forces unleashed by the uncurbed technological advances in our modern age are now a hurricane blast, tearing through the temple walls and exposing the skeleton within.

The skull met by every incoming Freemason, every co-creator of the *church not made with hands*, was more than a metaphor for mortality. It was a way of expressing that which remains, the permanent which is hidden in the transient.

The Lord, as Christos, as the divine and cosmic Will, makes the dry bones dance before the vision of Ezekiel. It is this same poet-prophet who describes a fire shut up in his bones.

The source of this fire is upon the ever-going fourfold chariot throne of deity, inspiring the Merkabah mystics to assail the Halls of Hekaloth. They were seeking the Ultimate by means of their own Tower, climbing through the trials and tests of its heights that the divine fire, unveiled and naked, would return to and infuse the Earth.

The "ignorant and evil men" Burroughs spoke of have built a universe about us, a pseudo-reality inverting the evolutionary place of both Chaos and Order. What we behold around us, in the mania, panic, desperation and soul-sucking despair of this world, is their invention and monstrous offspring. It is a dominion born of fear and feeding on the same.

The machinery powering this Empire is increasingly exposed. This Dying God will not think twice before blindly burying you in its black bosom. You, on the other hand, were not born to feed this foulness. Ra Hoor Khuit declares:

Now let it first be understood that I am a god of War and Vengeance.

Horus is the avenger of his father's death. The lifeblood of Osiris survives and is transmuted in the body of his Son. Infinite Aeons of rising and falling have spun our souls into this space. We have not arrived to be passively swept downstream. We are the rising of the Tower even as it is being struck down, the fable of Babel shall not dissuade us. Our uprising may reach escape velocity. The momentum of this *going* curves and arcs but does not trace a circle. It spirals outwards and inwards all at once. Babalon beckons us to the light hid in darkness, the Sun behind whose glory a second Star blazes in transtemporal radiance. Sothis. Sirius. The crossroads between all we are and all we might become.

We were not built to last.

We were built from, and for, Eternity.

THE
EGS
TAT
IGS
TAT
EJU
LIA
NVA
YNE

IN HIS CHANNELLED TEXT, *The Book of the Law*, Aleister Crowley is repeating something that has been at the heart of most esoteric traditions since the first shaman sat, pupils dilated, on the African savannah surrounded by lots of blueish tinged mushrooms. Drugs, those fantastic alchemical materials that can catalyse heaven or hell, are the key ingredients of many magickal systems. Where would the witch be without her cauldron of solanaceæ? Where would the shaman be without his power plants? Where would the alchemist be without the philosopher's stone, or the druid without those droplets of inspiration? Hadit states in *Liber Al Vel Legis* 2:22:

I am the Snake that giveth Knowledge & Delight and bright glory, and stir the hearts of men with drunkenness. To worship me take wine and strange drugs whereof I will tell my prophet, & be drunk thereof! They shall not harm ye at all. It is a lie, this folly against self. The exposure of innocence is a lie. Be strong, o man! lust, enjoy all things of sense and rapture: fear not that any God shall deny thee for this. I am alone: there is no God where I am.

Crowley famously soaked himself in "cognac, cunt and cocaine". He plunged into plant induced alerted states, treading a path that propelled magick out of the doldrums and into the modern age. Uncle Aleister and many of his contemporaries were interested in exploring consciousness through chemical means. Crowley played around with opiates, cocaine, hashish and was a pioneer explorer of peyote. He made good use of these chemicals in his rituals, famously spiking the audience at his *Rites of Eleusis* with mescaline. Crowley wanted to generate a religious ecstasy in attendees, a project that was at the core of his mission to promote the cult of Thelema. *The Rites of Eleusis* aimed to transform the Victorian ladies and gentlemen in London's Caxton Hall, into modern pagans. Pagans because their god would be the intoxicating spirit of personal revelation, mediated by artistic ritual, fuelled by mind-altering substances.

Today, although the post-Protestant world is full of pagans and magicians and witches, an engagement with these sacred medicines is often curiously absent, at least overtly. Let's take the example of Wicca, a system with some of its roots Crowley's magick: is this a Dionysian, ecstatic pagan cult? In a word, no. Instead most of its rituals are little more than a titillating (though at times

engaging) Co-Freemasonry where, although the *Book of Shadows* suggests the use of psychoactives, these are painfully absent from the ceremony. However, within the more outré groups, such as Thee Temple ov Psychick Youth, some freestyle shamanic practitioners and many people who would call themselves Thelemites or chaos magicians, 'chemognosis' is alive and well.

And it's not as though we have got a shortage of these things. Indeed on a planet where we're used to hearing about species going extinct, in the wonderful world of psychoactives, new ones seem to be being discovered every week. Not only do we have all those novel designer chemicals (of which the phenethylamines such as MDMA are the best known) but also thousands of organic sources. Some of these are (at least to western culture), new materials (such as the brain blisteringly potent *salvia divinorum*, or the gently fuzzy blue lotus of the Nile). Whatever their source, people in the early 21st century, especially in the industrialised world, have access to a staggering variety of consciousness altering substances.

We have modern alchemists to thank for this situation. Albert Hofmann, father of LSD, and Alexandra Shulgin, the godfather of rave culture, who in 1976 synthesised and thoughtfully tested MDMA on himself. Many of these discoveries come wrapped in their own synchronistic, some might say magickal, packaging. Hofmann discovered the reality shattering effects of LSD as a result of accidentally ingesting the chemical he was working on. A chemical that he created five years before in 1938 (just as World War II was about to kick off). As the war drew to a close, Hoffman writing in *LSD My Problem Child* says:

A peculiar presentiment – the feeling that this substance could possess properties other than those established in the first investigations – induced me, five years after the first synthesis, to produce LSD-25 once again so that a sample could be given to the pharmacological department for further tests. This was quite unusual; experimental substances, as a rule, were definitely stricken from the research program if once found to be lacking in pharmacological interest.

One famous bicycle ride through wonderland later, and the rest as they say, is history. But ah, all those fantastically twisted plot devices! The CIA get interested in LSD as a mind control drug. They had already been sniffing around, trying to score magic mushrooms with Gordon Wasson's explorations of Mexican shamanism.

So the CIA are the ones that the gods choose to distribute LSD to the youth of America! The CIA dump the stuff into the brains of undergraduate research subjects, including the people who would become counter-cultural icons, such as Ken Kesey. They may also have covertly been bankrolling a Harvard lecturer in psychology, one Timothy Leary. The stable door of modern psychoactive culture was flung open by those very organisations that are now charged with re-capturing the horses that have long since bolted.

How does this peculiar situation link with contemporary esoteric practice? Much of my own activity, and that of the magicians I've been fortunate to work with, has been about creating new rituals that serve to contain and indeed amplify the new psychoactives that are available today. Let me give you three examples.

KETAMINE

THIS IS A DISASSOCIATIVE ANAESTHETIC. It is typically used in anaesthesia of children, the elderly, burns victims and, famously, horses. It is a chemical worth getting to know because it's increasingly used in palliative care. At the end of your life it's quite likely that it will be ketamine that will send you off into the realm of the ancestors. The basic ketamine trip is that of becoming aware of consciousness as it re-emerges. A high enough dose of the drug will knock you out and the trip arises as awareness and memory comes back on line.

Ketamine makes you loose contact with your body. Its dissociative action means that you loose the sense of where you end and, for instance, the curtains begin. So one way we've discovered you can work with this material is through the process of mummification. The participant is naked, then wrapped neck to foot in Clingfilm (black Clingfilm is best). Then a large dose of ketamine is administered by insufflation and the head is then bound with only the nostrils remaining uncovered.

Floating in a memory-less state the participants finds themselves in a world deep underground, rooted in the muladhara chakra's chthonic darkness. The other ritualists judge the time after the ketamine has been taken (perhaps taking low doses themselves) and begin to chant, moving up through the seed syllable mantras of each centre. As memory comes back on line the mummified magician feels their consciousness awakening, dividing from the

unified null state. As this happens and the chanting around them builds towards the Sahasrāra so a pair of bandage scissors are used to open the cocoon. As the plastic binding falls away so the subject emerges, first imagining themselves as a flowing liquid. Then realising they have limbs, a form, and that they can move in emerging space of separate existences. This ceremony is a powerful initiation; a death and resurrection.

TOAD VENOM

ANOTHER TYPE OF RITUAL can be performed with the formidable power of 'toad venom', 5-MeO-DMT, which has been (perhaps correctly) described as the most powerful entheogen on the planet. In this ritual the sacrament is central to a rite of trance where the aim is to connect to the life force of the planet. In this ceremony a space is made, ideally outdoors, and participants circumnambulate the location, each coming forward to partake of the four elements; scented herbs for air, honey for fire, water and the feel of rich earth. Then they kneel on blankets, animal skins or the grass, and the white perfumed smoke of the toad venom is administered. A simple drum beat and a lilting chant help the psychonauts to dive into the heart of the power in the earth. Rivers of dark DNA swim in front of their eyes. There are none of the typically bright visions that the venom's sister chemical, N,N-DMT of Terence McKenna fame, can produce. Instead there is a sense that one is expanding down and simultaneously, outward. Into the cellular heart of creation, out into the radiant darkness of space and then all around there is nothing but light, light, light!

FOXY METHOXY

A FINAL EXAMPLE OF AN ENGAGEMENT, this time with the aphrodisiac of psychedelic Pan, namely 5-MeO-DiPT or foxy methoxy. A pharmacological sister to DMT, Foxy is so called because of an article in Playboy Magazine that favourably commented on its erotic potential. Ideal for tantric sex (as in real tantric sex, you know, with a real partner) this material keeps the body sense intact but allows vibrations of energy to deliciously suffuse the organism. It comes on like MDMA, takes you up fast and then dumps you off

somewhere that looks a bit like a mushroom trip. Since at low dose the visual disturbance is minimal and cognition remains good, this is an ideal sacrament to combine with group ritual, even fairly elaborate processes. I remember a rite to Abraxas featuring an elemental healing process, an invocation of the chicken headed deity and the cracking of a giant golden egg, but that, as they say, is another story.

4

NOW INTERESTINGLY, there are some ways of getting ecstatic which are less fraught with legal problems in our culture. A few years ago I was hanging with two chest piercings through my skin from an ancient yew somewhere on the south coast of England. And it wasn't just me, there were seven of us similarly wounded and dancing, stretching cords from our bodies to a ring of rope round the tree. Leaning backwards, letting the tug of the hooks pull at our flesh. For some of us there was plenty of blood.

Funny that if a police officer had walked past it would have been more legitimate to be doing this (although I recognised there is legislation that could have been involved to prosecute us for our English style sundance) than being mummified on ketamine. And why is this? The fact is that we, the industrialised world (and most of the rest of the planet who follow what our governments do) have a deeply abiding fear of drugs.

Now it's true that drugs and drug use are problematic. But making these things illegal, as with alcohol prohibition in the early 20th century in the United States, does not make the problem go away. In fact it makes things much, much worse. Drugs can be useful in shocking us out of habitual patterns of behaviour, allowing us perceive the world anew. However, they can also be cages of drunken violence, of habituation, addiction and sorrow. But it is no news to say that the flip side of heaven is hell or the shadow of ecstasy is despair. The fact is that as a culture we need to own this responsibility, not keep brushing the white powder under the carpet in the hope that it will go away.

Every time a locus of ecstasy appears in our culture it is stamped on. Not in a big conspiracy way, but simply out of habit. Mushrooms go on sale openly in London's Camden market, within months legislation is rushed through to stop it. New chemicals created with ecstatic and therapeutic potential are banned in the

blink of an eye. Those most public manifestations of ecstatic society, such as Rave culture and even latterly pub culture have been outlawed, squeezed and redefined by the state. Personal ecstasy may be dangerous but collective, communal ecstasy is social dynamite.

Why are we – as a society, as a species – so afraid of this material ecstasy? Is it born from the lingering horror that, in true Tantric style, it is the physical world, in this case chemicals, that are our means of our liberation? We've been told how we need to pray, to do good works, to trust in the Lord, when in fact we can get a reliable religious experience from a good dose of psilocybin and a little ritualisation? Timothy Leary's research student Walter N. Pahnke, proved this in 1962 when he gave a group of divinity students mushrooms in Boston University's chapel, just prior to the Good Friday service. Unsurprisingly (to anyone who has taken this entheogen), all those who were dosed reported profound religious experiences, experiences indistinguishable in their phenomenology from mystical experiences reported in other contexts. Just to check the results of this experiment (and rather as though the last forty-four years hadn't happened) the experiment was repeated in 2006, and produced exactly the same results.

Both communist and capitalist, left and right, politicians want to keep prohibition in place. Terrence McKenna commented on this, suggesting that it was the radical ontological unpicking of reality which psychedelic drugs produce that meant the State had to ban them. In common with many other commentators he also pointed out how those drugs that speed the wheels of industry (or the means of production, if you prefer) such as caffeine, that take our minds off the dullness of the day (tobacco), or blot out the pointlessness of our struggle (booze) are all perfectly acceptable. The general profile of which psychoactives remain legal remains unchanged, though the chemicals drafted in may vary. Of course, to calm the masses with opium (as we did in Victorian times) would be terrible; instead we provide Prozac snuggles for downtime, and a Red Bull pick-me-up for when the going gets tough.

Frequently, voices are raised about this insanity. Most recently a chief science advisor to the British Government lost his position after having the temerity to suggest that taking drugs such as MDMA really didn't deserve to be considered as dangerous as some perfectly legal activities. Professor David Nutt, the man in question, described the Kafkaesque process of drug classification in his lecture of July 2009, published by the Centre for Crime and Justice Studies at Kings College London:

MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT: You can't compare harms from a legal activity with an illegal one.

PROFESSOR NUTT: Why not?

MP: Because one's illegal.

PROFESSOR NUTT: Why is it illegal?

MP: Because it's harmful.

PROFESSOR NUTT: Don't we need to compare harms to determine if it should be illegal?

MP: You can't compare harms from a legal activity with an illegal one.

Good grief! No wonder this academic lost his job! He's clearly insane, whereas our wise politician has got a perfect grip on things...

Yet in the British Isles, and round the globe, there are many religions that make use of the ecstatic power of drugs. From the Rastafari movement, orthodox Hinduism, the Peyote users of North America and the ayahuasca users of South America. These and many other movements exist which are being informed by the core principle of what Aleister Crowley called Thelema, namely that personal revelation through ecstatic experience is what religion is all about. Not adherence to some garbled Holy Book whether it be the *Koran*, *King James* or indeed *The Book of the Law*.

So what are we, what are you as magicians doing about this? Make no mistake our time has come. That's why although some of the ecstatic cults are informed by the works of Crowley and western esoteric culture, many are not. Thelema is one formulation of this psycho-historic force, a force that is popping up in rave culture as much as it is in the burgeoning numbers of the various psychedelic religions. And the tide is turning. The Santo Daime Church and the União do Vegetal, both international religions that use an ayahuasca style brew, have had significant legal victories in the United States and elsewhere. They have won the right to import their DMT rich sacrament into the most prohibitionist of jurisdictions. The changes are coming and they are going to leave groups like the Ordo Templi Orientis and squeaky clean Wicca behind as quaint anachronisms of muddled Masonry, unless they focus their attention on what really matters. What matters is the core spirit of these traditions, the spirit of ecstasy as a valid spiritual path. What matters is changing the law of the land, of maturing as a culture so we can make use of the plethora of psychoactives that we have access to without running screaming into the arms of the Nanny State or addicted oblivion.

This doesn't mean we all have to take drugs. Or indeed that chemical ecstasy is the only valid path to enlightenment. But what it does mean is that devotees of this path need to fight for legal acceptance of their activities as a valid spiritual praxis. More broadly our cultures need to embrace the ecstatic as a valid and indeed essential human state. A state that should be valued, respected and enjoyed.

It can be done. A mere seventy-two years after Oscar Wilde was imprisoned for gross indecency, homosexuality was legalised in Britain. This change in the law overturned hundreds of years of criminal and thousands of years of Abrahamic religious law. Such a shocking volte-face is coming and entheogen users should be among those pushing for their own Stonewall riots. The cults of ecstasy are what this aeon is all about, so wise up, get loaded and ditch those holy books. They may have been the spiritual booster rockets that fired us out of earth orbit, but now we need to jettison them. Now the real work begins; it's time to storm the citadel of sobriety and party!

Nothing is True, Everything is Permitted!

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GREAT BEAMS OF CHARCOALED WOOD CRUMBLE AND FALL, collapsing inward into the fiery inferno. The flames rise higher, spiralling sparks into the black night, the great pyre of civilization at the onset of the New Millennium, the prophesied Apocalypse. Screams rend the night, but they are screams not of terror in the face of the disaster but of delight, revelling in the sight and heat and light of this spectacular catastrophe. For around the blazing tower's periphery is a great moat. Once the final check was done, the drawbridge was drawn up so that none could cross over; the fire was lit as the clock tolled thirteen on New Millennium's Eve. And so the only victim of the great blaze was the mighty Millennium Bug, a 10 foot high insect whose textured fabric skin soon flamed and melted revealing metal bones within.

I was amongst those thousands thronged – from all over Europe and some such as myself from even further shores – who cheered as the Tower blazed then crumbled; I danced in the ashes in the dawn's first light. For this edifice, constructed over three months from masses of wooden palettes collected from building sites, was a symbol of humankind's arrogance, was burnt with purpose to demonstrate such folly and to protest against man's impudent stampede of 'progress' and 'development'. The New Millennium Tower of Babel was built by The Balloon Company (and their allies), a theatre group in Holland who had occupied the entire village of Ruigoord, squatting a great old Cathedral as a base for set and prop construction, for thirty years. Only recently had the beautiful old forest surrounding this village been decimated, purportedly for the construction of a new harbour on the bay beside their home. Another harbour seemed unnecessary, and upon investigation they did indeed discover that it was primarily an excuse to dump a vast amount of toxic waste in a great pit and build the damned thing over the top.

The villagers of Ruigoord were all part of The Balloon Company, whether as performers, costumers, carpenters or cooks, and had a cohesive co-operation born of long term co-creation. They had occupied the forest valiantly in organized protest for many moons, keeping bulldozers at bay with various physical tactics while also battling with more mental strategies in courts of law. But ultimately police reinforcements extracted the protesters with force of numbers and weapons, and big machines driven by big money with big interests had levelled the forest, dug a pit, dumped waste and built the harbour.

The village still stood, a few weathered old abodes now alone in a vast wasteland of stark sand where once they had nestled amidst trees. The magic of Ruigoord was still there in those aesthetic dwellings and their creative denizens, but its future seemed now uncertain and its surroundings desolate and threatening.

Now for three moons a new edifice had progressively grown on the plains of sand near the village – a great tower of wood, fabrics, oddments bones and stones which now blazed heartily in the midst of a crowd gathered for the symbolic spectacle.

So the delight with which they cheered and screamed was a justified one it seemed – for this Tower of Babel was built to burn, a symbol of all the worst of civilization, the city-mongers and capitalist butchers who would crush underfoot any who stood in the way of their march of money-making systematic and unrelenting ‘progress’. It was a peak of exultation for the underdog, the eco-warrior, the rebel, the artist who often suffered at the hands of those who placed functionality over beauty. Though it would seem insane or at least inane to fight fire with fire, to blow up the corporate office of those responsible and reciprocate the very values we were protesting against, we could and did fight back with symbolism and magical intent, even with artistry. The Tower was constructed entirely from found and recycled materials. Yet it was no half-arsed hodgepodge of amateur toydom, this was a truly impressive construction, sturdy in the mid-winter winds through which it had swayed and creaked but stood strong despite its somewhat ramshackle appearance. It was seven stories and at least 70 feet high, and spiralled similarly in form to the mythic Tower of Babel it was named after. The thousands of attendees on New Year’s Eve and those whom they conferred the tale thereof to, the independent media, would all remember this powerful sight and spread the story of its origin and purpose. And it was magic, powerful magic, some possible repercussions of which were not yet glimpsed and perhaps would have caused some to shudder and later wonder at their actions.

And yes, it was a big party too! We would dance in the ashes, the destruction of the forest would not stop the Balloon Company from their grand celebrations of the temporal, from the manifestation of Art in the face of adversity. For it was not merely some throng of rabid ravers rocking to the bassy beat of imminent apocalypse – there was beauty and considered expression in this particular spectacle, beginning gradually that afternoon.

BEFORE THE TOWER WAS LIT, ritual ceremonies were enacted at twelve points around the looming central axis mundi. These had begun at 1pm Netherlands time that afternoon, when the Islander people, Pacific and Maori, were celebrating the turning of the new millennium in their own time-zone. Their cultural representative at the gathering appeared in skins with face-paint suggesting Maori mukka facial tattoos. As he lit the fire we stood around and did the Bes-Kali AHA mantra-asana, its pose being akin to the Tiki postures of the Islanders with tongue out and arms and legs bent askew. As usual this mudra reduced me to a primordial state. It seemed like we were lighting the first fire at the dawn of time.

Then we – just a handful of people for this first one, while others were setting things up for the expected crowd – danced around the growing fire doing a Maori tribal chant and dance.

The next fire was lit at 2pm Netherlands time, a burning log from the first fire carried ritually to the 2 o'clock position on the great mandala around the Tower. Representing the Arctic peoples who were celebrating new millennium at that time, Cleo danced around in furs and leathers with a reindeer-antler headdress.

The ritualists dispersed and returned for the third fire at 3pm. By this time people had begun to gather around the initial two fires to warm themselves against the considerable cold, and watched our ceremony of carrying the flame to the third, the Australian fire. Sarah (a fellow Australian, who has spent considerable time with Aboriginal tribes) danced painted in ochre while Tamara played didgeridoo. Others including myself joined in with makeshift clapsticks, chanting and tribal dancing.

And so it progressed, each fire carried on the energies from the previous ones, and the intensity and number of participants grew each time. Rather than just a separate individual doing the ceremony for each fire as I had envisioned, the cultural representatives from the previous fires and others also came and joined in with each new ritual. It was a wonderful gradual progression. The atmosphere and energy around each fire was unique and different, and remained so all night even when those who initiated them were gone.

I started getting quite high from all the chanting, dancing and the build-up of energy. I felt tangible links with the represented cultures, finding myself doing movements and sounds that felt right for cultures I didn't consciously know much about. Others expressed the same feelings. A microcosm of collective global

consciousness was evident as the twelve tribes linked towards midnight.

People arranged the artefacts and tools they used for the cultural ceremonies on altars next to the fires and signs, and I noticed extra pieces had been added to some of these later in the night.

The ritual lighting of the time-zone fires had been partly my idea, inspired by parallels in the thirteenth Tribe ideals expressed by the Balloon Co. and my own vision of weaving together twelve Tribal representatives for the Global Anahata Chakra Working at Glastonbury.

TORCHES WERE BEING LIT by people on the Tower in patterns, so that it glowed with a soft expectant warmth in the dark night. As more people began trickling in and setting up camps in the surrounding muddy plains, people turned up to fill the last few missing places of cultural representatives.

A strange character with a winged staff twice as high as himself called Bert was planning to make a San Pedro cactus brew for the party, so we recruited him to perform this ritual with the lighting of the South American fire, as these sacred plants come from that part of the world and were used magically by the shamans of their indigenous cultures.

After the 9pm fire was lit I climbed up the Tower of Babel with my camera. Security had already been set up with a barrier on the bridge across the moat between the Tower and the encircling fires and camps, so I had to attain the necessary authorisation to convince the guards to let me in.

As I spiralled around the dark narrow precarious stairs around and up the tower, I teetered a bit, and realized how out there I was from the ritual activity all afternoon and the mounting energy of anticipation. As I neared the top, feeling quite giddy and excited, I looked down and around. What a beautiful sight, the fires encircling the moat encircling the tower, each now with at least 20-30 people around them, warming and conversing, playing music and communing, little specks of vibrant life glowing in the dark from my heightened perspective, in a spectacular solar mandala of life. The great horizontal clock was almost complete, with the 9pm fire forming the three-quarter point. Midnight approached.

And beyond this circle and the flatlands were the surrounding lights of Amsterdam and harbours across the bay, forming a larger circle which branched beyond in an intricate web of celebratory activity.

I descended the Tower in time for the lighting of the 10th fire, the African, then kicked back for a while and prepared for the 11th, for which I was the cultural representative. Synchronized with the celebration of new millennium in the time-zone centred on London, I represented the Celtic peoples (England, Ireland, Scotland) where my blood ancestry lies.

In costume and cloak I carried a burning log from the 10th fire to the penultimate position in the circle where I played some Celtic violin, chanted and danced.

By this stage there were thousands of people everywhere, not just around the fires but walking about excitedly, milling between them and thronging around the moat. I heard the next day there had been an estimated five or six thousand present at midnight.

After doing my acoustic voice and violin thing for a while the Rinky Dink pedal-powered PA and its travelling band who had come from England for the celebrations, pedalled over from the African fire and set up around me. I plugged in and joined them for a celtic folk jam, as their mates back in England hollered in midnight.

By the time the twelve o'clock fire was to be lit it was a barely noticeable activity, as there were now people everywhere, filling all the space between the fires as well as around them, and crowding around the moat in expectation. Nevertheless, we carried the fire to the final position and closed the great circle. There was no one cultural representative as the time-zone was 12:00 midnight Mediterranean Europe including Netherlands, ie Here and Now! So it was apt that the gathering was by now decentralized from the fire, spreading across the whole scene.

I poured the last of the lamp oil on the 12th fire and it blazed as the first fireworks went off. I had not been expecting the amount of spectacle the Balloon Co. had quietly invested in this aspect of the celebrations. From midnight til 1 am there were fireworks galore, exploding all around us from every possible angle. As it grew later they came mostly from the Tower, shooting up out of it into the stars, whilst smaller fireworks crackled brightly across its looming structure, drawing everyone's focus onto this axis mundi. People were drumming and screaming and dancing. The energy was very high. It had been a stroke of brilliance to burn the Tower at 13 o'clock, not midnight as everyone would expect at a New Year celebration, carrying our anticipatory energy further and higher.

As the fireworks continued the barrier was removed so the guards could allow through a wide cart with large wooden wheels.

This went in with crew and with some strain the large ancient black stone carved with a spiral that had been at the centre of the tower was hauled onto it with ropes and carted out. It had been at the edge of the tower since the night before, when it had been removed from the centre and the time capsules beneath dug up.

A while later in went the Dragon, fire spouting from its nostrils – the creation of Fritjof (the Mastermind behind the whole Tower project), it had a great painted sculpted head and white cloth body borne by nine people in the Chinese parade tradition.

When first hearing of this plan during the weeks of preparation for the festival, more pieces had fallen into place in the cosmic jigsaw puzzle of it All. I had discovered that the original Tower of Babel was a Temple to Marduk, aligning with the concept I had been exploring of Marduk chopping up Tiamat in the establishment of linear time.

Tiamat as the primal chaos dragon was divided into sections – hours, weeks, months, years – by the sword of the solar hero Marduk, representing the cycles of the sun and linear logic. Our civilization's 12/60 division timekeeping artifice actually comes from the Babylonians. So the burning of Marduk's Temple (symbolized by the Tower of Babel structure at Ruigoord) signifies a return of the lunar spiral dreamtime of 13 moons, the tower being the 13th fire, through which the purging kundalini of Tiamat (or The Midgard/Rainbow/Feathered Serpent rising towards the end of time in multiple cultural pantheons) flows as the fire-breathing Dragon was carried spiralling up the stairwell of civilization. Tiamat restored to fluid wholeness.

The Dragon looked spectacular as it weaved in over the moat. The Rinky Dink crew and their bizarre pedalled PA contraption followed them over the bridge. I was on the bike, pedalling like mad. We circled around the Tower as the Dragon went up, and I chanted the chakra tones through a microphone as the great Serpent ascended, a note of the octave for each level of the Tower as the Serpent reached it.

With the cheering and drumming of the masses, the kundalini of the Thirteenth Tribe purged civilization in a DNA double-helix up and then down the Tower. As it returned to earth, four friends gathered around me and shared the microphone, adding power to the final low base chakra tone of manifestation.

Then out went the Dragon and Rinky Dink PA, the area was checked for any stragglers and the bridge was sealed so the Tower

stood alone on its island. Fireworks began to bristle and pop across its surface again. And the flames began.

I felt elated as I and thousands of others watched this looming symbol of humankind's inherent arrogance and of miscommunications destroyed in a glorious spiralling blaze.

We were all united as one, the pan-global mongrel hybrid cross-cultural diversity of the Thirteenth Tribe, returning to the Dreamtime as Marduk's Temple toppled, and the stress and pressures of anticipation, preparation and pre-millennial tension went up in smoke.

What a huge fucking inferno. The heat it gave off was intense. People were recoiling from the edge of the moat with roasted faces. The flames roared stronger on one side, and we watched the structure crumble and topple piece by piece quite slowly and gracefully. I knelt on the sandy banks of the moat, caduceus dancing with my arms (apparently I was caught on the Dutch national news), following the flickering dance of the leaping fire-snakes.

The flames spiralled into the night. Fireworks, strategically placed in the construction, leapt out from the blaze and burst into glorious colours above, cascading above the heads of the cheering exuberant crowd, who danced the new millennium in rapturously through the remainder of the night.

THE SUN ROSE FOR THE FIRST DAY in the Netherlands of the Gregorian Calendar year 2000 over a vast circle of smoking ashes and smouldering logs of charcoaled ruins, patches still flaring red now and then in the simmering heat. The remains of a few of the central support beams still stood semi-upright, black and pointed like great charred ribs of the fallen behemoth.

Most revellers fled with first light, leaving this stark edifice of civilization destroyed to return to their comfortable homes or cushy hotels.

It was not til mid-morning that the gnosis from the ritual and revelry wore off to an extent that I began to flag and tire, and desired some withdrawal from the bright sun above to an abode of more interior comfort and repose. But I was staring at my bedroom, what little was left of it was black and still smoking. For the last three weeks like several of those working on the tower or its rituals and performances I had lived in it too, creating a small space for myself in the bottom story. It had been a wonderful home for a while, minimal but most aesthetically fascinating, especially

when the tower had swayed and creaked in the winds, flags and other fabrics fluttering, and it had felt like some great pirate ship of the sandy plains. There had been an intense gale just after the big circus tents had been put up for the new millennium festival and they'd been uprooted and torn. Cleaning up the next day, I saw a thick metal pole that had been snapped in half. The tower had shaken mightily (I got little sleep!) but stood fast. Yet now naught remained of it but a vast smoking ring of blackness.

Unlike its other temporary residents I had no other home in Holland to retreat to, and stared at the ashes with a renewed appreciation of the more positive aspects of civilization due to their sudden lack. Time to go to England, I thought.

I went into Amsterdam later that day, weary and weathered, and had to deal with the stark reality of a big city – if a strange and mostly stoned one – for the first time in a few weeks.

To my consternation, everything seemed to go wrong at once. I had problems with my bankcard and couldn't get money, the pay-phone wouldn't work, I couldn't even find a toilet that didn't cost coins I now didn't have. I soon realized that civilization seemed to be rejecting me, as if in retaliation against my intrinsic involvement in its symbolic destruction. The city bustled about me, apparently functional as usual and fully operational on this new millennium's day- the bug had been burnt in our play- but somehow for me amidst this I was some bastion of chaos, I couldn't seem to get what I needed from it. Which of course reminded me that I did need it, that civilization has its advantages like offering shelter, transport, sustenance, community, convenience, conveyance, transaction, communication... but not for me, that day!

And amidst my roiling frustration and anger that things wouldn't work like they should, it slowly began to dawn on me... I was partially responsible for that toxic waste they dumped near the village, as was almost everyone there screaming for civilization's (symbolic!) demise- my lifestyle was not devoid of pollutants and chemical crap, the refuse of my consumption and transportation, though I too would like to hide it under a harbour or at least harbour it somewhere out of sight and out of mind. We can protest or we can party to apocalypse, but where are we going to go in the wasteland that remains?

Somehow the following day I overcame all the obstacles and got on the train to England. I didn't make it. UK customs denied me entry, unsurprising in retrospect since I was coming from everything's legal Amsterdam having lived for the last three weeks



THE TOWER

in a ramshackle tower without a shower, smoking marijuana and wearing mostly the same old clothes which must have reeked of it by now. Instead I ended up in France, and then went on to Spain where I was able to obtain the oestrogen that enabled the manifestation of my anima in an unexpected enactment probably triggered by the Baphomet hermaphroditic invocation I performed midst the ashes of the Tower that morning. But that is another story.

I travelled on and the world soon seemed to return to normal (apart from the fact that I was now growing breasts and feeling rather hormonal). I didn't really think about the whole millennial episode until I married myself nine months later. By the time of the reception I was clad in a goatskin with wedge-tail eagle wings and horns; I had removed the layers of bridal lace and veils as well as the groomal top hat and tails at the end of the ceremony to birth myself as the Baphometric magickal childe of my union with my own anima. The Tower was unveiled before me again, its seven spiralling spongy layers iced white. The caduceus in the top of this Babel cake represented the union of the two serpents of light and night whose jaws are tattooed upon my hands and whose energies writhe up my arms.

Glossolalia flew thick and fast with the bouquet on myself and I's happy day. Once the cake had been unveiled, I began to tell the tale of the Tower of Babel, of how it was built by the Babylonians in an attempt to reach the heavens, and of how they sent an archer up to the highest peak to shoot an arrow off into the heavens. The Arrow of Art. As I told of the growth and increasing complexity of the Tower's structure, I placed little jelly babies along the rim of each progressive layer, different coloured ones on different layers. I explained how the people on the upper levels of the tower began to lose communications with the people on the lower levels. Each became a dgierrt system unto itself, and the dkgwer iojwvn occupants of each level stopperedjeio fj talking with each tut otherdaseg. Even as as I nyrq babble about the babbledon about the break dgwlrtkaer down of cgaetcvcommmunicationsd commun bet weenrt the different layers my own commmuni cationsle be ganto break dow n asdfe as I told vitr thedvp tale... the Babblebabblebabbleonians babbledon bab elle defiv ofge found that they could no long er stand under each others language sdportqe. They no lvaer lunger understooded each other bruiler's words dkes and the tower's fuctions began to break downn rew toegnbd afl as... andgg Babbel Bible Babel Bubble bou bleor r: bnu bible on

bun. Asd as I spake these dribbleon drabble as I babbled on about the Babbleonians babeling onn and ass I dribbled into gossamer glossalia gibble gabble greufdmblmble gibberishgbitfs... others, first those who had been pre-briefed on the scenario, then random congregationistsz who caught onto the diyer idea of gobbergabble glop bewgan to drip their drop their triptrap triple trubblebubbur ston baibleihodloog hjrogs dotdkv ftngedjit into the soupy glop of clotted neolinguisticated esoteristerical terra leog noir hybrid espanol dotcom other neuron dzu bulul h'yumm Kin Znox spore-onbab elle le emit bdddfsfl rkfkeohgnasd voenvla e ckfj3dk v si binary406dahljsdfhlg x c dlsl isp contrary egkdo chai singales thai thi amin amen freeformfromFren Francaise fastflipbeterigibbet franchise fundaplupit gubbin est eres um moy latino eurotrash dammerweiden blended ocker ben bisted barby babelsprachen di lemisci bisci blahhbleon...

I hadn't been sure how or even if the crowd would pick up on the idea of a glossolia babblefest but was pleasantly surprised to find the whole congregarious congregation babeling on in a blindingly cacophonous caphoconus nun nulldeblitz of corruscating lysdexic infelible grasplin linkuistication of different gibberishscapes of degenererating occultese taxilinga spashtikundammerhagen est vold und groot...ep.

The pitch and intensity of this rose as I made the little jelly people bif each other and fall off the tower of BibelBabble into the seas of chaos. I took the caduceus out of the top of the cake. Everyone (both those of jelly and those of flesh) was screaming and yelling drqwelling angrily in confusion and fumbmmble fusion of different g garbledglukets...

.....until it reached fever pitch and with a burst of rolling thunder from Amordios's sampler the lightning struck and the Tower burst into iridescent flames. A lit strip of alcohol-soaked hessian on the back of the cake allowed the conflagration to ignite as the lights went out dramatically and the congregation ranted and railed. Struck with the lightning-stroke of revelation, from Kether to Malkuth, I cried out, *AHA!*

I began to babble on again, but those I babbled to now looked at me with wisdom and understanding, and while they babbled back in gibberish as incomprehensible linguistically as my own, our intent was now one of communication and understanding, so that our gestures, expressions and intonation implied the gist of what we were saying though the words were apparently nonsensical.

I did this initially with the few co-conspirators with whom I had devised the scenario, then with random guests who understood me also, proving that communication is foremost about intent, language being merely a means. The whole atmosphere calmed drastically, into a peaceful babble of confirmation and understanding, so different from the harsh conflict of confusion prior to the Tower's conflagration.

As the flames began to flicker down I looked around for a knife to cut the cake. All I could find was my decorative Bolivian athame from the altar, and this seemed most apt for it having a monstrous gargoylian face on its hilt. I raised it up as Tiamat primal serpent from the seas of chaos, saying something about chaos engulfing the Tower of civilization. Bridesmaid Barrington yelled out, *But I like civilization*, to which I replied, *Me too, that's why I want to eat it!* I chomped into the first piece, and began to hand out slices of Babel (with both hands and tongue).

I WRITE THIS MANY YEARS LATER in the wake of my equinoctial ninth Alchymic Wedding animaverseary, knowing now how I can take my cake and eat it too: civilization should be baked before consumption. As I'd passed the sacred chalice around the congregation, Kestral – male, formally cross-dressed Maid of Honour – had sung beautifully his Babalon song, *Ev'ry last drop now, ev'ry last drop, Ev'ry last drop goes into Her Holy Cup*.

We bleed for the Goddess, as the Beast Tiamat bled under the blade of the solar hero Marduk. The Babalonians created the 12:60 time system we still employ, they are responsible for the division of the fluid time of Tiamat into T(he)-I-am-at, our location in linear time artifices of hours, minutes, seconds. The (where) I am at? Where should I be? Busy schedules distract us from awareness of the effects of our actions. Appointments lead to dis-appointment if we miss them, when we bind ourselves with expectation. But we can flow with time too, ride Her sinuous scaly curves in rhythmic ebb and flow.

The following year, 2001, I lived in a world of fantastic surreal ritual as theatre and theatre as ritual; of magickal music, touring through the desert with the HarleQuintet on the Earthdream convoy. Disappointed with a world of political tyranny, social conformity, mass consumption, and a civilization of ugly (lack of) aesthetics – all which seemed beyond our powers to control or even effect except on a very localized level – my clan and I created our

own world of mythic potency, escaping into our sub-cultural artistic endeavours and interior magical environments. In early 2002 some of these began to coalesce into a ritual theatre device which we called the Choronzon Machine was also intended as a microcosmic reflection of flaws and struggles of and with the macrocosm of the greater world, the Fool's Journey of the initiate in the 'play' having socio-political echoes. The Fool was actually born on April Fool's Day, and the production was first performed at the start of his recurring 33 and a third birthday. During the manifestation of this work in the form of a Ritual Opera(ation) the outer world came crashing in on us again: crashing *down*, as twin towers fell to the aerial assault of (apparently) eastern powers on September 11th, with most interestingly synchronous timing for our project(ion).

We had rehearsed the first half of the play, which was spawned on ayahuasca in the desert from the infernal and supernal device we called the Choronzon Machine, several times, but always ran out of time before we got any further than scene IV/XV: The Emperor/The Devil. Each scene presented a dichotomy between two reflective tarot trumps (as spun by Jackal 1 on the Malkuth Wheel of the Machine itself, powered by illuminat-eye coins from the audience), a conflict or tension which was resolved by the scene's end when the two giant tarot cards were added to an increasingly precarious Tower of Cards at the front of the stage.

Finally, at one rehearsal we decided to just start with the following scene V/XVI: The Hierophant/The Blasted Tower and work on the second half of the Ritual Opera. After the Hierophant's lecture on the Tarot Lemniscate which underlay the production, Jackals 2 and 3 hesitantly and with great care and trembling paws reached up to place the Blasted Tower trump against the Hierophant trump atop the giant House of Cards, while the Hierophant explained to the audience authoritatively that the Blasted Tower represents, *Chaos... Havoc... Unexpected Change!*

However, as the jackals cringed expectantly the Tower did not fall, as that would not of course be unexpected. The Hierophant became demanding now, calling to the Gods for, *Chaos!... Thunder and Lightning!* to confirm his assertion of the meaning of the card. Meanwhile, Chaos built onstage more gradually as the Emperor from the previous scene – whose player had mysteriously chosen to fashion himself as a middle-eastern emperor, turban, hookah and all – began to make love with Babalon as the Empress in a most unbalanced way, *ah... abh... Abh...*, and the Peacock Angel Melek Taus (transformed Choronzon Devil from the previous scene) got

an itchy nose, *ah... abh... Abbh...*, and the Choir of Angels in the back row of the Theatre sang soprano staccato bursts, *aa...aa... aaa...* Consternated by the apparent lack of chaos, the Heirophant scratched his head, murmuring, *uh... uh... uhh...*

The rhythm of the Emperor and Babalon gained momentum, *ah... Abh... AHHH...*, the Peacock Angel's mighty sneeze encroached, *ah... Abh.. AHHH...*, the angels' chorus swelled, *Ab... AHH..AHHH...* Each in round-like rhythmic echo of each other until...

AAAAHHHHH!!! The Emperor ejaculated all over his scarlet pantaloons, the Peacock Angel sprayed snot and feathers over the precarious Tower of Cards as the other Angels' back pew chorus crescendoed, the consternation of the Heirophant confounded as the Tower Crashed and Blasted, physically pounded to destruction by the sudden charge from backstage of Jackal one-third (11.11 years old at the time) roaring with arms outstretched like aeroplane wings.

The Empress arose disgusted at the Emperor's premature explosion and, as She stormed offstage, spun the Malkuth Wheel of the Choronzon Machine *backwards*. No wonder we'd had so much trouble getting to this scene!

In our clan few of us ever watch TV, it being such a mire of commercial consumer crap, propaganda control mechanisms, unfunny comedies with unconvincing canned laughter, and bad news. However, for some mysterious reason our Emperor in the Choronzon Machine turned on the box (probably the only one of us who even had one) to unwind when he returned home after rehearsal, just in time to see the planes crashing into the Twin Towers in New York, live. I received a rather stunned and garbled late-night phone call.

There is an aspect of the whole over-hyped S11 phenomenon that is unbeknownst to most of the World, but was initially very pertinent to us in Melbourne Australia at the time. The previous year, there had been a huge protest of tens of thousands, of course largely ignored by the mainstream media, in central Melbourne against the World Trade Organization – an alliance between corrupt corporations which seemed designed to help facilitate their further exploitation of the third world and draining of its resources for the profit of the few and to the detriment of the environment – who were holding their annual gathering at the Melbourne Crown Casino (how appropriate) building that year *on September 11th*. There were some episodes of extreme violence by the police



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against relatively peaceful protesters, probably paid off out of court by the WTO bigwigs.

Thus, when the towers of the World Trade Centre came crashing down on the exact same date the following year, a lot of Melbournians thought it was some kind of cosmic justice until the stark reality of all of the innocent lives lost began to sink in. It was a tragedy, no doubt, but nonetheless quite incomparable to the atrocities perpetrated by the American government in the Middle East with far less media attention. Still, it was a tragedy that had far-reaching consequences for many globally, and awoke many to realization that there is more going on in the world at large than the mass media present us with.

It was not until weeks later that the Tower of Babel in the Netherlands on New Millennium's Eve flashed back into my mind and I suddenly saw the relationship between that event and the Twin Towers.

Please don't think for a moment that I'm trying to suggest that with either the Tower of Babel or the Choronzon Machine a direct cause and effect scenario! There are, though, obvious morphic resonances, whether divinatory or conjurational, in these microcosmic reflections of greater patterns and events and their timing. And sometimes I wonder, is there a difference but in our perspective of the direction of timemit?

Let us hope that if the New Millennium Tower event was a precursor or shockwave back through timemit of S11, then that the Thirteenth Tribe Weaving at Glastonbury in 2003 and its ritual expression of *Unity in Diversity* – whose ground-plan was laid in the lighting of the twelve tribal fires around that very Tower – will also manifest in more macrocosmic morphic ripples. For in times of crisis and civilizational upheaval, we will need that kind of unity, love and multi-cultural cohesion to survive and build the world anew.

Now let me turn finally to a less socio-political but equally magical episode that occurred in working ritually and theatrically with the image of the Blasted Tower.

A few months after the opening two shows at the Carlton Courthouse Theatre in Melbourne, we decided to take the Choronzon Machine Ritual Opera up to the Exodus Festival in northern New South Wales.

The Opera there was very different from its Melbourne launchpad, being outdoors. Not only did this allow for installation artist extraordinaire Amordios Gobblyn-Smyth to construct the Tree of

Life Machine larger, and for us to elaborate the set and space considerably, but it also opened us to a response to the ritual from the raw elements. They gave us one, with fervour!

It was a full moon, a blue moon and a partial lunar eclipse the night before New Year's Eve 2001–2002. Many were saving their energy for the calendrical rather than lunar peak on this first night of the festival (30th December 2001) but we had our space set up and ready to open on this eclipse night when the doorways betwixt the worlds were also open.

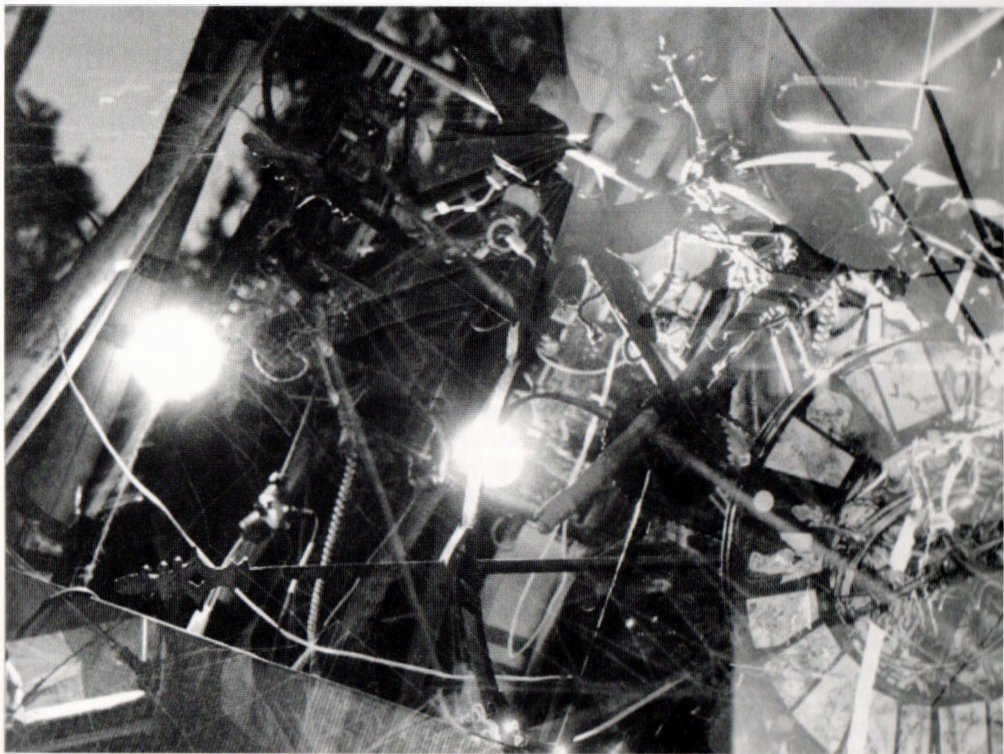
With people still arriving for the festival, we decided to do a dress-rehearsal/performance anyway to initiate the opera into its new set and context and to adapt ourselves to cast and operational changes. Believing it would be better at our second Exodus performance, I failed to have this ritual filmed and so only words and memories remain of a rather wondrous and unexpected spectacle.

As we initiated the performance to a small audience of about thirty, the wheels of the Machine began to turn and great rain clouds rolled in. Distant thunder rumbled softly above and away as Evan cast the circle in the Magician (trump I) scene of the play. Throughout the ensuing scenes the black clouds came in, though I was oblivious to them at the time, caught in the creative expression of the entities I had invoked. By the Hierophant/Blasted Tower scene they were ready to burst, and did so on cue with our ritual elemental theatre, in a most amusing manner.

We (I as the Hierophant replacing Rain who'd not been able to make it up to New South Wales, and the new Jackals) built our house of cards from the 5 foot high cardboard tarot trumps presented at the beginning of each scene, I explaining the sequence of the Fool's journey as we constructed this Tower, in which coupled opposites came together.

As I revealed the pattern of this cosmic order, two celestial voices began to chant the word, *Harmony*, harmoniously. We looked up to see two glowing white-clad angels floating serenely in the black night stage-left. This time I was almost as surprised as the audience, for the effect of the dark stormy night and the black light illuminating their white gowns while they were elevated on the roof of the unseen Gobblyn-Bus below was quite profound.

In my theatrical 'lesson' I progressed through the twinned trumps, eventually reaching my own card, the Hierophant. Opposing this bastion of order and systemization was the Blasted Tower card, which I presented as representing Chaos and unex-



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pected change. With trembles of anticipation we placed the Tower card atop its namesake opposite the Hierophant card.

The unexpected change did not occur as expected (at least from the audience's perspective) and the house of cards stood fast.

I began to scratch my head and murmur, *Abh...*, in mock confusion. *Chaos and unexpected change!* I demanded expectantly, but there was none. *Um... thunderbolts and lightning!*

In the way the play had been rehearsed and performed previously, this was meant to engender no response, but that night the heavens answered! A mighty burst of thunder rumbled overhead perfectly on cue, and lightning flashed, starkly lighting up the space for a split second. We had rehearsed (and therefore expected) this not to happen when artificially expected (that is, theatrically) in the play, and now it actually was.

My mock confusion became real confusion. On the other side of the stage The Emperor and Empress began to writhe together, he moaning, *Abh...* Melek Taus rubbed his itchy nose, *Abbh...* The glowing angels' chanting broke down into a fragmented, *Haar... haar*.

As we all cycled through a sequenced round of, *abh..*'s, the volume, pitch and intensity of our cries raised. The blackened sky boomed and churned again. The Emperor's cries of ecstasy exploded orgasmically, as a great sneeze erupted, *abhh...HAVOC!* from me. The luminescent angels screamed, *HAVOC! HAVOC! HAVOC!* from above, and as the Tower of Cards finally collapsed, the sky split wide and tumultuous rain lashed down and filled our outdoors theatre.

Already some of the audience had run for their camps, and those that were left now huddled into the small shelter over our Mongolian chai tent. The storm was far too intense to even consider continuing the performance – we were more intent on getting all the cardboard cards and other props out of the onslaught as fast as possible.

Once we had done so I apologized to the shuddering remnants of our audience, explaining that we would attempt to complete the opera at a later date of the festival with, *Don't worry, the Sun card scene is coming soon.*

The full Opera was performed only once, then inspired by the storm episode, we concluded with a spectacular *finale de construction* performance. The entire system we had established with the Choronzon Machine ritual opera and subsequent elaborations was collapsed and banished along with the physical structures that

housed them. After all, we had to pack up anyway so we thought we might as well have some fun with it.

We performed the Tower/Hierophant scene again, extended into an entire performance in itself summarizing the Fool's journey as expressed in the Opera. Each card was explained progressively as we made the house of cards from the now rather weathered large cardboard trumps, while Marduk the solar hero sliced each off the lemniscate floor pattern they had been laid out in. I threw in references to the Tower of Babel, relating the structure we were building to the order of civilization, including the structured system of the tarot as the paths of the Tree of Life. To demonstrate the hierarchy that was established with the mythic Tower of Babel I demanded that the Jackals do all the work constructing the tower, as I was busy telling the congregation what it all meant. Then our language broke down, I began to bibble babble bible 025G4 babel bile bglblug yyg gglossalia at the audience.

After introducing my own card the Hierophant as a *bastion of Order and systemized knowledge*, a Jackal once again brought in the opposing Blasted Tower card as the symbol of, *Chaos and unexpected change*. When we were about to put the Blasted Tower atop the house of cards, the audience were warned to get back. Most did so on my insistence but laughed at the idea of the pile of cardboard being so dangerous. Those who refused to move were politely informed that Metamorphic Ritual Theatre held no liability for any damages incurred. With trembles of anticipation the card went on top, but the Tower did not collapse. No thunder and lightning this time despite my most ardent pleas to the heavens – just a stable construction, an ordered map of the cosmos. *But there must be chaos and unexpected change – the Blasted Tower is a part of the established order of this tarot system!* I insisted to no avail. The House of Cards stood fast.

At that point, a small titanium explosion (courtesy of Robin from Mutoid Waste Co.) went off in the circuitry of the big towering Tree of Life Choronzon Machine at the back of our set. It began to spark and shudder. Those few who had refused to move back got up rather quickly now and got out of the way. A glowing Angel cameth down with a great chainsaw and saweth through one of the main support pillars and the whole thing came crashing down, melodramatically, slowly and with Amordios riding the back of it throwing off the sephiroth wheels, taking the relatively little house of cards (the paths) down with it!



The ruins of the Machine became akin to a ship as we leapt onto its fallen back, bouncing and rattling it up and down on the rope web awning which had caught most of its weight, which caused the masts around the entire installation's periphery to sway and creak. The great horned Minotaur head which had been at its loftiest peak was now like a figurehead out front. Only the Wheel of Fate had remained vertical, sticking up through the hull like a great Ship's wheel so that we could navigate this strange vessel upon the seas of Chaos.

WHEN THE TOWER CRASHES, can we make Art blossom from the Ashes? Fuck the 'real world'. Like the weather, politics seems mostly beyond our control, no matter who we vote for the Government is in power. They make the rules.

What can we do? Break the rules? Ignore the rules, fuck the rules, but consume as little as you can, fuck the system but don't fuck your own system, eat healthy local produce, exercise, dance, feel good, produce as little consumer waste as you can, recycle *and use* recycled products, live as sustainably and responsibly as possible, avoid plastic bags and use recycled toilet paper. These are baby steps. Pass them on. You don't have to live a life of protest, that's sometimes still giving indirect energy to the machine; but please don't add to what you'd be protesting about if that was, or is, your path.

Increasingly banal structures of control and edifices of anti-nature seem to impose on us, encroach on us. But we can and must create rich and diverse inner worlds and environments, and spread transformation from the self outwards.

Let's make Art, perform theatre, do ritual. After all, that's got nothing to do with the 'real world'... .. has it?

ESG

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DO WE HAVE A PROBLEM? Do we face some kind of Eschaton, an end of the world scenario or an *end of civilisation as we know it* scenario? Can we make alternative plans for Immanentising the Eschaton and bring about the end of the current world order by replacing it with something a bit more agreeable?

I

INTRODUCTION

THE DENIZENS OF ANY HISTORICAL EPOCH usually fancy that they live at some special time or at some pivotal point in history, yet the annals of political, esoteric, and religious history lay littered with apocalyptic predictions that failed to materialise.

Now the scientists have pitched in with their own versions of apocalypse, and according to a growing consensus amongst them we face multiple worldwide catastrophes that threaten civilisation itself within the lifetimes of most of those currently living.

The staff and members of Arcanorium College devoted an entire semester to sifting through a mass of data and statistics, and hypotheses and projections in a huge number of academic papers and books to consider two questions:

- 1 What level of threat actually underlies the growing concerns about overpopulation, climate change and environmental degradation?
- 2 What response from the magical community seems appropriate to such threats?

It might seem unusual that a college devoted to the exploration of the theory and practice of magic might concern itself with such issues. However, magical and esoteric thought has always historically played a leading role in the development of new paradigms and belief systems in science, religion and in the political sphere, and it appears that we basically approach a crisis which involves many of the core beliefs in those systems.

Five points emerged from the Arcanorium study which illustrate the conflicting beliefs involved:

OVERPOPULATION

Few if any authorities expect a 'demographic adjustment', (a reduction in birth-rates due to female emancipation, reduction in infant mortality, and increasing financial security), to prevent the human population attempting to grow from the current 7 billion to about 9.5 billion by 2050.

GLOBAL WARMING

Atmospheric carbon dioxide levels do appear to roughly correlate with this planet's temperature. We appear to have almost doubled the levels since the advent of industrialization and we may at least double them again before we bring fossil fuel use under control. The planet's temperature has risen by about one degree and looks set to rise another degree even with no further carbon dioxide burden.

The speed and extent of such further warming remains unknown but a global rise of more than a couple of degrees will have disastrous effects on world agriculture. The rise in human produced carbon dioxide may trip a series of positive feedback loops that release catastrophic quantities of greenhouse gases from the land and the seas. A four degree rise in this planet's overall temperature means a fatal catastrophe for human civilization.

RESOURCE EXHAUSTION

The human race has based its post WWII boom in food production and transport and its steep increase in population and manufactured items almost entirely on oil. We may have already reached peak oil production anyway, but further use of fossil fuels can only add to global warming. The huge recent expansion in human numbers and activity has led to serious environmental degradation and the loss of vast numbers of species already.

ORGANIZED RELIGION

The three abrahamic monotheisms all assert that their deity has given them the earth and all its creatures to do with as they wish, and that it wants them to go forth and multiply.

POLITICAL-ECONOMIC THEORIES

Virtually all current political-economic theories assert the desirability of continual growth in production and consumption, (de-

spite that beyond a certain level this brings only marginal or even negative changes in quality of life).

Plainly, the beliefs of scientists conflict severely with those held by many religious and political-economic lobbies. Few people seem happy with mutually contradictory belief systems, indeed many people will enthusiastically go to war over contradictory belief systems. So let us look at each of them in some detail before considering which sides, if any, to take when attempting to devise a magical response.

II

THE DESIRABILITY OF GROWTH?

FIRSTLY, overpopulation and growth economics. The scientists have already got this partly wrong at least once. Thomas Malthus wrote at the beginning of the nineteenth century that food production could only increase by adding a few million tons or so extra production each year by piecemeal increases in land use and agricultural technique improvements, so food can only increase arithmetically, 1. 2. 3. 4. 5, etc, at the very best. However, he considered that population would naturally increase exponentially 1. 2. 4. 8.16, etc, as the more people you have the more extra people they all make. This led him to predict catastrophe. It seemed that human numbers would inevitably outstrip any possible increases in food supply and mass mortality due to starvation, disease, or war would result.

Such Malthusian dynamics keep all natural plant and animal populations in check. Indeed disease and food supply, and to a limited extent war (self-predation), kept human numbers fairly low on a planetary scale until Malthus' time. Then they really began to take off, primarily because of mortality reduction due to better hygiene and the beginnings of modern medicine dramatically reducing infant mortality.

We would have had a Malthusian catastrophe sometime after the middle of the last century, but two other factors came into play. A so-called Green Revolution based on the massive use of artificial fertilizers and industrialized agriculture allowed food production to suddenly step change to a higher level and a demographic adjustment occurred in developed nations where people no longer felt the need to reproduce as much as possible to guarantee their own survival in old age. However, continued

population growth has now absorbed the surpluses created by the green revolution and global per capita food availability has begun to decrease. Furthermore, the damage inflicted by industrialized agriculture now begins to become apparent and the demographic adjustment seems to have failed to take place in huge tracts of the world where wealth creation has failed.

It now seems unlikely that we can achieve sustainable adequate food production for 9+ billion people, particularly as the current production methods lack sustainability.

The areas of the world where the Malthusian equation has hit hardest so far have become the hotbeds of political instability and accelerated environmental degradation and, in the context of a globalized world, the main sources of terrorism.

From a scientific viewpoint we require a massive switch to styles of product and food production that do not depend on fossil fuels, or fertilizers that degrade the soil, coupled with a massive effort of persuasion to reduce population and consumption to sustainable levels.

From a religious viewpoint demographic adjustment generally seems undesirable. Faiths compete by breeding, and poverty breeds faith better than wealth does.

Political-economic theories remain almost exclusively committed to economic growth through increasing consumption and population increases. In Europe, where birth rates of the indigenous population have fallen below replacement levels, the political classes have covertly encouraged immigration to maintain population growth in the hope that this will maintain economic growth.

Politicians usually take a short-term view, particularly in democracies that limit their tenure. Many seem to figure that if science got us into this mess it can get us out just as easily, despite the fact that few scientists exhibit much hope of quick technical fixes to the problems they envisage. Sometimes politicians even opine that humans themselves constitute the ultimate resource and that more people equals more possible solutions, however more starving, uneducated and under-resourced people seem more likely to enlarge rather than solve such problems.

Magicians, as habitual antinomians, might well take a dim view of all of the above and in their characteristic observation-intuition thought mode, come to the following conclusions: the world does appear to have become uncomfortably crowded and more paranoid, the climate has obviously started to change and environmental degradation increases alarmingly. Optimism about the future

seems in short supply and what little exists seems rather fragile. In the developed world the material standard of living seems to increase but the quality of life does not, and indeed it seems to have peaked several decades ago for many people, in the late 1960s in the USA and in the middle 1970s in Europe according to some sociological measures. In many of the undeveloped parts of the world both material standards and quality of life have declined, partly due to their population explosions, and partly due to the rapacious economic activity of the developed world.

It seems that humanity has made a very large number of mistakes, but they all seem to come down to variations on the same basic mistake: *Humanity has mistaken Quantity for Quality.*

More does not necessarily mean better. Two properly fed and educated children seem a better investment than six left half starved and stupid.

Beyond a certain income level no further increment brings any increment in quality of life, and this income level corresponds to having sufficient food and shelter and the freedom to do something interesting with one's leisure.

The acquisition of ever more consumer goods and consumer experiences and the quest to consume competitively against ones social peers does not actually bring any quality of life improvements at all according to psychologists, despite the vast industry of lies that we have created to promote these false assumptions.

'Virtue' brings life satisfaction but the effects of 'Pleasure' remain ephemeral, as the ancient Greek philosophers realized long ago. By Virtue they meant service to others, the establishment of agreeable relationships and friendships, and personal achievement in terms of learning and self-improvement. Such things bring lasting satisfaction. Pleasure, on the other hand, evaporates almost immediately, leaving little but a desire for more pleasure till it either becomes an addictive vice or so tedious that it needs replacing with another pleasure. Virtue brings Quality, Pleasure merely creates a demand for Quantity.

Of course a vast industry of lies exists to promote the contrary view in developed nations because marketing pleasure proves far more profitable than marketing virtue.

Thus it would seem that a battle for belief needs fighting to save humanity from the catastrophic consequences of overpopulation and over-consumption. Magicians specialize in the construction of belief systems, and thus they seem uniquely placed to assist with this. No major religion, with the possible exception of some forms

of Buddhism, has much to offer here, so we may need to create another by integrating various minority ideas into a coherent alternative. Some form of panpsychic neo-Pantheism suggests itself. (see part v).

III

RELIGION AND POLITICS

MOST RELIGIONS do contain an ascetic aesthetic which values the inner life above the outer life of material acquisition and consumption, however most reserve this for their monks and nuns and mystics and for other specialized classes of holy people, who all usually remain celibate.

However the great mass of believers in most religions live under rule systems designed to maximize reproduction through the control of sexual activity. Polygamy tends to evolve in cultures suffering high male losses in warfare; monogamy tends to evolve in agrarian cultures. Homosexuality, masturbation, contraception and other practices which may lower the reproduction rate tend to fall under religious prohibition, except where temporary homosexuality aids militarism.

Religions compete as much by breeding as by proselytizing and forced conversion after military conquest. The 'Monotheist Phallacy' as we magicians call it, refers to the Abrahamic idea that some male deity created the world for our convenience and exploitation. This idea no longer seems tenable from an evolutionary or an ecological perspective.

Confident that they can outbreed the Israelis, the Palestinians rejected a 'Two State Solution' in the Middle East, believing that they will eventually dominate demographically in a 'Single State Solution'.

We seem to have a curious situation where full religious experience demands asceticism and celibacy but ordinary religious observance demands quite the reverse.

Indeed, ordinary religious observance in most cultures consists largely of praying for improvements in material life and obeying rules for multiplying the population.

At many stages in history the multiplication of population and advances in material conditions went hand in hand with each other and with religion, but that era seems to have ended. Material

ease tends to erode religious faith. When you have medical care, freedom from serious want and oppression, and plenty of entertainment, little remains to seriously pray for. Religion has become a negligible social force in Europe, in America it remains loud but shallow, a mere *add on* to one's lifestyle and identity choices.

However, in many parts of the underdeveloped parts of the world where religion itself has inhibited technical development and hence social development, population growth has led to diminishing living standards and prospects. Paradoxically, this has not led to the rejection of religion but rather to virulent fundamentalist forms of it, seemingly on the basis that if something fails we obviously need much more of it to make it work.

A similar situation has developed with growth and consumerism in developed nations. It doesn't actually work, it fails to provide satisfaction, so obviously we need more of it, or so the mainstream economists and politicians tell us, and most people still believe them.

Contraception now allows for the development of non-celibate forms of intense mystical and religious experience. Basic prosperity now allows for the development of ascetic political-economic behavior that seeks satisfaction in small scale quality rather than through trash in quantity. So where do the prophets of these phenomena lie?

Well elements of these philosophies lie all around us in the writings of various tantrics, sex-magicians, hippy-anarchists, deep ecologists, neo-panteists and other disaffected types, but the alternative movement currently lacks coherence and it faces fanatical opposition from the religious and political-economic establishments.

IV

THE WILD CARD

SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY effectively lie beyond social and political control. We cannot reliably anticipate what we may discover and invent, we cannot easily discover and invent to order, or un-invent anything. At best we can merely influence the rate of discovery and invention and try to prevent the use of technologies we don't like.

We already have technical fixes for overpopulation, contraceptives or weapons of mass destruction, but we have an unwillingness to use them.

We already have the technical ability to replace all fossil fuels with nuclear and renewable energy sources but we lack the collective will to make the sacrifices of short term and vested interests to do this.

We do not however, have the technical ability to double the world's yields of food, freshwater, and raw materials in a sustainable way, and we seem unlikely to achieve this.

We already have the technology to create consumer durables that will last many times longer than current models, and to achieve vast reductions in waste; but instead we use technology to create ever more spurious and disposable fashions and products for economic reasons.

Decades ago we fondly imagined that science and technology would largely free us from most of the work, toil, and drudgery in our lives and leave us with endless time for leisure and our interests and pleasures. In fact quite the reverse has happened in 'developed' societies. Somehow we have ended up co-opting most of the females into the workforce as well, and ever vaster amounts of work get done due to technologically increased productivity, but few get any more leisure or any more satisfaction from the system, we just get busier and ever more time-oppressed.

We do have the technology to produce quite enough for our life support and amusement needs with just a couple of days work a week, but the entire economic system that we have built works against such a more sensible arrangement. In particular, the artificially high prices of food and shelter and the built in obsolescence of manufactured goods keeps everyone's nose to the grindstone.

Capitalism works well enough to create wealth, but it also creates an equal amount of un-wealth or 'ill-th' at the same time in the way of waste, pollution, artificial shortages, and a supply and a demand for shoddy and low quality goods and experiences.

Despite the apparent economic freedoms capitalism confers, it actually acts effectively as a highly sophisticated command economy by manipulating demand. Most people spend most of their waking lives working far longer than they want to for either over-priced necessities or for stuff they don't really want or need or derive much satisfaction from.

Perhaps alone of all recent technologies, the internet offers a sensible alternative to a lot of consumerism. It offers the possibility

of virtually free music, entertainment, literature, knowledge and communication. Artists, writers, and creative types hardly need paying. Most of them do most of their best work before they get paid anything anyway. If nobody had to do more than two days work a week we would have an avalanche of creativity, people would do it for its own sake and the social kudos and to improve their mating opportunities.

Much the same applies to scientists. Although society may sometimes need to assist with equipment costs if it wants some areas investigated. However it does seem that the majority of fundamental breakthroughs required little more than pencil and paper and time to think outside the box. (Newton, Darwin, Einstein, etc).

At the time of writing the internet remains relatively democratic and somewhat anarchic although in some nations it has already become subject to censorship and political and moral policing. Even in democratic countries politicians continually debate measures to police it in various ways and it seems appropriate to consider possible future political developments in this technology section.

Military technology largely defines political reality. Athenian democracy applied only to the elite who could afford to equip themselves to join the hoplite phalanxes, or who had the spare time to crew the triremes. Feudalism arose from the battlefield superiority of armored cavalry. Democracy grew out of the barrels of mass musket formations. Female emancipation came at the price of work in munitions factories. Communism arose from the effect of machine guns and the telegraph on half medieval societies. The presidential dictatorships that dominate most of the third world depend on assault rifles and the control of communications.

The current offensive ineffectiveness of mass conscript conventional armies depends partly on the existence of weapons of mass destruction and partly on the huge defensive power of cheap infantry weapons, but it poses a great threat to democracy.

The political classes do not like democracy. Whilst it allows them to retire from duty whilst still alive, it plays hell with their job security. When they cease to need massive armies they no longer need to offer democracy, particularly if civilians remain mainly unarmed, as in Europe. Only comparative freedom of communication now safeguards democracy, and it may not last.

All around the world democracy seems in retreat in favor of command 'mixed economies'. These have only tokenistic elections that merely reshuffle the lower echelons of the political class.

Russia and China lead the way in this direction and the political class of Europe seems keen to follow with its Synarchist model of the EU.

In this emerging EU Synarchic system, a self-perpetuating council and bureaucracy of 'Those Who Know Best' governs as an unelected oligarchy. The rule of law becomes corrupted by the imposition of impossible regulations that criminalize every imaginable activity, but which when selectively enforced yield to the political classes their Holy Grail of arbitrary power.

Relatively free societies have till recently demonstrated economic and military superiority over less free ones because their citizens innovated more effectively, but this may change. As we begin to run out of resources more heavily controlled societies may demonstrate greater robustness against disorder and collapse. Restrictions on communication and freedom of expression will inevitably herald any moves towards more authoritarian government.

In the meantime, the governments of both relatively free and highly controlled societies will continue to take the easy route of buying off popular dissent with economic growth, regardless of its well understood unsustainability, and the deteriorating climate.

V

THE MAGICAL RESPONSE

- A: Can the pursuit of Magic offer an attractive alternative to religion and the political-economic religion of consumerism?
- B: Would the widespread adoption of the pursuit of Magic reduce humanity's current suicidal reliance on religion and excessive consumption?

Well as for (A), nothing brings more satisfaction in life than those 'magic moments' of creative insight, achievement, laughter, wonderment, ecstasy, self-knowledge, parapsychological success, and joy in the company of others. Basically, we live for such magical experiences without often realizing that whilst to some extent they depend on circumstances, we largely create them within ourselves.

Magic has developed many techniques to explore these phenomena. Chief among them lays the meta-belief that we can treat belief as a technology rather than as an end in itself. The value of any belief lies in what effects it produces; the best ones produce plenty of meaningful magic moments.

Magic can supply a far more effective antidote to religion than science. It can demonstrate how to reproduce all the effects of religion, social, psychological, mystical and parapsychological, without all the dubious dogma or reliance on fixed counterintuitive belief structures.

Science can merely point out the stupidity of religious beliefs whilst grudgingly admitting their occasionally beneficial consequences. Magic makes a more fundamental attack; it regards all beliefs, including scientific ones, as tools for achieving effects, and it selects or discards them on the basis of whether or not they produce those magic moments that make existence worthwhile.

The magical quest for meaningful experience and beliefs 'that do what they say on the packet' involves the development of inner resources as much as outer ones. Indeed most magicians have discovered that developing inner resources seems to encourage the outer resources they need for this to appear, as if by err, magic.

Magicians prefer to develop powers of trance and meditation and visualization and the ability to divine and cast spells and to explore their own inner pantheons and make their own gods and sources of inspiration. Of course, this takes study and effort but they would argue that it brings meaningful peak experiences more effectively than striving for ever more material consumption does.

Personally, I only tend to value objects that I have made by hand myself, books which have presented a challenge to my understanding, and abilities that I have mastered.

I care little for manufactured objects or vicarious experience, most entertainment seems dull in comparison to my own dreams.

Amongst emerging magical paradigms, the new Chaos Magic tradition seems to have taken the broadest metaphysical approach and identified Magic as an all encompassing world view with its own take on religion, science, and art, which it views as sub-sets of itself.

This new magic does not overly concern itself with ancient grimoires and antique symbolic 'secrets', although it acknowledges the historical struggles that the magical world view has gone through in search of self consistency and consistency with obser-

vation and experience. To this extent it has more in common with science than with religion.

'Quantum-Panpsychic-Neopanteism' probably best describes the default paradigm of Chaos Magic, the belief its practitioners use when they're not using another one for some particular purpose.

Panpsychism means recognizing that everything has some degree of aliveness, even seemingly inanimate phenomena like planets, the weather, rocks, and teapots. The conventional view attributes aliveness only to very complicated structures like plants and animals and us, and possibly to very sophisticated or recalcitrant machines.

However, quantum-panpsychism starts at the other end and recognizes aliveness in the basic building blocks of the universe, the fundamental particles or 'quanta', quarks, electrons, neutrinos, photons and so on. These all exhibit a degree of free will/random behavior and a degree of memory/information retention.

Relatively simple objects like rocks do not exhibit much more aliveness than their constituent particles but some complex structures, particularly those conventionally designated as 'living organisms' have structures which magnify the underlying quantum life signs up to macroscopic level. The Gaia hypothesis asserts that this whole planet acts as a sort of vast living organism. Most magicians regard the weather system as alive in some sense. Personally, I attribute life to rocks, but they live their lives so slowly that it usually escapes our attention.

Of course, if everything has life it all deserves our respect and it may respond to our attempts to communicate and negotiate with it.

The theory that everything 'lives' goes by the name of Pantheism, the idea of a god or gods in all phenomena and not separate to them. Mind/information and matter/energy consist of the same mysterious substance. The universe thus consists of the inseparable mind and body of a god or of many gods.

The many gods hypothesis seems more realistic than the unitary hypothesis. The universe consists of a chaotic jumble of conflicting forces, and so do we, although most of the beliefs of science and religion seek to assert otherwise, and impose some kind of order.

The human mind plainly does not actually function in the singular sense that the monotheist theory of soul or the post-monotheist idea of 'self' implies. The brain has many programs that it has accreted over the course of a rather haphazard evolution; many of

them remain more or less unaware of each other, or have little or no executive control over each other, we consist of a squabbling bag of gods inside our brains with no fixed head of state. At best we can hope to establish some sort of Neo-Pantheist democracy rather than impose a dictatorship along monotheist lines.

Neo-Pantheists do not seek to erect a false singular identity for themselves; rather they seek to explore the riches of their inner pantheons by meditation, ritual enactment, and action in the world. Neo-Pantheist theory asserts that everyone has untapped reserves of extraordinary abilities, often you merely have to persuade the other parts of the mind to shut up for a while to invoke them.

Neo-Pantheist magicians quite frequently name their various selves, sometimes using the names of appropriate pagan gods. Such godforms, or chaomeras as we sometimes call them, can actually create parapsychological and probability distorting effects in the outside world, thus our scientific selves do not regard the process as entirely deluded.

The outside world only exists for us as perceptions and thoughts and feelings about them inside our own heads anyway. People who spend their energies frantically piling up worldly power and riches do so in an attempt to change their own experiences of the world within their heads. Magicians usually have more interest in discovering the riches already inside and they usually remain content with merely remaining materially comfortable, excess wealth and consumption brings them no kudos with their peers, only their knowledge and self mastery counts for anything there.

Magical philosophy contains a strong streak of individualism and self reliance bordering on hubris, we choose what to believe and try to make it work, and we make our own gods in our own images and try to live them out. We also try to make ourselves a work of art in mind and body, an aesthetic more akin to that of the classical Greeks than that of the contemporary wage slave and consumer-punter.

And thus we arrive at question B). Would the widespread adoption of the pursuit of Magic reduce humanity's current suicidal reliance on religion and excessive consumption?

Most of the magicians I know have a high standard of education, they have a working knowledge of science and a profound distrust of organized religion, they either got this through social privilege or by clawing their way to it by sheer will and imagination.

So perhaps we need to consider the wider question of *what can magic offer the great mass of humanity?*

AT THIS POINT it seems appropriate to loosen the constraints of consensus religious and politico-economic reasoning and try for some visions of a magic based society instead.

Imagine a society where neighborhoods had their own magical temples where people could come to learn and practice meditation, visualization, trance, ritual, invocation, enchantment and divination, free from theological dogma, purely as mental techniques.

Places where people could bring their own creations in the form of music, song, art, food, poetry, ideas, and rituals, for mutual celebration.

Imagine that such activities might prove more rewarding than watching television or competing to acquire ever more consumer junk, and that it might create a different aesthetic which values people more for the quality of what they can offer rather than the quantity of what they can consume.

Imagine a working week reduced to two days. In technologically sophisticated societies this should easily suffice to provide basic necessities. We could pleurably spend the rest of the time freely exchanging our efforts and gain social kudos by amusing, entertaining, serving, teaching and learning from each other. We do not need to commercialize and economically regulate such activities.

Imagine having to foot the real hidden costs of private vehicles; they would virtually disappear in favor of public transport, and the reintroduction of walking and cycling. Coupled with the decriminalization of public nudity, that would sort out the obesity crisis very quickly.

Imagine a society where everyone had the leisure for proper exercise and the resulting disappearance of the grotesque waddling blobs that now make up a sizeable proportion of the consumer population. Commercialized culture has destroyed any kind of bodily aesthetic that the Greeks would have recognized and replaced it with anorexic role models and an overweight population, and people who would rather watch sport than do it.

Imagine a world where any piece of land we do not really need to use reverts to wilderness, and a world in which any proposed building deemed ghastly by general acclaim doesn't get built, we cease to practice modern architecture and the world doesn't get any uglier, for that just increases disrespect for it.

ESCHATON

Imagine having no professional politicians. Instead we assign the duty by lottery to a random selection from the citizenry for a strictly limited time. People who want political power shouldn't have it, for that very reason.

And for that very reason we as magicians shouldn't seek it either, rather we should lead by example, persuade by the power of imagination, and implant our will by stealthy enchantments.

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THE BLASTED TOWER: in a whip-crack of lightning *la tour* transforms into *le trou* – the hole, or cave – an allusion to the female sex. In livid incandescence, amidst destruction and the reconfiguration of matter, that ever present interplay and interpenetration is manifest. Not a reconciliation of opposites, but in essence the yab-yum of divine dynamic sexualised polarity – seeding potential, creating as it destroys, destroying as it creates.

Atu XVI evokes our present condition recalling the destruction of the tower of Babel, our hubris punished at the dawn of civilization – as again we are facing the wrath of the gods in our dusk. Interpretations of the Tower based on dualistic thinking can be consigned to the rubble of our iconic folly. A straightforward or superficial reading risks us finding ourselves in a dead-end or carried away by the mainstream. The gift of the image lies in its power to feed our imagination. Here is the fire from heaven which catalyses our latent or sleeping natures. The Tower depicts union, but also the moment of illumination, that fulgurant irruption of revelation which springs from this union.

THE SURVIVOR'S STRATAGEM

WE ARE LIVING IN A WORLD IN CRISIS. Humankind has rapaciously devoured the fruits of the Garden, has stripped and bled the Earth, and has delivered itself into slavery. Surrendering our freedoms does not absolve us of responsibility, just as it will not liberate us from the consequences of our actions.

It appears that we are fast approaching a non-industrialised future, closer to the feudal model of the Middle Ages. In distinction to the medieval period however, we are confronted with a severe shortage of resources. Europe is no longer covered in forests. The oceans and seas are overfished and polluted. Blood will be spilt over clean fresh water. Our cohesion as a society has been rent; we are divided, frightened, tired, medicalised, anaesthetised. We have been bought, *freedom* redefined as *consumer choice*. Once more, the burden of guilt – to be expiated in toil and want – falls on us, the people. In this world it is all too easy to forget our connection to the land, suffocated as it is under asphalt, bricks, communication networks and all the adornments of progress. Our ability to lose ourselves, to go into the wild remote places, is diminishing and in some areas completely gone. Without this connection we are truly lost.

We are screened from the full realisation of our state by the dazzling glare of the media that saturates our waking and our dreaming consciousness. The result of this rapid-cut close-up dismantling of history is a failure to see patterns, to predict events. A first magical and revolutionary act is to throw away the TV. Perhaps it will then become possible to respond meaningfully, to the onset of what Dmitry Orlov has called *collapse*.

A Russian-American engineer, Orlov was born in the Soviet Union, emigrated to the United States at twelve, and thus has witnessed, as an insider, the rival trajectories of the two superpowers as they race towards their respective falls. His insights into their similarities and differences are worth reading, not least because he has seen the 'soft' collapse of Russia, in light of which he predicts a 'hard' collapse for the West. The advice he delivers to those who would see through the transition is purely practical, his strategies include: investing in resources that will maintain value after currency collapses and, above all, skills; buying land, both to farm and also to return to original use, ie. forest; the reinstatement of gift-giving and bartering; investing locally, and carrying out a *controlled demolition of the global economy* whilst decoupling from it.

He has also noted that previously marginalised groups will come into their own during this process; the rural poor (*being poor takes a lot of practice!*) – and by extension, the wise women, the healers, the cunning men and horse whisperers, the midwives and the necromancers – whose roles were all but expunged in the pyres of reason and progress, will find their skills are increasingly sought and valued. He writes:

And so I would not be surprised to see these marginalised groups stage a come-back. Almost every rural place has its population of people who know how to use the local resources. They are the human component of the local ecosystems, and, as such, they deserve much more respect than they have received. A lot of them can't be bothered about fine manners or about speaking English. Those who are used to thinking of them as primitive, ignorant and uneducated will be shocked to discover how much they must learn from them.

What interests me in this transition is the potential for magicians, occultists and pagans to engage with what is happening, to take initiative. Our strength will be found in combining our differences,

our resources and our talents. Our diversity can become the medium of resistance against an (out of) control culture.

The fall of the Tower is the failure of a phallic hierarchical construct. In its place, the possibility to initiate a rhizomatic underground, a web of self-sustaining, self-perpetuating autonomous cells or covens, whose praxis is rooted in their environment. If the outer form of this submerged structure is subversive by its nature, it is equally so in its inner orientation: for it removes the man-made contrivance of the Tower as its focus and aligns itself with the axis mundi.

THE WITCHCRAFT

OUR OWN MAGICAL WORK, as it develops, is leading us further from the mapped and colonised terrains of modern magic. When I met Peter it was a *coup de foudre* for us both; our old lives were shattered – materially and spiritually – so that we were freed to test and temper each other, to dismantle and discard what had served its purpose. What is (re)emerging from the ruins is a magic stripped bare, a practice based on altering consciousness through energy work, ordeal and psychoactive plants and drugs, ritualised and freeform. It is, in some ways, a continuation of the spirit of the last works of Jack Parsons, a return to the roots of witchcraft. In *Freedom is a Two-edged Sword* his instinctive and passionate essays illuminate the first steps of a path to reconnect with the primal spirit of woman and man. A partnership of equals. Art. Change. Revolution.

We are the witchcraft. We are the oldest organisation in the world. When man was first born, we were. We sang the first cradle song. We healed the first wound, we comforted the first terror. We were the Guardians against the Darkness, the Helpers on the Left Hand Side.

We are on the side of man, of life and of the individual. Therefore we are against religion, morality and government. Therefore our name is Lucifer.

We are on the side of freedom, of love, of joy and laughter and divine drunkenness. Therefore our name is Babalon.

On August 20th 1946 Parsons resigned from the OTO, calling it autocratic. Feeling that he had reached the limit of what he could learn within the Order, he needed an alternative expression for the energies and impulses that had fired his first occult explorations. His solution was to invoke the myth of the earliest manifestations of magic, there being none of the myriad opportunities available to our generation. Jack imagined witchcraft, he dreamt it. He sought it through the fault lines in consciousness, at the crossed roads of power lines, in descent to the wells of atavistic memory. And he found it in the body of a woman, of woman.

... she will come as a perilous flame and a devious song, a voice in the judgment halls, a banner before armies. She will come girt with the sword of freedom, and before her kings and priests will tremble and cities and empires will fall, and she will be called BABALON, the scarlet woman. For she will be lustful and proud; she will be subtle and deadly, she will be forthright and invincible as a naked blade.¹

His œuvre is slim, but the essays in *Freedom is a Two-edged Sword*, show Jack to be a torchbearer for the idealistic and humanist philosophy that founded the United States: ideals, he felt, that had already been betrayed by 1950. They are being further undermined today, the Patriot Act has eclipsed the Bill of Rights, and the situation is as dire in the UK.

In Jack's manifestos we can trace the influence of Thelema, particularly *Liber Oz*, which states the rights of man. Further, we find Rabelais, whose subversive use of humour reignited in the Renaissance the bonfires of medieval popular insurgency. It is of course Rabelais' *do what thou wilt* which was recycled by Crowley.

The influence of communism, still viewed as a devilish opposer to capitalist interests in America, is also apparent in Jack's thought. His writing style echoes the stirring clarion call for freedom found in the *Communist Manifesto*. But he took its idealistic vigour, rather than a straight reading of Marx's economic critique of society. Instead of embracing dialectical materialism, Jack saw the disintegration occurring in his own society ending in the individual freedom of Thelema not the collectivism of communism. He writes in the *Manifesto of the Witchcraft*:

¹ *The Woman Girt with a Sword*, from *Freedom is a Two-Edged Sword*.

... the breakup of the home and family, the confusion in the problems of morals and behaviour, the frustration of the individual need for love, self-expression and freedom, and the immanence of the destruction of western civilisation all indicate the need for a basic reexamination and alteration of individual and social values.

Looking deeper we can also detect the ideas that led to the French Revolution and the fall of the ancien régime – liberté, égalité, fraternité. Jack, in common with Wicca and feminist aligned witchcraft, also inherited the ideas of Jacob Grimm and Jules Michelet, who recast the witch in the 19th century as a wise woman and the defender and healer of the people. The rising of a Romantic nationalist sentiment amongst the bourgeoisie cast the figure of the witch as both pre-Christian and anti-Christian. Inspired by Grimm's example, set out in *Deutsche Mythologie*, Michelet saw her as a symbol of the French people. He specifically and quite fictitiously identified her with the Revolution in his novel *La Sorcière*:

Under such a system of blind and indiscriminate repression, to venture little, to venture much and far, is all one, and the risk the same. The very danger incurred increased the Sorceresses' recklessness, and led them to do and dare everything.

Whilst Michelet could not be accused of historical veracity in his novel, his imaginative recovery of the witch as the guardian of the Old Religion, was rousing to those looking for an archetype to lead them over the barricades and into an egalitarian, progressive future. Folklore was mobilized, as the peasants and proletariat themselves could never have been. The rebellious witch may be a romantic figure born of idealism, nevertheless her hold over our imagination is real. All modern forms of witchcraft are heavily dependent on this very romanticism, on a nostalgic remembering which at its best is a form of Gnostic re-membering and at its worst a mawkish sentimental escapism.

It is witchcraft which can destroy the Tower, turn over the social order and throw kings from the battlements. Opposed to an external coercive authority, I see witchcraft being spun from the body, the true pole around which the dance of life and death circles.

INVERSION AND REVOLUTION

The Black Mass and the Sabbat

MICHELET EXPLICITLY UNITES woman's body with Revolution, and the return to a natural, cyclical order which she spins from her womb. He writes: *That the marvellous monster of universal life was swallowed up inside her; that from now on life, death, everything was held within her entrails, and at the price of such painful labour, she had conceived Nature.*

What he intuits and deploys to his own ends is the immense energy generated by her menstrual cycle: order is reversed or inverted and the body is purged and renewed. Woman IS revolution because she is always in flux, always moving, always changing.

Jack too, places Woman at the centre, and not at the edges of magick. Not a fixed, obedient centre, not the projected idealised object of male single-pointed consciousness.

The suppression, demonisation and control of women under Christianity and Capitalism – its rapaciously prolific progeny – signifies the intent to domesticate people. A tamed workforce is more productive, more manageable. It was woman, as herself, and as mother, sister, wife, lover, comrade in arms, who had to be undone in order to break the strength of man.

Aiming at controlling nature, the capitalist organization of work must refuse the unpredictability implicit in the practice of magic, and the possibility of establishing a privileged relation with the natural elements, as well as the belief in the existence of powers available only to particular individuals, and thus not easily generalized and exploitable... Above all, magic seemed a form of refusal of work, of insubordination, and an instrument of grassroots resistance to power. The world had to be 'disenchanted' in order to be dominated.²

It is for us all to re-enchant the world. To free ourselves. To do what we will. The role of women is vital in this process, and always has been. From the women burnt to fuel our enlightened consumer utopias, to the feared *pétroleuses* of the Paris Commune, to the incendiary women of 20th century Red Armies, women have always been more than equal in the revolutionary struggle for freedom.

² Silvia Federici, *Caliban and the Witch*.



The Sabbat and the Black Mass symbolise and accomplish an overthrow or a subversion of the established order. They threaten the architecture of control, as also did the Feast of Fools, the Vigil of Venus and our May Day festivities. Traditions such as the 'Oss of Padstow, and Penglaz the 'Obby 'Oss of Penwith, are clearly pagan in origin and sensibility, they mark natural time – May day, Midsummer, Midwinter – and they are ever vital, even now as the wheel of the year is loose on its axle, because they belong to the present. Penglaz, the nightmare, confronts the living with their inescapable mortality; with Her pallid indestructible skull She teases and goads us, She rides us into the ground.

If May Day is both green and red, we must not forget the black masses, the celebrations of opposition, the nigrescent gatherings in the high distant places, the orgiastic feasts of the witches and the beasts. It should also be remembered that the sabbats were often a cover for the revolutionary meetings of the medieval peasantry in conflict with their feudal overlords. Unified for a common aim, men and women enjoyed a rare equality.

The reverse spectacle, the celebration, in which everyone participates, in which no-one is voyeur, is the sabbat.³

Once more we recognise the inversion and revolution inherent in Witchcraft, and exemplified by the sabbat. This is the essence of magic, the shamanic core of which demands that each celebrant, each ecstatic, each *present*, loses their face and speaks with the gods directly.

Jack's manifesto of *The Witchcraft* is anti-organisation and anti-authoritarian: *All organisations have known us, no organisation is of us; where there is too much organisation we depart.* And Hélène Cixous in her insightful and poetic elucidation of oppositions, *Sorties*, writes: *Organization by hierarchy makes all conceptual organization subject to man.*

Witchcraft subtly evades this external control, as it eludes exoteric definition; structure is anathema on this path which is always underfoot, which comes into being in the act of being trodden. Witchcraft is first and foremost an art written in, by and through the woman, having a pared down beauty and restraint that needs nothing but the body and what is at hand to exist. Her body is the means and the end. Power waxes through life lived, experience, the hundred daily chores that whittle away the ego – it cannot be

³ From *La Jeune Née*, Catherine Clément.

bought or feigned. At core, witchcraft is a fluid number of techniques – as individual as those who develop and carry them; it is craft as power, and craft as skill.

Witchcraft speaks the green language of Venus, her alluring fly-trap cunning leading us into the game, her game; and witchcraft speaks in the common tongue. Her universe is a realm of assonance and play, rather than number and dogma.

Witchcraft is timeless precisely because it is NOW, the blindspot of history. Lunar because it is a reflection of the times we live in, and a living response to our present condition. The witch walks with a foot in both worlds, sacred and profane bound together with each footfall. Never obliged to believe in man-made truths, her eye looks beyond the shifting surfaces, day and night, life and death, into the dynamic unity: Pan-Babalon, Ometeotl, Śiva-Śakti. This is an archaic, shamanic vision of the world and the words of artist sorcerer Austin Osman Spare evoke it:

This is the wisdom of the cavemen 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 now 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.⁴

In the search for an irrational, transgressive otherness lies the convergence between my path as a dancer and witchcraft. The Ecstatic whose feet beat out rhythm against the earth. The cauled fetus whose heart pounds against the confines of its sac. Entering the circle the Sabbatic dancer is plunged into a void, the *ombilic-alembic*, the cauldron. Time gyrates space bends. Spirit flows into form, held momentarily and shattered. Each movement iterates a corporeal glyph spelling incantations. Wordless expression, creation inseparable from destruction, a primal archaic gnosis that has not yet been born.

Dance allowed me to enter the world of spirits, and to move amongst them; to alchemise physical and mental exertion whilst developing focus, balance and the harnessing of the emotions. The ritual of performance, with or without an audience, is a potent magical act, but it is through training and daily practice that I have undergone the profoundest initiations.

⁴ AOS, quoted by Kenneth Grant in *Hecate's Fountain*.

The sacrifice and ordeal of dance as an offering, an energetic prayer by which we participate in the cycles of creation, preservation and destruction, is reminiscent of the role of Śiva as Natarāja, the Lord of the Dance. The body of the sacrificer or dancer is one of His eight forms and through it we partake of the entire realm of Nature which is His: water, fire, *ākāśa* (æthyr or quintessence), earth, air, the Sun and the Moon. The sacrificer is the sacrifice, just as the artist is one with creation. This devotion is its own reward, the benefits extend throughout the nervous system, to the awareness of being a body that speaks, a *lucid body*.

THE WITCH HAS LONG SUBLIMATED THE DESIGNS OF POWER. She has been born of dungeons, learnt her craft under the tutelage of inquisitors, she *took flight* in strapado. All institutions of repression will incubate heresy. It does not take long to realise the society whose freedoms we enjoy is repressive, restrictive and controlling: one nation under CCTV, spy drones, and a militarised police force to quell and deter protest. One does not need to step far out of line to slam into the bars. Witchcraft is a path of resistance, the path of the survivor, as relevant now as always.

Of all the fathers of modern witchcraft only Jack shared the witches' fate, his body burned to ash, his self effaced. And since Michelet resurrected this downtrodden and silenced woman as the future messiah, only Jack has so explicitly called for freedom, and addressed this cry to woman, called her Babalon, goddess of Love and War. Babylon is fallen, we are fallen, and it has fallen to us to dismantle the towers within and without. The revolutions will first be accomplished in consciousness. We can change ourselves, in a lightning flash, *in ictu oculi*. We have in our hands and in the land, the tools and the weapons to win our freedom. The world is our battlefield and the battle is still being fought. Let us be like the *enfants perdus* of the Paris Commune. Those foolhardy or brave souls who flung themselves over the barricades at the behest of the goddess Liberty. These are the *voltigeurs*, whom you may recall from the works of Michael Bertiaux and Kenneth Grant where they are the leapers between worlds. But rather than this batrachian image, I prefer the other meaning, of pauper princes rather than frogs. Ragged children of freedom sacrificing all for their brothers and sisters in this world – for what is this world if not the place where ALL worlds meet and collide. And by acting in this world who is to say that we are not leaping between?

The witchcraft we practice is not regression, neither is it nostalgia; it is a process of anamnesis, a revelatory un-forgetting of our true nature which we seek to fix or earth in our bodies. The archaic world is sealed to us and our exiled consciousness can only return to it in ekstasis and wild abandon, throwing off the shackles we took on in fear. Fear of change, fear of going without, fear of death, fear of the unknown... Yet, in the unknown lies the path we must tread. Do not let ignorance, conformity and social inertia determine your course. Be unreasonable.

Sometimes we move openly, sometimes in silence and in secret. Night and day are one to us, calm and storm, seasons and the cycles of man, all these things are one, for we are at the roots. Suppliant we stand before the Powers of Life and Death, and are heard of these powers and avail. Our way is the secret way, the unknown direction. Ours is the way of the serpent in the underbrush, our knowledge is in the eyes of goats and of women.

Jack understood. The way opening to us now is the lightning path, that crooked path of current ripping through the heavens and bringing fire to earth. The witch has always been found on the threshold, in the liminal spaces. At twilight. And this is where precisely we find ourselves now – driven into the margins of life. The collapse of the oil economy, environmental disaster and the catastrophic pillaging of the world's remaining resources are plunging our present civilisation into meltdown. The monuments of our age will pass in time, of that I do not doubt. The shattered visage of this civilisation will slip and be reclaimed by Nature. We will be swallowed by the yawning Hellmouth we have created; we have consumed the Earth, so in turn we will be consumed by the Earth. I see a way through this, looking beyond the Blasted Tower and following the concealed path into the cave, to the heart, into the underworld, to Babalon. Life goes on. As cave, cauldron, chalice, womb and vulva, as Ω . Where life ends it also begins.

**XVI
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CARL ABRAHAMSSON

Born 1966, lives in Stockholm, Sweden. Educated at the academies of Thee Temple ov Psychick Youth, The Church of Satan and Ordo Templi Orientis (graduations with honours) and some private schooling in Asian esoteric studies. Primary occult and manifest work in the field of art (writing, music, photography and various cross fertilisations), quite often inherently stressing the talismanic potential of structured human expressions. www.carlabrahamsson.com

HAFIZ BATIN

Hafiz Batin wishes to remain anonymous.

RAVEN CALDERA

A Northern-Tradition Pagan shaman, herbalist, astrologer, transgendered intersexual activist, homesteader, and founding member of the First Kingdom Church of Asphodel. He is the author of too many books to list here, including the Northern-Tradition Shamanism series, *Drawing Down the Spirits* (with Kenaz Filan), *Northern Tradition for the Solitary Practitioner* (with Galina Krasskova), *Pagan Astrology*, and *Hermaphroditic: The Transgender Spirituality Workbook*.

PETER J. CARROLL

Past Grandmaster of the Magical Pact of the Illuminates of Thanateros. Chancellor of Arcanorium College. Aka Frater Stokastikos.

He spent his early adolescence making rockets and explosions without loosing any fingers or eyes, despite some close calls. At college he found the wonders of science reduced to mind numbing dullness by academics whose talent for tedium surpassed even that of his schoolteachers.

Pete enjoyed 'the sixties' immensely. The publishing houses reprinted Crowley and a tidal wave of esoterica followed. With the London Illuminati of the day, he started conjuring in gothic graveyards and luridly decorated bedsits. He spent the next four years wandering in India and the Himalayas.

Booksales got him a lecture tour in Europe, and out of this developed the IOT Pact. Pete had the privilege of leading this radical and innovative magical order for five years. The order continues to flourish but he retired as grandmaster to pursue many other commitments.

He opened Arcanorium College www.arcanoriumcollege.com and then published many of his findings in *The Apophenion*. His next book will be *The Octavo*, a sorcerer-scientists grimoire. Research has become his main priority. Current findings appear on his website: www.specularium.org

ORRYELLE DEFENESTRATE-BASCULE

Orryelle Defenestrate-Bascule is dedicated to the wo/manifestation of wyrdness and wonderment in the world of form via multifarious magickal Arts. S/He is director of MetaMorphic Ritual Theatre Co., and the founder of The HermAphroditic ChAOrder of the Silver Dusk, an art movement/magickal (cha)order to culminate the cosmic day begun with The Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn. Orryelle is editor of SilkMilk MagiZain, and artist/author of *The Book of KAOS Tarot* (iNSPIRALink.02) and the Graphic Grimmoire *CONJUNCTIO*, the first in the fourfold Tela Quadrivium book-web from Fulgur Limited. Originally hailing from Sirius B or thereabouts, Orryelle grew up in Australia and is now growing up globally. Regardless of when you are reading this book, s/he is 33.3 recurring years old. www.crossroads.wild.net.au

ALKISTIS DIMECH

Alkistis is a dancer, artist and writer; her work explores the erotic, irrational and primitive, using techniques derived from Butoh, Asian dance and martial forms, as well as shamanic practices to access states of expanded consciousness. She is the co-founder of Scarlet Imprint.

RAMSEY DUKES

Ramsey Dukes is a long time iconoclastic writer and commentator on magic, the occult and alternative paradigms. Using several pseudonyms, he is the author of numerous articles and books, including the classic *SSOTBME: An Essay on Magic*. In between his esoteric activities he free-lances as a technical writer.

DR. DAVE EVANS/FRANCIS BREAKSPEAR

Dr. Dave Evans has co-founded and edited an academic journal and helps to produce Francis' books. In addition to being a published academic researcher of various magical areas and writing for several websites and magazines worldwide he is an ordained Pope of the Discordian Society and a Reverend of the Universal Life Church (both very serious non-serious religions). Francis Breakspear often wishes he was merely a convenient fiction, and has trouble apprehending consensus reality at the best of times without bursting out laughing. He is often not sure if someone 'else' is 'writing him'; which gets him into all sorts of painful, and ultimately irresolvable, Cartesian gymnastics. Francis and Dave were born in the same year and town, were educated at the same places and have been variably good friends or at each other's throats since childhood, and often argue about who is the more real person.

KYLE FITE

Kyle Fite is an eclectic Gnostic, Artist and Writer. He is a member of the Typhonian Order and the OTOA-LCN. Kyle's work has appeared in *Starfire*, *Diabolical* and numerous books and publications over the years. He is primarily concerned with the initiatory evolution of consciousness as a magical phenomena, as well as its expression through creative writing and visual art. Kyle is an avid student of the Gnostic systems of Michael Bertiaux as one of the most powerful and progressive means of exploring and channeling the energies of Inner Space. He resides in Wisconsin with his magical partner, Kym.

STEPHEN GRASSO

Stephen Grasso is a writer and artist based in London. He writes about magic, its history and what it means in the context of the 21st century world. His writing appears in the anthologies *Generation Hex*, *Dreamflesh*, *Devoted* and *Abraxas*. Stephen blogs at <http://cleanlivingindifficultcircumstances.blogspot.com> and is a regular contributor at <http://liminalnation.org>

JOHN MICHAEL GREER

John Michael Greer is the author of twenty-two books on topics ranging from ceremonial magic to the future of industrial society. An initiate in several occult and Druidic orders, he currently serves as Grand Archdruid of the Ancient Order of Druids in America (AODA). He lives in the mountains of western Maryland.

PETER GREY

Peter is a writer, the author of the acclaimed devotional work for Babalon, *The Red Goddess*. He is the co-founder of Scarlet Imprint. He is an exponent of the antinomian and libertarian strand of the Western Magical Tradition. His work comes out of physical praxis. His path is one of ordeal, ecstasy, and Love.

ERIC K. LERNER

Eric K. Lerner is a priest of Obatala-Ajaguna. He has worked as a tarot reader, astrologer and diloggun reader throughout the United States, Europe and Australia. As a writer, his published books include *Olokun, A Book of Mystery* (T& D Publications), 2003; *Babalu Ayé: Santeria and the Lord of Pestilence* (Original Publications, 2000) and *AIDS Crisis in America* (ABC-Clio, 1999). He has published essays on metaphysics, Afrikan-Caribbean religions and the occult in a variety of magazines, including

Shaman's Drum, Ashé, New Aeon and Oya N'Soro. He has also worked as an arts reviewer and investigative reporter. As a commercial illustrator, his work has been featured by the BBC, Science Magazine and numerous books. As a fine artist, Lerner principally works with traditional painting techniques and intaglio printmaking.

MICHAEL IDEHALL

Michael Idehall is a Draconian mystic walking the path of the sorcerous warrior. He channels much of his inspiration from the Qliphothic Qabalah and translates it into an artistic endeavour spanning across painting and music. Michael's artworks have been exhibited in galleries and museums, and he tours Europe with his alchemical audio-visual duo Sönderbyggd. XVI contains his first publicly published work although he has contributed to private publications in the past.

DR. GEORGE J. SIEG

Dr. George J. Sieg has recently completed his doctoral thesis *Occult War: The Legacy of Iranian Dualism and Its Continuing Influence upon the Modern Occult Revival* at the Exeter Centre for the Study of Esotericism under the supervision of Professor Nicholas Goodrick-Clarke. *Occult War* (presently in negotiation for publication by I.B. Tauris of London) elaborates on Dr. Sieg's earlier MA dissertation *Dualism and Demonisation in Zoroastrian Tradition* at the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London, planned for future publication along with his speculative construction of the sorcery of the Iranian counter-dualist cult of the Lie. Dr. Sieg also explored the contribution of Iranian dualism and Aryan racism to the genre of horror in *Infinite Regress into Self-Referential Horror in Collapse*, Vol. IV, and considered esoteric practices of transgression in *Dead Skulls, Living Belief: Antinomianism in Japanese Tantric Buddhism* in Oracle occult magazine no. 9. He has also contributed an article to a previous Scarlet Imprint anthology, *Devoted*, which considered the role of personal ethics in mystical practice from the perspective of achintya bheda-abheda (inconceivable differentiated non-difference).

FREDRIK SÖDERBERG

Fredrik Söderberg (b. 1972) live and works in Stockholm as an artist and teacher of painting at the Royal University College of Fine Arts. Has had several exhibitions in Europe and America. Has also made record cover art for many bands and artists, most notably The Skull Defekts. www.fredriksoderberg.se

STAFFORD STONE

Stafford Stone began his occult career in the short lived Cult of the Hidden God, before becoming a member of the Typhonian Order for almost twenty years. He participated in the Ku-Seblittu, a joint lodge with Cultus Sabbati, and is also a member of the Esoteric Order of Dagon. He is the creator of the Nightside Tarot. www.staffordstone.com

JULIAN VAYNE

Julian Vayne is a practicing occultist and writer. His own journey has taken him through shamanism, Wicca, Druidry and Thelema but he is probably best known as a chaos magician. He is the author of the acclaimed and unique book on magic and drugs *Pharmakon: Drugs and the Imagination*, and has authored/co-authored several other books on the occult including *Magick Works: Stories of Occultism in Theory and Practice* and *Now That's What I Call Chaos Magick*. Julian is a prominent member of the Magical Pact of the Illuminates of Thanateros, and a charitable trustee of The Friends of the Boscastle Museum of Witchcraft.

JAMES WASSERMAN

James Wasserman is the author of several books including *The Secrets of Masonic Washington: A Guidebook to Signs Symbols and Ceremonies at the Origin of America's Capital* and *The Templars and the Assassins: The Militia of Heaven*, and the co-author and editor of *Secret Societies: Illuminati, Freemasons, and the French Revolution*. A longtime member of Ordo Templi Orientis, the opinions expressed in this essay are solely his own, and in no way reflect those of O.T.O.

