ROSALEEN NORTON’S CONTRIBUTION TO THE WESTERN ESOTERIC TRADITION

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Submission for
Degree of Doctor of Philosophy
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Date of submission: September 2008
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ABSTRACT

This thesis explores the contribution of the Australian witch and trance artist Rosaleen Norton (1917-1979) to the 20th century Western esoteric tradition. Norton’s artistic career began in the 1940s, with publication of some of her earliest occult drawings, and reached a significant milestone in 1952 when the controversial volume *The Art of Rosaleen Norton* – co-authored with her lover, the poet Gavin Greenlees – was released in Sydney, immediately attracting a charge of obscenity. Norton rapidly acquired a reputation as the wicked ‘Witch of Kings Cross’, was vilified by journalists during the 1950s and 1960s, and was branded by many as evil and demonic. Norton’s witchcraft coven was dedicated to the practice of heathen worship and ceremonial sex magic and attracted a small number of dedicated inner-circle followers, most notably the renowned musical conductor Sir Eugene Goossens (1893-1962), whose personal and professional career would be irrevocably damaged as a result of his contact with Norton’s magical group.

Within the social context of post-World War Two Australia Norton was unquestionably an unconventional figure at a time when the local population was approximately 80 per cent Christian. Norton claimed to be an initiated follower of the Great God Pan and also revered other ancient figures, most notably Hecate, Lilith and Lucifer. Norton claimed to encounter these mythic beings as experientially real on the ‘inner planes’ which she accessed while in a state of self-induced trance. Many of her most significant artworks were based on these magical encounters.

Norton is presented in this thesis as a magical practitioner and artist whose creative work and thought has made a substantial contribution to the 20th century Western esoteric tradition – and, in particular, to the magic of the so-called ‘left-hand path’, which is a significant part of this modern occult tradition. Norton’s artworks are also compared to those of the notable British trance artist and occultist Austin Osman Spare (1886-1956), who is now widely regarded as a major figure in the 20th century magical revival.
INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this thesis is to present a detailed overview of Rosaleen Norton’s magical practices and to evaluate her contribution to the Western esoteric tradition. The selection of this topic immediately raises two specific issues: is the controversial and bohemian ‘Witch of Kings Cross’, Rosaleen Norton, an appropriate subject for academic study and can she be positioned within a social, intellectual or historic context which makes such a study worthwhile?

I will argue in this thesis that Rosaleen Norton (1917-1979) is a significant figure within the 20th century Western esoteric tradition considered as a whole, and that within the context of 20th century Australian esoteric practice she is one of its most notable, albeit controversial, figures. After providing an overview of key aspects of the Western esoteric tradition, as it is generally understood, I will also present evidence that the practice of Western magic became fragmented and highly polarised in the early 20th century, substantially as a result of the widespread influence of the well known British ceremonial magician Aleister Crowley (1875-1947), and that Norton can be considered a practitioner of the so-called ‘Left-Hand Path’, a branch of Western magic associated mainly with Crowley and his followers. The influence of Crowley on the Left-Hand Path in modern Western magic is described in detail in Chapter Three.

With regard to the academic study of modern magical practices (as distinct from the anthropological study of magic in pre-literate societies, which is well established as a discipline), it is significant that an increasing number of highly regarded scholars are now turning their attention to the study of modern magical beliefs as expressions of ‘contemporary alternative spirituality’ (or, in some cases, New Age spirituality) as well as exploring the historical nature of esotericism in general. Recent academic studies of modern magical practices include Luhrmann (1989), Hutton (1999), Owen (2004), Greenwood (2005), Bado-Fralick (2005) and Urban (2006). Wouter J.Hanegraaff, Chair in Western Esotericism at the University of Amsterdam, believes that the study of Western esotericism has been gaining ground in academic circles and that ‘it has become more and more apparent…that the traditional neglect of Western esotericism as a domain of historical inquiry has led to serious gaps in our knowledge, with predictably negative effects upon the understanding of our own cultural
heritage. Michael D. Bailey similarly observes in his recently published journal article, ‘The Meanings of Magic’ (2006) that scholars in many fields now recognize magic as an important topic since its ‘rites, rituals, taboos, and attendant beliefs…might be said to comprise, or at least describe, a system for comprehending the entire world.’ The European Society for the Study of Western Esotericism was established in 2005 ‘to advance the academic study of the various manifestations of Western Esotericism from late antiquity to the present and to secure the future development of the field’ and several scholarly journals have been established to cater to the increasing academic interest in this subject area, including *Magic, Ritual and Witchcraft* (University of Pennsylvania Press), *Esoterica: Journal of Esoteric Studies* (Michigan State University), *Nova Religio* (University of California Press), *Journal for the Academic Study of Magic* (University of Bristol, UK), *Aries* (European Society for the Study of Western Esotericism) and *The Pomegranate* (Equinox Publishing, UK). Clearly the diverse range of modern magical practices, including such controversial topics as sex magic and Tantra, are no longer considered taboo subjects unworthy of academic study. As Hugh Urban has noted in the preface of his recently published *Magia Sexualis* (2006) such study ‘opens some critical insights into the shifting attitudes towards sexuality, gender, religious authority, and social liberation over the last two hundred years’. Norton herself receives significant coverage in Lynne Hume’s academic study *Witchcraft and Paganism in Australia* (1997). Meanwhile the nature of esotericism itself has been discussed in a recent scholarly article by Arthur Versluis, editor of *Esoterica* at Michigan State University. Versluis acknowledges the pioneering work on Western esotericism undertaken by Antoine Faivre at the Sorbonne, noting that Faivre identifies Correspondences and Interdependence, Living Nature, Imagination, Transmutation, Praxis of Concordance, and Transmission as the six defining characteristics of Western esoteric systems. However Versluis notes that in his definitive book *Accès de l’ésoptérisme occidental* (1996) Faivre has omitted *gnosis*, or spiritual knowledge, as a key element in the Western esoteric tradition. Versluis defines gnosis as ‘direct spiritual insight either into hidden aspects of the cosmos, or into transcendence’ and maintains that without *gnosis* the concept of Western esotericism is impoverished because it is central to various currents of thought found in the Western esoteric tradition. I agree with Versluis on this crucial point and in Chapters Two and Three of this thesis will seek to demonstrate not only that the quest for gnosis is a central feature of modern Western magic but that both the left-hand and right-hand paths in modern magic have specific Gnostic precursors.
Who was Rosaleen Norton?
During the 1950s Norton was well known in Sydney as ‘the Witch of Kings Cross’ and was portrayed in the popular media as a colourful and ‘wicked’ bohemian figure from Sydney’s red-light district. Her provocative ‘pagan’ art, exhibited first at the University of Melbourne Library in 1949 and later in the Apollyon and Kashmir coffee-shops in Sydney’s Kings Cross, plunged her into legal controversy, and her 1952 publication *The Art of Rosaleen Norton* was, for a time, banned in Australia on the basis that it contained allegedly obscene material. Norton was involved in a number of court hearings and was widely criticised in the media for engaging in bizarre sexual practices with her lover, the poet Gavin Greenlees. She was later associated with the scandal that eventually engulfed the professional career of renowned musical conductor and composer, Sir Eugene Goossens (1893-1962), who had arrived in Australia in 1947 and later became a member of Norton’s magical coven in Kings Cross (see Chapter One).

Norton was invariably depicted in the popular media as a pagan rebel and portrayed in such ungracious terms as ‘the notorious, Pan-worshipping Witch of Kings Cross…a person known to the police through two prosecutions for obscenity’. Most of her mainstream print media coverage was generated by popular gossip-driven magazines like *The Australasian Post, People, Truth* and *Squire* that inclined towards sensationalist articles, and tabloid newspapers like *The Daily Telegraph, The Daily Mirror* and *Sun*. But all of this salacious media interest in Norton has to be seen in
an historical context. During the immediate post-World War Two period, Australia was both socially and politically conservative, ruled by the highly traditional Sir Robert Menzies, an ‘ultraconservative prime minister, who reigned supreme in the 1950s with his anti-communist manifesto and harsh stance on censorship’. Norton was portrayed in the media as a Devil-worshipping harpy, ever eager to flaunt accepted social conventions at a time when the appropriate place for a woman was perceived to be within the home, focusing on domestic concerns and attending to the needs of husband and children. As Marguerite Johnson has observed, ‘Rosaleen was presented as society’s scapegoat, the witch on the outskirts of the community, a demon required to reinforce family values and Christian morality.’

During the 1960s, with its increasing intake of migrants from many European and Asian countries, Australia began a process of becoming a multi-cultural, multi-faith society associated in turn with a range of new religions. However, from the 1860s up until the period immediately after World War Two, Australia’s religious profile remained relatively stable. In 1947 Anglicans, Presbyterians and Methodists collectively comprised over 60 per cent of the population and Roman Catholics made up an additional 20.7 per cent, which meant that in the immediate post-war environment Australia was more than 80 per cent Christian.

Because witchcraft has long remained linked to medieval and early modern Western Christian demonology, it is hardly surprising that in most media depictions of Norton during the 1950s and 1960s she was portrayed as a renegade from mainstream society, as an anti-Christian Devil worshipper, and as a practitioner of ‘black magic’. It seems to me that this perception of her was substantially distorted and uninformed. Nevertheless, the distinctions I make in this thesis could be considered finely delineated, since I believe that there are undoubtedly shades of grey between the familiar polar opposites of ‘black’ and ‘white’ magic (see Chapters Three and Seven). Norton’s chthonic magical orientation is clearly evident, both in her writings and in her artistic imagery, and, as I seek to demonstrate in subsequent chapters, Norton was both a pantheist and a practising witch who paid homage to a range of ancient pagan deities associated with the primal forces of Nature and the Underworld. The latter included Pan and Hecate, to whom she dedicated her ritual altars. Norton was also involved in sex magic, pursuing forms of ritual practice derived principally from the occult teachings of the British ceremonial magician Aleister Crowley, referred to earlier. For reasons that I describe in detail, I do not believe that Norton was a practising Satanist in the literal sense of the word. However it is clear that her inclination was toward the ‘night’ side of magic and much of her occult imagery as a visionary artist is associated with the so-called
**Qliphoth**, or dark, negative energies of the Kabbalistic Tree of Life – a central motif in the study and practice of modern magic. A substantial section of this thesis is spent in describing Norton’s magical beliefs, cosmology and ritual practices because this is vital to any understanding of Norton herself. The connections between Norton’s visionary art and her magical perspectives are also described in detail.

What was less well-known to readers of the popular tabloids published in Sydney during the 1950s was that Norton was a natural trance artist. She began experimenting with self-hypnosis in 1940, at the age of 23, and as a result of her visionary explorations of trance states began to portray a wide range of supernatural beings in her paintings and drawings. Norton believed that the Great God Pan, the principal deity in her personal magical pantheon, was not simply a figure from ancient Greek mythology but a vibrant and living archetypal ‘presence’ in the world. By paying ritual homage to Pan, Norton believed that she was responding to the Earth as a sacred, living organism. To this extent she can be considered a significant precursor of those members of the environmental and Goddess spirituality movements who, since the late 1970s, have affirmed the need to ‘resacralize’ the planet. Any evaluation of Norton must necessarily consider these aspects of her magical philosophy as well.

My thesis begins with a concise overview of Norton’s life. Chapter One is essentially a condensed historical biography; her magical ideas and visionary art practices are described more specifically in later chapters.

In Chapter Two, I describe the principal strands of the Western esoteric tradition which, by common consensus, include the Jewish Kabbalah, the Hermetica, Alchemy, the Tarot, Rosicrucianism and Freemasonry. All of these esoteric strands in turn became central elements in the magical philosophy and ritual practices of the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn which more than any other comparable organisation led to the resurgence of interest in Western magic in the 20th century. The Order of the Golden Dawn was established in England in 1888 and began to fragment into splinter magical groups soon after 1900. The Order’s ritual symbolism and grade structure, which derived from Freemasonry and Rosicrucianism, employed the symbol of the Kabbalistic Tree of Life as a central motif and operative framework. The principal activities of the Golden Dawn focused on the practice of ceremonial and visionary magic. Its membership included such figures as the renowned poet W.B.Yeats (1865-1939), occult historian Arthur Edward Waite (1857-1942), the controversial magician Aleister Crowley, novelist Dion Fortune (1890-1946), London coroner Wynne Westcott (1848-1925), actress Florence Farr (1860-1917), and S.L.
MacGregor Mathers (1854-1918), a translator of Kabballistic texts and medieval magical grimoires. In this thesis I present the Golden Dawn as a magical organisation drawing on the Gnostic and Hermetic traditions and also as a group aligned with the Right-Hand Path in magic, as distinct from the Left-Hand Path described in Chapter Three.

Norton established her witchcraft coven in Sydney’s Kings Cross district in the early 1950s and during this period made brief contact with Gerald Gardner (1884-1964), one of the principal figures involved in the rise of modern pagan witchcraft in Britain. To place these events in context I have described the rise of modern witchcraft, or ‘Wicca’ as it is generally known, since there is evidence that Norton sought to emulate Gardner’s leadership role in Australia. Wicca is now regarded as an ‘invented tradition’ – that is to say, a ‘tradition’ presented as belonging to an ancient lineage but whose actual origins are much more recent. The birth of modern witchcraft can be dated specifically to September 1939 and the New Forest region of Hampshire, but Wicca nevertheless drew on many archaic elements which helped establish an impression of an ancient Celtic lineage (see Chapter Two). British witchcraft was exported to the United States in the mid-1960s and, following the advent of the American counterculture and the influence of feminism, subsequently gave rise in the late 1970s to a form of feminist witchcraft known as Goddess spirituality, which has since attracted an international following. This development is also described in Chapter Two.

Chapter Three focuses on the esoteric doctrines and practices of the so-called ‘Left-Hand Path’ which includes the ritual sex ‘magick’ [Aleister Crowley’s unique spelling]17 practised by members of the Ordo Templi Orientis (O.T.O.), an international organisation that Crowley joined in 1910 and headed from 1922 until his death in 1947,18 as well as the magical philosophy and practices associated with the rise of modern Satanism (with specific reference to the American Church of Satan and the Temple of Set). The term ‘Left-Hand Path’ can be used (and is so used, by many of the practitioners themselves) to refer collectively to occult practitioners who focus on individualism, antinomianism and the chthonic or ‘dark’ side of magic. This ‘nightside’ tradition 19 in modern Western magic is distinguished from the ‘Right-Hand Path’ which is aligned with the more mystically oriented Hermetic tradition that found expression in the Golden Dawn and also in those derivative magical groups influenced principally by Dion Fortune (such as the Fraternity of the Inner Light and the still extant Servants of the Light), that emphasize spiritual rebirth, transcendence, and ultimately mystical union with the Godhead.
The relevance of the Left-Hand Path magical material presented in Chapter Three is that Norton was strongly influenced by Crowley and practised a comparable form of sex magick both with the poet Gavin Greenlees and also with the well known musical conductor and composer Eugene Goossens (later Sir Eugene). Goossens was already interested in Crowley’s approach to magick prior to coming to Australia, having apparently learned of this type of occult ritual practice from his friend and fellow musical composer Philip Heseltine (1894-1930). Heseltine was a member of Crowley’s Ordo Templi Orientis and had dabbled with various forms of demonic magic found in medieval grimoires. I also describe the principal characteristics of modern Satanism in Chapter Three since Norton was frequently accused of being a Devil-worshipper and it is important to consider whether such charges could possibly have any substance.

One of the principal findings presented in this thesis is that Norton is best understood as a magician aligned with the Left-Hand Path, rather than with witchcraft alone (modern witchcraft has distinctly chthonic elements but also some characteristics more specifically associated with the Right-Hand Path in magic – see Chapter Seven). Norton’s worship of Pan and Hecate, her sex magic practices (associated with Crowley), and her trance-art and visionary magic (which parallel the chthonic visionary art and trance techniques of Austin Osman Spare – see below) provide evidence of this esoteric alignment.

Norton’s magical cosmology, ritual practices, and visionary art are the subjects of Chapters Four, Five and Six and collectively present the core material that is central to this thesis. Also included in Chapter Six is an overview of the visionary art and trance-magic of Austin Osman Spare (1886-1956), whose artistic and magical approach closely parallels Norton’s in several key areas and therefore provides the basis for some useful and intriguing comparisons. Spare is now regarded as one of the major figures in the 20th century magical revival, alongside Crowley and Dion Fortune, and I believe that it is within the context of this post-Golden Dawn magical revival that Norton’s contribution to the Western esoteric tradition should be considered. Such a summation necessarily includes a discussion of both the similarities and also a number of crucial differences between her magical approach and that of Austin Spare. In my view both Spare and Norton should be considered as significant ‘visionary’ magicians aligned with the magic of the Left-Hand Path.

Chapter Seven begins by describing various academic approaches to the practice of magic. I initially intended this chapter to be part of the
Introduction but because it explores perspectives both from academia and also modern occultists themselves, it seemed more appropriate to locate this material towards the end of my thesis, following on from the presentation of the major data on Norton’s art and magic, and an exploration of her position within the Western esoteric tradition itself. Chapter Seven draws attention to the fact that because most anthropological perspectives on this subject are based on the study of pre-literate societies around the world, most of these academic models have only very limited application in describing contemporary Western magic as practised in modern, largely urban contexts. Fortunately, many modern occult practitioners are themselves highly literate, and they have described their various philosophies and practices in detail, both in books and more recently on the Internet. Norton was one of these highly literate practitioners. In addition to presenting her magical philosophy in the introduction to *The Art of Rosaleen Norton*, Norton also described her magical approach in a series of informative autobiographical magazine articles published in the 1950s and I have drawn extensively on this important primary material. Such data makes possible a systematic study of Norton’s beliefs and ritual practices from what is known in the field of academic anthropology as an emic perspective – that is to say, a perspective that draws substantially on the ‘insider’ point of view (in this context, the beliefs and viewpoints of Norton and her magical associates) rather than focusing primarily on imposed ‘external’ or ‘outsider’ models of analysis (etic explanations of magic). In Chapter Seven I extend this emic analysis by proposing a ‘spectrum’ approach to the study of 20\textsuperscript{th} century Western magic which, in my view, allows us to consider not only the familiar polarities of ‘black’ and ‘white’ magic but also the various shades of grey found somewhere in-between. Throughout this thesis I have made numerous references to the beliefs, practices and stated viewpoints of a number of influential modern occultists since their perspectives have been extremely valuable in locating Rosaleen Norton within the Western esoteric tradition as a whole. Many of these themes carry through to my concluding remarks in Chapter Eight, which considers the contribution Norton has made to this tradition and positions her both as a modern witch and also as a practitioner aligned with the magic of the Left-Hand Path.

**A note on sources**

Shortly after Norton held her exhibition at the University of Melbourne Library in 1949, she was interviewed at length by L.J. Murphy, a psychologist from that University. A lengthy transcript of this interview has survived, and because Norton discusses her magical philosophy, trance magic methods and attitudes to sexuality, it is of considerable interest as a primary source document. In 1951 Norton also compiled a range of
extensive notes on the symbolism of the occult artworks reproduced in *The Art of Rosaleen Norton* (published in Sydney in 1952). I have drawn on this unpublished manuscript material, which was passed to me in the 1980s by Norton’s publisher, the late Wally Glover, and which remains in my possession.

Glover had first contacted me in 1981 following publication of a book I co-authored with Gregory Tillett on occultism in Australia (*Other Temples, Other Gods*, 1980) and I subsequently became involved in the re-publication of a facsimile edition of *The Art of Rosaleen Norton* (published in Sydney in 1982, three years after Norton’s death). This publication was financed by Glover and I contributed an introduction to the new edition. At the time, Glover assembled numerous documents and wrote personal notes about his reminiscences, all of which have been extremely useful as background for this thesis. The publication of the facsimile-reprint edition of *The Art of Rosaleen Norton* also led to an approach from Mrs Cecily Boothman, Norton’s elder sister, who suggested that I write a biography of Rosaleen Norton. This eventually resulted in the publication of *Pan’s Daughter: the Strange World of Rosaleen Norton* (Sydney 1988). Mrs Boothman provided me with pertinent family details and other relevant material which, like Glover’s reminiscences, provided key insights into Norton’s background. *Pan’s Daughter* was aimed at a general rather than academic audience, was written in a journalistic style, and was around 35,000 words in length, approximately 80,000 words shorter than the present thesis.

Since the publication of *Pan’s Daughter*, which remains the only biography of the artist, a substantial body of new information has emerged which has effectively demanded that Norton’s approach to magic and visionary art should be researched and evaluated in much greater depth. This has been the underlying aim of this thesis, which contains a substantial amount of previously unpublished material. The new data includes transcripts from the 1949 University of Melbourne transcripts not previously available [see Appendix A], records of interviews provided by key members of the NSW Police Department following the arrest of Sir Eugene Goossens, and copies of letters sent by Goossens to Norton which contain specific magical content [see Appendix B]. None of these sources of information was available to me at the time I wrote *Pan’s Daughter*. I have also been able to draw extensively on an archive of 1950s newspaper clippings compiled by Wally Glover’s friend, Jock McKenna. Unfortunately, Glover, McKenna and Boothman are now all deceased. I should also mention here that in *Pan’s Daughter* I did not seek to position Norton as a magical practitioner of the Left-Hand Path as I do here, and I did not describe in depth Norton’s
magical relationship with Sir Eugene Goossens, the nature of which has become much clearer to me since I began work on the detailed research required for this thesis. The nature of Crowley’s influence on Norton’s magical practice, a factor greatly enhanced by her relationship with Goossens – who in turn shared Norton’s interest in Crowley and the Goetia – has also become apparent to me only in more recent times.

It is pertinent to mention that I interviewed Rosaleen Norton at her home in Roslyn Gardens, Kings Cross, in 1977, two years before her death. Some of my notes from that interview have been useful in the preparation of this thesis. Also, I was fortunate in December 1984 to take part in the filming of a 90-minute international television documentary, The Occult Experience (Cinetel Productions, Sydney, screened on Channel 10 in 1985 and later distributed in the USA through Sony Home Video). My role as the co-producer, researcher and interviewer for that documentary gave me direct personal access to several key figures in the Wicca and Goddess spirituality movements (some of whom have since died) and information acquired at that time has proved invaluable by way of historical background as I researched Norton’s involvement with witchcraft and trance-magic.

On a personal note I would like to mention that if the University of Newcastle had not been bold enough to offer a course on Neopagan studies, which remains something of a rarity on Australian university campuses, I may never have contemplated undertaking this thesis in the first place. I am very grateful for the support of the University and for the gracious and generous assistance of my supervisor, Dr Marguerite Johnson. I would also like to acknowledge the assistance of Robert Ansell, Publishing Manager of Fulgur Publishers, London, who provided valuable feedback on the section of text in Chapter Six which deals with the visionary art and trance-magic of Austin Osman Spare.

1 Four of these publications focus on modern and contemporary magic in Britain. Tania Luhrmann’s Persuasions of the Witch’s Craft (Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts 1989) explores contemporary Wicca and white magic in England, Ronald Hutton’s The Triumph of the Moon (Oxford University Press, Oxford 1999) is considered the definitive historical study of modern pagan witchcraft and explores the birth of Wicca in England and events leading up to it, Susan Greenwood’s The Nature of Magic: An Anthropology of Consciousness (Berg, Oxford 2005) describes nature magic, witchcraft and neo-shamanism in contemporary Britain, and Alex Owen’s The Place of Enchantment (University of Chicago Press, Chicago 2004) is a highly regarded scholarly overview of occult practices in Victorian and Edwardian England. Nikki Bado-Fralick’s Coming to the Edge of the Circle: A Wiccan Initiation Ritual
(Oxford University Press, New York 2005) is of special interest because the American-based author is both an academic and a high priestess within a Wiccan coven, and Hugh Urban’s *Magia Sexualis* (University of California Press, Berkeley, California 2006) looks likely to become the most authoritative academic source-work on sexual magic in the West for many years to come.


See European Society for the Study of Western Esotericism website: www.esswe.org.


7 A. Versluis, ‘What is Esoteric? Methods in the Study of Western Esotericism’, *Esotérica: Journal of Esoteric Studies*, IV (2002) 2. According to Faivre, the first four elements are especially crucial to the study of esoteric thought. ‘Correspondences’ includes the symbolic relationships between the visible and invisible cosmos; the concept of ‘Living Nature’ arises in all forms of *magia* which regard Nature as being essentially alive – traversed by light or ‘hidden fire’; ‘Imagination and Mediations’ includes such intermediaries as rituals, symbolic images and spirit entities; and ‘Experience of Transmutation’ refers to the transformation or ‘metamorphosis’ experienced by the esoteric practitioner. ‘Praxis of the Concordance’ refers to the attempt ‘to try to establish common denominators between two different traditions’, and ‘Transmission’ refers to the transmission of esoteric teachings from master to disciple. See also J. Santucci, ‘Esotericism, the Occult and Theosophy’, paper presented at CLE lecture series ‘Cults, Sects and New Religions’, Department of Comparative Religion, California State University, 2000.

8 A. Versluis, loc cit: 3.


10 As I demonstrate in Chapter One and Chapter Seven, Norton also received more serious critiques of her visionary art and pagan symbolism in small literary magazines like *Pertinent* and *Arna* but these were specialist publications with low printruns and did not reach the mainstream Australian public.


16 The Cambridge Centre for Western Esotericism, an academic organisation, lists relevant areas of investigation within the field of esotericism as ‘alchemy, astrology, Gnosticism, Hermeticism, Kabbalah, magic, mysticism, Neoplatonism, new religious movements connected with these currents, nineteenth, twentieth, and twenty-first century occult movements, Rosicrucianism, secret societies, and theosophy’. See www.ccwe.wordpress.com.


19 This term is used by members of the Dragon Rouge, a contemporary Scandinavian Thelemite organisation aligned with the teachings and occult philosophy of Aleister Crowley and Kenneth Grant. See www.dragonrouge.net/english/general.htm.

20 Goossens was knighted in June 1955. See Chapter One.

Chapter One

ROSALEEN NORTON – A BIOGRAPHICAL OVERVIEW

Norton’s family background
Rosaleen Miriam Norton was born in Dunedin, New Zealand on 2 October 1917. Norton was the third of three sisters: Cecily and Phyllis were, respectively, twelve and ten years older than her. The family’s religious affiliation was orthodox Church of England, Norton describing her parents as ‘not deeply religious, but God-fearing’. According to Norton her family’s religious observance ‘was more a matter of custom, rather than personal conviction and [their] sporadic attendance at church was more a token of politeness than anything’.

Norton’s English-born father, Albert Thomas Norton, was employed as a master mariner with the New Zealand Steamship Company. He had been at sea since becoming an apprentice deckhand at the age of 16. Albert Norton was often at sea for long stretches of time, visiting such locations as Vancouver, San Francisco and the Pacific Islands. In view of his travel commitments, the Norton family decided to relocate from Dunedin to Sydney, which they felt might prove to be a better base, and in June 1925 purchased a house in Lindfield on Sydney’s North Shore.

Norton described her relationship with her mother, Beena, as difficult and was emotionally closer to her father. Although his visits home were sporadic, Norton’s clear-cut relationship with him was more to her liking. At the time of moving to Lindfield the two older Norton sisters had already left school but Rosaleen, who had commenced her education in Dunedin at the age of four, was sent to a private infants’ school and then on to the Church of England Girls’ School in Chatswood, on Sydney’s North Shore.

During an interview conducted with a psychologist, L.J. Murphy, at the University of Melbourne in 1949, a transcript of which has survived (see Appendix A), Norton maintained that from her infant years onward she was a rebellious child and often disobedient. In an autobiographical
article Norton described her early life as ‘a generally wearisome period of senseless shibboleths, prying adults, detestable or depressing children whom I was supposed to like, and parental reproaches’. This apparently led to a feeling of independence:

As a child my chief aim was to be left to my own devices, and to this end I staged a hunger strike for the right to have meals alone (which I liked to eat on the roof and in other odd places). After a couple of days mother capitulated – apparently not realising that I had access to a well-stocked provision cupboard. Soon after this I acquired a tent which, pitched in the garden, became my sleeping quarters until it fell into tatters three years later.

It was while sleeping in her garden as a child that Norton developed an attraction for insects, especially spiders, which would later feature in her drawings. Norton maintained that this process helped her gain an increasing familiarity with the myriad creatures of bush and garden. As a child Norton had many pets, including an assortment of cats, lizards, mice, guinea pigs, a possum, an echidna, a goat, tortoises, dogs and several toads, and she spent hours poring over her biology texts. ‘I was fascinated by zoology and entomology,’ Norton recalled in an autobiographical interview published in 1957, ‘… at 9 or 10 I could have answered a quiz on prehistoric animals with a reasonable chance of winning the jackpot.’ Norton also claimed to find more solace among animals and insects than among most members of her family:
Family affection as such never meant anything to me, and although I was very fond of two relatives – my eldest sister [Cecily] and one of my aunts – it was because I regarded them as friends rather than relations.\textsuperscript{11}

**Early artworks**

At a young age Norton demonstrated her propensity for drawing. In an article published in *Australasian Post* in January 1957, she provided details of her early visionary memories:

My first drawings, at about 3½, were mainly creatures called ‘Nothing Beasts’ and ‘Flippers’, which I knew very well as presences. The latter looked rather like the conventional sheeted ghosts, and were hostile to me; but they were kept at bay by my friends and protectors, the ‘Nothing Beasts’, who had animal heads surmounting a mass of octopoid [sic] tentacles, with which they seemed to swim through the ether. Apropos of apparitions, various psychic manifestations, both subjective and objective, have always been an integral part of my life; consequently I accepted them unquestionably as part of the natural order of things.\textsuperscript{12}

At the Church of England Girls’ School Norton also began producing unusual drawings for her classmates, culminating in an interpretation of Saint Saens’ *Danse Macabre* that included vampires, ghouls and werewolves. According to Norton it featured ‘...every sort of grotesque horror I could put pencil to, in a great cavern under the earth’.\textsuperscript{13}

Norton’s teachers deemed her drawings unacceptable and her behaviour disruptive. Her headmistress subsequently wrote to her mother complaining that the fourteen-year old had a depraved nature which would corrupt the innocence of the other students. Soon afterwards, Norton was expelled from the school. Norton then enrolled at East Sydney Technical College where she studied art for two years under the tutelage of the noted sculptor, Rayner Hoff (1894-1937), who at the time was head of the Art School. Hoff encouraged Norton’s creativity and she in turn appreciated his support:

He freed me from routine and let me spend my time at figure drawing and composition, and since for the first time I was encouraged to work continuously at my own art form, I became an exemplary student.\textsuperscript{14}

While attending East Sydney Technical College Norton began to consider a possible career that could follow on from her art studies. She had submitted several stories to the popular broadsheet *Smith’s Weekly* when she was only fifteen, and had had them accepted by the editor, Frank Marien.\textsuperscript{15} As a
consequence Norton considered becoming a journalist, even though this was not her preferred choice of occupation. Norton first visited Marien at Smith’s Weekly in 1934, when she was sixteen years old. Following their meeting, Marien hired Norton to be a cadet journalist, largely on the basis of the stories she had submitted.\(^{16}\)

**Norton’s early fiction**

Norton’s early fiction is of interest because it provides an insight into her imagination. Her first story concerned a young man who was exploring a strange street by night when he came across a waxworks – admission sixpence. Since he liked waxworks, he decided to patronise the place:

A witch-like woman took his sixpence ‘in a grey talon’ and led him up rickety, worm-eaten steps...The young man ultimately found himself in a vast room lit by candles as black as pitch. Leering, misshapen forms were all around him, throwing criss-cross shadows on the floor. It was like a picture painted by a decadent genius. Were they only waiting for a signal from their master, the devil, to descend from their wooden pedestals and sport in a hellish saturnalia?

Terrified of the atmosphere, the young man sought to flee, but found that he had been locked in.

Somewhere, a clock struck midnight. A low, clear note of music sounded in the room and that music came from the pipes of a waxen satyr. Carl’s brain reeled in an ecstasy of horror. The pieces of the waxworks were descending from their pedestals... the light snuffed out...

Next morning two policemen on patrol heard a shriek. Entering an empty, deserted old place that had once held a waxworks, they found ‘the pitiful remains of what had once been a young man... his eyes had the look of one who had seen things mortals should not see.’\(^{17}\)

After receiving her first submission Marien invited Norton to submit another short story, and she sent in a piece titled *The Painted Horror*, a tale even more disturbing than the first. It described a young artist who, while painting in his garret, noticed his hand being mysteriously guided into painting ‘a gigantic, sickening mass of purplish, bloated flesh, looking as if it had risen from a sea of corruption, topped by a squat, leering, half-human head, and great, thick, blood-bedabbled fingers like writhing worms...The vast hulk crouched on the canvas ready to spring.’\(^{18}\) This mysterious force fed upon the artist’s mind and soul and then, one morning, he was discovered on his studio floor ‘torn to
pieces and chewed’. A policeman who found the bizarre death impossible to solve noted: ‘Funny the way a big canvas in his studio had a great hole in it, as if something had jumped right out of it, or through it.’

Marien was so intrigued by these stories from the pen of a fifteen-year-old girl, that he requested a further tale for publication. Norton’s third submission, Moon Madness, was a study of a girl who, under the influence of the full moon, murders her sisters as a sacrifice to the marble statue of a young man in an orchard. The following is a characteristic extract:

There was one shriek from Corinne as Vivienne’s teeth met in her jugular. A shriek, short and horrible like a trapped rabbit – but there was nobody to hear it...only the thin carven lips of the youth seemed to smile as the warm blood of the sacrifice flowed over his feet.

Intrigued by Norton’s imaginative, if gruesome, skills as a writer, Marien decided that he would offer her a job as a cadet journalist, although he realised that he would have to channel her creative energies into a more palatable form. Soon afterwards, however, Norton began to insist that she should be employed as a graphic artist rather than a journalist. Marien was unsure of her artistic talents and advised her that the sort of drawings required at Smith’s Weekly were humorous and witty, the main aim being to make readers laugh. Norton assured him that she would be able to produce illustrations in an appropriate style.

Unfortunately, Norton’s first drawings for Smith’s Weekly proved commercially unacceptable. The first composition she offered Marien showed a number of women sitting in a circle on some grass, laughing while biting their babies. Another captioned drawing showed two girls outside a tiger’s cage at the zoo. One of the girls was glaring at the zoo keeper and remarking to her friend, ‘Wouldn’t it be a thrill if one of the beasts devoured him! ’

During the next few months Marien asked Norton to present her work in a more accessible style. However Norton was unable to produce the sort of illustrations that were acceptable to the Smith’s Weekly readership. After eight months, Norton left Smith’s Weekly so she could paint and draw as she pleased.

*Life after Smith’s Weekly*
Norton now decided that not only would she have to find a more congenial work environment than *Smith’s Weekly* but she would also have to leave the family home in Lindfield. Norton’s mother had recently died so there was no emotional pressure to stay at home. According to her own account Norton left a note on the mantelpiece for her father and sisters, gathered her possessions, and then walked to the nearby railway station.\(^{23}\) However she very quickly realised that her departure had not been properly planned:

The only thing I had overlooked was money. At the railway station I realised I hadn’t a farthing. I couldn’t walk into town with two heavy suitcases but I managed to borrow two shillings from the local librarian. That took me in triumph – and a train –to the city.\(^{24}\)

Plate 3: Norton worked frequently as an artist’s model during the 1930s. Here she is seen posing for fellow artist, Selina Muller
In the city Norton contacted several fine art studios, seeking work as an artist’s model. According to Norton’s older sister, Cecily Boothman, Norton also modelled several times for Norman Lindsay, visiting him at his home and studio near Springwood, in the Blue Mountains west of Sydney, and showing him some of her drawings. Lindsay regarded Norton’s supernatural artwork as rough and unsophisticated but there was no doubting his influence on her style. Norton would become notorious in the early 1950s for exactly the same type of bacchanalian art – pagan revelries, frolicking naked women and satyrs – that had made Lindsay’s early line drawings controversial. In the 1940s Norton was still formulating the rudiments of her artistic style and developing her own, unique range of nightmarish images (see Chapter Six). However she was frequently employed as a model:

I was accounted a good model; not because of my curves, which were and are inclined to be conspicuous by their absence, but being myself an artist I knew which poses were best to draw. There was plenty of work, but all some days ahead. Meeting my current boyfriend, I was greeted by the news that he’d lost his job too; however, there was enough to take a room (eight shillings in those days) at a fabulous old building in Gloucester Street – the erstwhile Ship and Mermaid Inn, Sydney’s first pub, which later became the haunt of artists, musicians and drunks.

The Ship and Mermaid Inn, built in 1841, overlooked Circular Quay, Sydney. It was while residing here that Norton first began to read esoteric literature, including works on the mystical Jewish Kabbalah, comparative religion and medieval demonology. She also fostered her own developing interest in the Greek god Pan. During her stay at the Ship and Mermaid Inn Norton took various part-time jobs working variously as a kitchen maid in a hospital, as a designer for a toy manufacturer, and as a waitress in a bohemian nightclub. She also began to search for a suitable outlet for her drawings and writing. Norton eventually made contact with the editor of a small magazine called Pertinent, a pocket-sized monthly which proclaimed itself to be a blend of ‘fiction, fotos [sic] and fact’.

The first issue of Pertinent was published in August 1940 and was edited by its founder, the poet Leon Batt. Pertinent differed from Smith’s Weekly in emphasis, defining its editorial approach succinctly. ‘What it does not want,’ wrote Batt in a trade advertisement, are ‘sentimental clichés, conventional drama, chauvinistic patriotism and romantic unrealistics [sic]. Cartoons, ideas for cartoons, and unusual photo-stories are considered, while Pertinent is one of the few non-intellectual publications which are interested in poetry.’
It was the free-thinking, innovative approach of *Pertinent* that attracted Norton as a potential contributor. Her first drawings accepted for publication, two fantasy works depicting ghost-like elementals and a pencil study titled *The Borgias*, appeared in the third edition, released in October

![Plate 4: Norton’s pencil drawing, The Borgias, reproduced in Pertinent](image)

1941. The November and December 1941 editions also carried major articles on her work. The opening paragraph in the December feature began:

> Few, if any, other Australian artists have aroused as much astonishment, as well as technical controversy, as Miss Rosaleen Norton. Further studies by this most remarkable artist discovery will be published in future issues of *Pertinent*. Originals of such work may be purchased.³⁰

The November 1941 edition of *Pertinent* included three visionary drawings: *The Rite of Spring*, showing a bearded centaur; *The Dream*, with a mix of Egyptian and Saturnalian images, and *Sorcery*, featuring a horned version of Merlin wearing a conical tower-like headpiece surrounded by a cluster of leering ghouls and hobgoblins. The accompanying article acknowledged no author and was probably written by Batt himself. After
exploring Norton’s pagan influences it went on to state that the artist’s work, ‘apart from the alleged “unorthodoxy” of theme and outlook, [was] undeniably advanced far beyond the ordinary; it merits more interest and attention than it has been afforded in the past’.31 This was possibly an implied criticism of Smith’s Weekly and Frank Marien, who had not appreciated Norton’s artistic talents. Leon Batt clearly believed that Pertinent had made a substantial discovery in the art of Rosaleen Norton: ‘Pertinent feels that in Miss Rosaleen Norton, has been found an artist worthy of comparison with some of the best Continental, American and English contemporaries.’32

The December 1941 edition of Pertinent provided Norton with further pictorial coverage. The article More from the Folios of Miss Rosaleen Norton’s Art opened with a watercolour and pencil rendition of ‘The Goat of Mendes’ (reproduced in Chapter Six), a stylised interpretation of the Devil as a leering goat-headed monster. Also featured were two other drawings: Nightmare and Desolation.

Norton was encouraged by the coverage in Pertinent; for her it represented a breakthrough to receive such recognition, albeit in the pages of a minor magazine. However, in one important way Norton’s connection with Pertinent would have an enduring impact on her life, for the journal would soon begin publishing the works of a young writer who would become her lover and also her partner in magic: the poet Gavin Greenlees.

**Norton and Gavin Greenlees**

Greenlees was unquestionably a precocious talent; two of his early poems were published in Pertinent in 1943, when he was only thirteen.33 Greenlees was born in the Melbourne suburb of Armadale on 15 April 1930. His parents were middle-class, if not especially affluent. His father, Gavin senior, was a journalist, and his mother Gladys a social worker. Greenlees’ parents sought to instil in their son a love of literature and ensured that he had a sound and rigorous education.

Greenlees began his education at Elwood Public School, later becoming a pupil at Christian Brothers’ College, St Patrick’s, Ballarat, and Melbourne High School. When he was twelve Greenlees won three successive poetry competitions sponsored by the Australian Broadcasting Commission and
several of his works would later appear in the *Australian Weekend Book*. In the early 1940s several of Greenlees’ poems were also published in the *ABC Weekly* and in *Australia Monthly*.\(^{34}\)

Greenlees’ earliest intellectual influence was Surrealism, which he discovered when he was twelve. In a personal commentary in *The Art of Rosaleen Norton* – a collaborative work between Norton and Greenlees first published in 1952 – Norton noted that Surrealism ‘excited his imagination to such a degree that he became obsessed... Intuition sensed mysterious, unknown realms and the possibility of evoking them...’\(^{35}\)

Plate 5: Gavin Greenlees in 1952 – jacket photograph for *The Art of Rosaleen Norton*

It is unlikely that Norton knew Greenlees personally during the early years of *Pertinent*, for he was still a schoolboy living in Victoria, but it can be argued that the journal was nevertheless the vehicle that brought them together as part of a common *milieu*. A further article on Norton’s occult and visionary art appeared in the June 1943 edition of *Pertinent*, and the same issue contained a poem by Norton titled *Winter Night Thoughts*. The new article on Norton was subtitled ‘A Vision of the Boundless’. Here Norton was presented as a psychic who could provide a glimpse of ‘hidden worlds’, a mystic able to penetrate dimensions of consciousness only dimly perceived by ordinary mortals.

Norton had recently been granted a painting exhibition at Pakie’s Club in Sydney, a popular night-spot in Elizabeth Street frequented by artists, journalists and bohemians. The *Pertinent* article, written by an author identified simply as ‘Paul’, was a critique of the exhibition.\(^{36}\) In his review Paul explained how, when he first looked at Norton’s pictures, ‘many appeared unpleasant because they [were] presentations of evil.’ Most of the
works disgusted him, but he blamed himself, and not the artist, for this response:

If I am to analyse this feeling quite honestly now, I find only one explanation: to the impure all is impure. There is nothing disgusting about them, not even those which depict horrible, terrifying, even repulsive ideas or images. One and all, the drawings and paintings shown are perfect in drawing and design, and even where they remain somewhat sketchy due to the subjects used, they are well balanced, considered and complete.\(^{37}\)

Paul presented Norton as a person well versed and interested in ‘occult and psychic phenomena’ but he also emphasised that she was a practitioner, someone who had experienced these phenomena first-hand:

From a practice of self-hypnosis, she had developed a most exceptional ability to actually enter the psychic sphere, to transport her personality to other planes than the physical one, and to sensually perceive that which, to most of us, remains for ever hidden...\(^{38}\)

The article was accompanied by three drawings. One, titled Challenge, showed a naked woman wrestling with a spider. Another, Medieval Scene, portrayed a cluster of jovial monks, magicians, warlocks and court jesters. Nightmare showed an archetypal god-form rising up from the naked prostrate body of a woman who was clearly Norton herself.

Nightmare provided a representation of human consciousness transcending temporal boundaries and penetrating astral and mythic realms, a clear depiction of trance states manifesting in art (see Chapter Six). It was to be the precursor of the many visionary illustrations which would later accompany Greenlees’ poems in The Art of Rosaleen Norton.

It is not known when Norton and Greenlees actually met each other but in mid-July 1949 they hitchhiked together from Sydney to Melbourne to find a venue for an exhibition of the artist’s most recent works. Following contact
with a student from the University of Melbourne named Ian Stapleton,\textsuperscript{39} a booking was made at the gallery of the university’s Rowden White Library for an exhibition. The forty-six works selected for the exhibition included some of Norton’s finest drawings to date: \textit{Timeless Worlds}, \textit{Lucifer}, \textit{Triumph}, \textit{The Adversary}, \textit{The Initiate}, an early version of \textit{Individuation}, \textit{Merlin}, and \textit{Loosing (sic) of the Whirlwind.}\textsuperscript{40}

It was intended that the exhibition would be attended mainly by students and academics but two days after the opening, members of the Victorian police entered the gallery, seizing four of the exhibited drawings. Charges were subsequently laid under the Police Offences Act of 1928 alleging that Norton’s \textit{Witches’ Sabbath}, \textit{Lucifer}, \textit{Triumph} and \textit{Individuation} were decadent and obscene artworks and were likely to arouse unhealthy sexual appetites in those who saw them.\textsuperscript{41}

During the ensuing court hearings at Carlton Court, Melbourne, counsel for the Crown, representing the Victorian police department, argued that Norton was displaying works inspired by medieval demonology. However, in Norton’s defence, Mr A.L. Abrahams argued that the artist’s allegedly obscene pictures were mild compared with illustrations published in \textit{The History of Sexual Magic}, a publication which had been cleared by the censors and which was readily available in Australia.\textsuperscript{42} Abrahams also maintained that
for Norton to be declared guilty as charged, her art would have to be found to be of a nature ‘likely to corrupt those whose minds were open to immoral influences’. In his legal summation Stipendiary Magistrate Addison found in Norton’s favour, dismissing the charges against her and awarding £4/4/- costs against the police department.

Plate 7: Norton’s controversial drawing *Witches’ Sabbath*, which was included in the 1949 exhibition in Melbourne.

While in Melbourne Norton was contacted by Professor Oeser, Head of the Department of Psychology at the University of Melbourne. Many of Norton’s exhibited works were photographed in colour, although these colour slides did not emerge again until 1982. Norton also undertook a Rorshach-Behn Test with Professor Oeser’s colleague, psychologist L.J. Murphy at the University of Melbourne. The insights into Norton’s magical and artistic processes provided by this test and Murphy’s interview are discussed in Chapter Four.

After returning from Melbourne, Norton and Greenlees moved to Sydney’s Kings Cross district, a suburb that attracted eccentrics, poets, vagrants and
artists and which was known for its bohemian lifestyle. Kings Cross had witnessed a long line of colourful characters as residents, and represented Sydney’s counterpart to New York’s Greenwich Village and London’s Soho district. Originally, the area around Bayswater Road, Darlinghurst Road and Victoria Street had been exclusive, and the province of the well-to-do. During the Victorian and Edwardian eras successful merchants had built their mansions there, making it a place of elegant reserve. But then it began to change demographically and in the 1920s, as Frederick C. Folkard has observed in *The Rare Sex* (1965), it became ‘the hangout of writers and poets, painters and sculptors, musicians and bums’.44

Norton’s sister, Cecily Boothman confirmed45 that by 1949 Norton and Greenlees had become lovers although at the time Norton was married to a young tradesman named Beresford Conroy.46 It would seem, however, that initially the possibility of a sexual relationship was not the original

Plate 8: After returning to Sydney from Melbourne, Norton quickly acquired a reputation as an ‘occult’ eccentric in Kings Cross. This photograph of Norton was published in an early issue of *People* magazine, 15 March 1950

attraction. It appears that Norton’s and Greenlees’ contributions to *Pertinent* had drawn them together, she as a visionary artist and he as an aspiring visionary poet. According to Boothman, the age difference between Norton
and Greenlees led initially to a nurturing relationship. Norton was thirteen years older than Greenlees and became protective of him: she encouraged his poetry, provided him with warmth and friendship, and offered him a degree of emotional security that he did not receive from his own family, especially his father.\textsuperscript{47}

Norton and Greenlees took up residence in a three-storey terrace house located at 173 Brougham Street, Kings Cross – in the ‘red light’ district of Sydney. The house was located near William Street, a short distance from such familiar landmarks as the Mansions Hotel in Bayswater Road and the Arabian café in Darlinghurst Road, where some of Norton’s paintings were on public exhibition. The terrace house itself was in a state of disrepair and was occupied by a mixture of vagrants and bohemians. Norton and Greenlees’ basement room was cluttered and drab: animal skulls, bones, shells and stones lay strewn around the room amidst discarded cigarette cartons and coffee cups. The main furnishings were an old armchair, a large mirror draped with colourful beads, and an orange crepe paper lampshade which hung down from the ceiling on a long lead. Broken battens in the ceiling had caused sections of the plaster to flake and crumble, and cobwebs adorned the dimmer recesses of the room. A sign in the corridor outside the flat read ‘The Female Vagrant’ while a placard on the door offered a greeting to visitors: ‘Welcome to the house of ghosts, goblins, werewolves, vampires, witches, wizards and poltergeists’.\textsuperscript{48}

In New South Wales in 1951 it was a legal requirement that residents had to be able to demonstrate visible means of financial support. Failure to do so could lead to a charge of vagrancy.\textsuperscript{49} In September 1951 Norton and Greenlees’ flat was investigated by members of the Sydney Vice Squad and the couple were arrested on a charge of vagrancy. They were later remanded at Central Court and given two weeks to find gainful employment. Through an act of fortunate coincidence, they were approached by a freelance publisher and editor named Walter (‘Wally’) Glover, who offered them a chance of employment and asked them to come to his office.\textsuperscript{50}
Plate 9: 179 Brougham Street, Kings Cross was in run-down condition when Norton and Greenlees lived there

Plate 10: Publisher Walter Glover, c.1951

Born in 1911, Glover had left school at the age of thirteen and then worked for various trade journals like *Decoration and Glass, Package Parade* and *Signs and Showcards*. During World War Two he served in New Guinea as a sergeant in the Australian Army, rising eventually to the rank of captain in the Army Education division. After the war he became a freelance publisher and
worked part-time as editor of *The Pastrycook’s Review*. Glover has provided a personal recollection of the day Norton and Greenlees arrived at his office:

They arrived at my office late in the afternoon, both freshly groomed and sparkling, as if they were straight out of a tub – but they were dressed like hippies two decades ahead of their time. Gavin displayed a propensity for copper. His spectacles resting on the end of his nose were held together with copper wire, as were his well-worn footwear. Rosaleen was more concerned with demons although at that stage she had not cultivated the acute features that characterised her later appearance. They showed me their extraordinary work. It had not been prepared specifically for the occasion, hence it was a genuine cross-section of their capabilities. It was so different to anything I had seen, that I was impressed with its obvious potential.

Glover has stated that initially he did not understand the content of Norton’s symbolic drawings and Greenlees’ surrealist poetry and, although he was working both as a publisher and editor, there was no proposal to produce a limited edition art book. At this stage Glover was looking for assistants to help him with his freelance advertising and journalism. Later, however, Glover came to believe that a publication featuring works by Norton and Greenlees could be commercially viable and he arranged for a contract to be drawn up, naming him [ie. Glover] as copyright holder of all of Norton’s past, present and future artworks in return for providing regular income to Norton and Greenlees.

**Publication of The Art of Rosaleen Norton**

During the next few months Norton and Greenlees spent much of their time gathering drawings and poems for the proposed limited edition art book. Among the selected illustrations were depictions of Lilith, ‘Queen of Air and Darkness’, a horned devil named Fohat – whose phallus took the form of a snake – and a male leonine deity named Eloi, who resembled an ancient Persian monarch. Also included were *Rites of Baron Samedi*, an artwork based on a ritual invocation inspired by the Voodoo tradition, and *Black Magic*, which showed a woman embracing a black panther – a work which, according to Norton represented the mystical experience of ‘union with the night’.
Not all the images were sinister or demonic. One of the works, *Entombment of Count Orgaz*, was a parody of a celebrated painting by El Greco. Another drawing, *A Room at Castle Issusselduss*, showed clocks, vases and chairs coming magically to life as if in a child’s fairytale; *Mosque of Eidolons* and *Fishers of Men* were caricatures of figures in the Church, and *Edith Sitwell* was a tribute to a writer whose work Norton had recently been reading. Greenlees, meanwhile, was engaged in compiling some of his most evocative poetry. The poem selected to accompany *The Angel of Twizzari*, was a work intended to depict the dream world as an aspect of the ‘astral plane’ (see Chapter Four for an explanation of the magical conception of the ‘astral plane’):

> He is the castle of echoes,  
> And the walking mill, sideshow attraction behind sleep.  
> We created those dissolving, mobile corridors,  
> From the dream logged, archaic flesh,  
> Of giants no longer valid...\(^{56}\)

While Norton and Greenlees were selecting the poems and accompanying illustrations, Glover was engaged with the logistics of printing and binding the published work. Fine quality deckle-edged Glastonbury Antique paper was ordered from B.J. Ball, Tonecraft of Marrickville was appointed as the printer,
and a retired flight captain, Alan Cross, was selected as bookbinder. Glover had not revealed to the printer and binder, however, that he had insufficient capital reserves to cover all the production costs, and he was hoping that book sales would help to pay the print-bill.\textsuperscript{57}

Advance copies of \textit{The Art of Rosaleen Norton} arrived from the printer in August 1952. Bound in red leather with gold blocking, the book had a Tibetan-blue dust-jacket featuring an impressive Norton line drawing and the retail price was set at eight guineas a copy. However, on the same day that advance copies of the book were expected from Alan Cross, both Glover’s and Norton’s fathers died, severely affecting the release of the book. Glover later recalled these events:

\begin{quote}
I hurried out to my parents’ suburban home to assist with arrangements for the funeral. I left at midday, met Alan Cross, collected the books and rushed a copy to each newspaper. Copies of the book were sent off to New York, London and my representative in Paris. Then everything crashed. We had no books and no distribution... The publicity created demand but nobody knew where to buy the books...\textsuperscript{58}
\end{quote}

On 27 August 1952 Glover was charged with producing an obscene publication; attending Central Court, Sydney, on 25 November 1952 he registered a plea of ‘not guilty’. The Crown was represented at the hearing by Mr D.J. Vine-Hall, while Glover was defended by Mr Jack W. Shand, QC. The noted newspaper magnate Frank Packer, who had taken a personal interest in the case, agreed to pay Glover’s legal expenses. Opening the prosecution before Magistrate Solling, the Crown solicitor maintained that the book itself provided all the evidence required to support a charge of obscenity. Debate over the contents of the publication proved to be a protracted affair, extending through to February 1953, and Norton was asked to explain her drawings to the Court. Mr Vine-Hall drew special attention to the illustrations featuring a black panther (\textit{Black Magic}), a winged hermaphrodite (\textit{Individuation}) and a naked woman rising from an egg (\textit{Esoteric Study}). Norton responded by referring to the psychology of Carl Jung and Sigmund Freud and explained that many of her works referred to the ‘fusion of the conscious and subconscious mind’.\textsuperscript{59} Describing \textit{Black Magic}, a re-worked version of one of the artworks that had been successfully defended in the Melbourne obscenity trial following the Rowden White exhibition, Norton claimed that the black panther represented the secret forces of the night, while
Esoteric Study ‘concealed a hidden side of religion which only a select few could recognise’. 60

Magistrate Solling closed proceedings by fining Glover £5 plus costs, and ruling that two of Rosaleen’s works, The Adversary and Fohat, were ‘obscene and an offence to chastity and delicacy’. Existing copies of the book were required to have these specific pages blacked out. 61 Norton responded by writing a poem titled Odium Psychopathologicum, which expressed her feelings about the magistrate’s decision. 62

The Art of Rosaleen Norton began to attract widespread publicity in the Australian press 63 and copies of the book sent to New York were confiscated and burnt by U.S. Customs. 64 As a consequence the publication automatically became a prohibited import to Australia. 65 Glover also found his publication difficult to advertise and his marketing arrangements became

Plate 12: Fohat – one of the controversial images in The Art of Rosaleen Norton that had to be blacked out before publication of the 1952 edition could proceed. The same drawing presented no legal problems when the 1982 facsimile edition was published
rapidly dysfunctional. In 1957 Glover was declared officially bankrupt, publication of the book having contributed significantly to his insolvency. Copyrights to Norton’s artworks, which had been assigned to him through his contract with Norton and Greenlees, were now passed to the Official Receiver in Bankruptcy and would not be returned to him until May 1981 when his state of bankruptcy was rescinded.

**Accusations of a ‘Devil’s Cult’**
Following publication of *The Art of Rosaleen Norton* and the subsequent controversy surrounding its publication, Norton acquired popular notoriety in the Kings Cross district and became a figure of curiosity to casual passers-by. Specific coffee shops, like the Apollyon café in Darlinghurst Road, Kings Cross and the Kashmir café, in Macleay Street, Potts Point, were alleged to be the haunt of her ‘Devil’s cult’. In early November 1955 the proprietor of the Kashmir, David Goodman, faced charges in Central Summons Court, Sydney, alleging that three of Norton’s paintings which hung in the Kashmir café – *Black Magic*, *Belphegor* and *Beelzebub* – were obscene. On 19 November 1955, Mr K.M. Dash found Goodman guilty of exhibiting obscene works of art and he was fined £5 plus £1 costs.

Two months earlier, on 14 September 1955 a New Zealand migrant, Anna Karina Hoffmann, had been charged with vagrancy by Constable Ikin of Darlinghurst Police Station. At the time Hoffmann claimed that she and Norton had attended a Black Mass in Kings Cross. This claim was widely reported in the media, greatly damaging Norton’s reputation. During legal proceedings at Central Court, Sydney, Hoffmann alleged that she had attended rites of Devil worship with Norton, that all the participants wore black – ‘the Devil’s colour’ – and that they had performed a Black Mass accompanied by ‘sex orgies and parties’. Hoffmann later denied taking part in a Black Mass and confessed that the alleged ‘connection’ with Norton was based purely on hearsay. Hoffmann was sentenced to two months in jail, Judge Holden describing her during an appeals session as ‘a menace’.

The Hoffmann incident was followed by further controversial claims in the popular press. Two Sydney journalists published an ‘eye-witness account’ describing how they had visited a Black Mass in Kings Cross and observed a gowned witch and wizard performing a mock imitation of the Christian Mass
during which a rooster was sacrificed. Norton was angered by these charges, maintaining not only that they were false but also that she would never condone any activity that harmed animals.

Then on 3 October 1955 – in a raid that would prove to have highly significant consequences – Vice Squad police from Darlinghurst Police Station entered Norton’s premises at 173 Brougham Street, Kings Cross and laid charges against Norton and Greenlees for performing ‘an unnatural sexual act’. The cause of the police raid was the prior discovery of a collection of film negatives that allegedly provided proof of a witchcraft cult in Kings Cross. During the subsequent court proceedings it emerged that two men, Francis Honer and Raymond Ager, had offered ‘obscene’ photographs to the Sydney Sun newspaper and were attempting to sell them for £200. It was further established that Honer had stolen the film negatives from Norton and Greenlees’ residence. The photographs allegedly showed Norton and Greenlees involved in a rite of flagellation. Norton was strapped by her wrists and ankles to a pedestal and Greenlees was garbed ceremonially. Evidence was provided that the photographs had been taken at Norton’s recent birthday party: Honer had stolen the films from a couch in the flat while Norton and Greenlees were temporarily out of the room. Honer and Ager were subsequently jailed for four months, but the court case and extended hearings with Norton and Greenlees attracted widespread coverage in the popular press. Norton was obliged to defend her belief in pantheism in court, describing it as the heathen worship of ancient Greek gods. (The significance of the Honer/Ager incident is discussed in greater detail in Chapter Five which focuses on Norton’s magical practices. It is thought that Honer and Ager were members of Norton’s coven.)

**Norton and Sir Eugene Goossens**

One of the most significant episodes of Norton’s life concerned her highly controversial magical relationship with the distinguished English conductor and composer, Sir Eugene Goossens (1893-1962), whose musical career was already well established long before his arrival in Australia in 1947. Born in London on 26 May 1893, Goossens attended Liverpool College of Music and won a scholarship to the Royal College of Music. He became an accomplished violinist, playing in the Queen’s Hall Orchestra from 1912-1916. Goossens had also begun conducting in 1912, and in 1916 was encouraged by Sir Thomas Beecham to concentrate on this particular aspect of classical music.
In June 1921 Goossens gave a series of concerts in London which included a critically acclaimed first concert performance in England of Stravinsky’s *Le Sacre du Printemps* which Stravinsky himself attended. Goossens also directed Diaghilev’s Les Ballets Russes and the Carl Rosa Opera Company at Covent Garden in 1922.  

In 1923 Goossens became the conductor of the Rochester Philharmonic Orchestra in New York State and in 1931 succeeded Fritz Reiner as permanent conductor of the Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra, a post he held for fifteen years. In 1947 Goossens was appointed director of the New South Wales Conservatorium and the first resident conductor of the Sydney Symphony Orchestra. At this time Goossens was already a Chevalier of the Légion d’honneur (awarded 1934) and he would later receive a knighthood at Buckingham Palace for his services to music (bestowed 1955). He is also credited with proposing the original idea for the Sydney Opera House.

Plate 13: The distinguished conductor, Eugene Goossens (later, Sir Eugene)

However, it was his fascination with paganism and magic that would attract him to Rosaleen Norton and lead ultimately to his professional and personal downfall.

Shortly after the publication of *The Art of Rosaleen Norton* in August / September 1952 Goossens purchased a copy of the book from a Sydney gallery bookshop and this rekindled his long-standing interest in magic and
the occult. While living in England during the 1920s Goossens had been a close friend of the British musical composer Philip Heseltine (1894-1930, also known as Peter Warlock). Heseltine was in turn deeply interested in the Goetia and the sex magic of ceremonial occultist Aleister Crowley (see Chapter Three) and according to Goossens’ younger sister, Dame Sidonie Goossens-Millar (1899-2004), it was Heseltine’s involvement with magic that first attracted her brother to the occult. After acquiring a copy of The Art of Rosaleen Norton Goossens wrote to Norton, expressing admiration for both the book and her artistic work. Norton subsequently invited Goossens to her residence in Brougham Street, Kings Cross, which was located close to the rehearsal rooms at the Australian Broadcasting Commission where Goossens frequently worked. Goossens told Norton that he admired her authentic approach to paganism, and a friendship began to develop. Goossens was subsequently invited to become a member of the small magical group that met periodically in Norton’s flat to discuss magical ideas and perform rituals sacred to Pan.

According to David Salter, who researched Goossens’ career for the Australian Broadcasting Commission television documentary Sir Eugene Goossens: Sex. Magic and the Maestro (2004), Goossens’ relationship with Norton quickly developed a ‘sexual intensity’. When Goossens’ conducting work took him away from Sydney he would write detailed letters to her about her rituals and occult paraphernalia. He was also seeking an intimate magical relationship with her. Goossens wrote to Norton: ‘I need your physical presence very much, for many reasons. We have many rituals and indulgences
to undertake.’ Unfortunately for Goossens it was precisely his importation from Europe of ‘occult paraphernalia’ and other prohibited articles that would prove his undoing, shattering both his professional career and his magical relationship with Norton and Gavin Greenlees.

On 9 March 1956, after returning on a flight from London to Sydney Goossens was apprehended by Customs officers at Sydney’s Mascot Airport. The Customs officers discovered that Goossens was carrying over 800 erotic photographs, a spool of film, a number of ritual masks and a quantity of incense sticks. Goossens was officially charged under Section 233 of the Customs Act, which prohibited the possession or importation of ‘blasphemous, indecent or obscene works or articles’.

Goossens’ legal defence was brought before Mr J.M. McCauley, SM in the Martin Place Court of Petty Sessions with the noted barrister Jack Shand QC acting as counsel for Goossens. The conductor himself did not attend the court hearings but a plea of ‘guilty’ was entered and Goossens was fined the maximum penalty of £100. Soon afterwards Goossens resigned from his positions with the New South Wales Conservatorium and the Sydney Symphony Orchestra, bringing both his career as an internationally renowned musical conductor and also his personal relationship with Norton and Greenlees to a close. After his departure from Mascot Airport, Goossens’ Sydney solicitors issued a statement which quoted Goossens as saying: ‘It is
my misfortune that I allowed myself to be used to bring prohibited matter into this country as a result of persistent menaces I could not ignore involving others. However, this statement was both ingenuous and misleading, and represented a clear attempt to shift the blame for Goossens’ downfall to Norton and her occult coven. As I will show in Chapter Five, Goossens was both a willing and enthusiastic member of Norton’s coven and offered to instruct her in ‘black magic’ techniques associated with the Goetia. According to transcripts of an interview given by Vice Squad detective Bert Trevenar in June 1999, Goossens also tried to recruit musicians from the Sydney Symphony Orchestra to join Norton’s coven. Nevertheless, Goossens’ fall from grace was extremely unfortunate and the consequences for his musical career both dire and unintended. Goossens’ sex magic involvement with Norton and Gavin Greenlees is described in detail in Chapter Five.

**Norton’s subsequent relationship with Greenlees**

A few months prior to the apprehension of Sir Eugene Goossens at Sydney’s Mascot Airport, Gavin Greenlees had been admitted to Callan Park Hospital, in the Sydney suburb of Rozelle. Details of Greenlees’ medical condition were released to Judge Clegg during sessions at Darlinghurst Court relating to the Honer/Ager obscenity charges. According to a statement prepared by Dr S.G. Sands, acting medical superintendent of Callan Park Hospital, in conjunction with Macquarie Street psychiatrist, Dr R.J. Kiely, Greenlees had been medically assessed as a schizophrenic and was hallucinating voices which would perpetually torment and ridicule him. According to Dr Sands, Greenlees was also ‘obsessed with sex’ and ‘wanted to escape from the real world’. He would take books on occultism into the corner of his room and ‘could only be aroused to any action by constant prodding’.

However, Greenlees’ medical decline did not mark the end of his relationship with Norton. She continued to support him, emotionally and maternally, as she had done since the beginning of their relationship, and visited him regularly at Callan Park Hospital, taking him books to read and showing him drawings and sketches she had recently completed. On allotted visiting days Greenlees was also permitted to visit Norton in Kings Cross. Norton remained Greenlees’ most valued contact with the outside world, and they maintained regular contact throughout Greenlees’ long period of medical supervision. Greenlees did not receive a full medical discharge until 1983, nearly four years after Norton’s death.
Norton’s persona as the ‘Witch of Kings Cross’

Norton received extensive media coverage in the Sydney-based tabloid press throughout the 1950s, and more particularly towards the latter part of that decade following Goossens’ departure. Major articles included the anonymous ‘She Hates Figleaf Morality’, published in People, Sydney, 29 March 1950, Dave Barnes’ ‘Rosaleen says she could be a Witch’ (1952) and ‘I am a Witch’ (1956), and a series of autobiographical articles by Norton herself, published in Australasian Post in January and February 1957. Other related articles in the same genre included D.I. Thompson, ‘Devil Worship Here!’ (1955) and P. Lucas, ‘Witches in the Nude’ (1958). These articles promoted a media image of Norton as ‘the Witch of Kings Cross’—with dark mischievous eyes, plucked eyebrows and a devilish grin. Norton was often photographed sitting beside her altar in front of a mural of Pan. Various adornments were also visible: a mounted set of antlers, a ritual
dagger or athame, ceremonial candles, and a phallic snake’s head ornament. Norton had not referred to herself as a witch during the legal proceedings associated with her obscenity charges but had described herself instead as a pantheist, or a worshipper of Pan, the ancient Greek god of Nature.  

Adopting a different approach for a series of autobiographical articles in the *Australasian Post*, Norton now allowed herself to be photographed in a conical witch’s hat, playing to the popular perception of an evil witch or crone. During this period articles were also published in the *Australasian Post* depicting Norton with her pet cats, a clear reference to the classic image of the medieval witch with her animal familiars. During one of her interviews with Dave Barnes, who was managing editor of the *Australasian Post* and author of three major articles on the controversial ‘Witch of Kings Cross’, Norton remarked: ‘If Pan is the Devil, then I am indeed a Devil worshipper.’ Norton also told Barnes that occult powers were a natural part of life, that she had been influenced by the psychoanalytic concepts of Carl Jung, and that she embraced many religions as part of her spiritual belief system: ‘Anything can happen in Infinity…I believe in lots of Gods, Buddha, and even the Christian God.’

**Norton in the 1960s**

By the mid-1960s, Norton had acquired widespread media notoriety, having developed her persona as ‘the Witch of Kings Cross’. This persona was further reinforced by Dave Barnes’ final article on Norton, ‘Confessions of a Witch’, published in *Australasian Post* in 1967. The British Witchcraft Act of 1735, which forbade the practice of witchcraft, had not yet been repealed in New South Wales – that would not take place until January 1971 – but Norton was earning a day-to-day living making magical charms and occasionally performing hexes for a small group of clients, as required. Occasionally she would also produce new occult paintings to sell. These would range in price from £5 for a small work to £100 for a large canvas. Sometimes she would recycle her more familiar themes, such as portraits of Pan and Lucifer.

During this time Norton moved house several times. For a number of years she lived at 8 Hargrave Street, East Sydney, a house owned by Gavin Greenlees’ parents. On 17 January 1964, Greenlees returned on temporary release from Callan Park Hospital and caused havoc, threatening to kill Norton with a knife and hurling her furniture and ritual bric-a-brac into the street.
during one of his schizophrenic attacks.\textsuperscript{117} Detective Sergeant Harry Giles, who was called to the house by neighbours, found Greenlees leaning over a sink running a knife across his throat. Giles later found Norton kneeling before the altar in her living room. Giles arrested both Greenlees and Norton as vagrants and Norton was also charged with ‘offensive behaviour’ and using ‘indecent’ language. Later she was acquitted of the vagrancy charge and fined £2 for using indecent language. Greenlees was sentenced to a month’s jail for carrying a knife with intent to harm, a seemingly inappropriate sentence in view of his mental condition.\textsuperscript{118}

After this incident Norton went to stay with her sister Cecily, who was living in a flat in Kirribilli, overlooking Sydney Harbour. Cecily was close to Norton and made her feel welcome if ever she needed a ‘retreat’. Cecily was also Norton’s only close surviving relative\textsuperscript{119} so it was understandable that Norton would turn to Cecily in times of crisis. Norton remained with her older sister for several months and spent long sessions meditating beneath a large Moreton Bay Fig tree which grew in the garden near the foreshore. This tree became a symbol in several of Norton’s later paintings: an archetypal and symbolic tree that reached up to the heavens – a secure haven for Nature-spirits as well as for Norton herself.

By June 1967, Norton was again living in Kings Cross, this time in a derelict house in Bourke Street, between William Street and Woolloomooloo. Norton lived in a small room, dimly illuminated by an oil lamp. She had constructed a new altar in the fireplace and had retained her familiar range of occult ornaments, various masks, portraits of Pan, trinkets, a metal gong and several small statuettes of cobras. Continuing her lifelong fascination with animals, Norton also had a range of pets, including two rats named Percy and Moonstone and turtle obtained from a pond in Centennial Park, which she believed was a gift from Pan.\textsuperscript{120}

When \textit{Sun} journalist Nan Javes interviewed Norton in February 1969, Norton referred to herself as a ‘coven master’, a term not previously used in the three Dave Barnes interviews in \textit{Australasian Post} or in her own autobiographical articles for the same magazine.\textsuperscript{121} Norton also presented a more confrontational interpretation of witchcraft in her interview with Javes, depicting herself and the unnamed members of her witchcraft coven as potentially hostile and dangerous:
It’s ridiculous to say we never do harm. If we weren’t capable of fighting people through hexes and charms we couldn’t survive. But here we are in the twentieth century, stronger than ever. Of course, we sometimes do good turns too. The sort of people I might put a spell on are those who harm me or someone close to me. I mightn’t do it immediately if the circumstances weren’t propitious, but you can bet your life I’d get around to it in time – and it works!122

Norton confirmed to Javes that she was now conducting Witches’ Sabbaths at Candlemas, May Eve, Lammas and Halloween, the major ceremonial events of the witch’s annual calendar, representing a more structured approach to her witchcraft practice that may possibly have developed as a result of her brief contact with British witchcraft practitioner Gerald Gardner.123 According to Javes, Norton was now claiming to have two hundred followers in Sydney and hundreds more throughout the country.124

The Anglican Commission of Inquiry into the Occult
In response to the increasing popular interest in astrology, tarot cards, magic and the spiritualist use of ouija boards during the late 1960s and early 1970s, vocal fundamentalists within the ultra-conservative Sydney diocese of the Anglican Church began arguing that the occult was influencing school children. As a result of this concern among members of the Anglican congregation in Sydney the Anglican Archbishop of Sydney, Marcus Loane, agreed to the establishment of a Commission of Inquiry into the Occult in 1974.

The Anglican Commission of Inquiry into the Occult was chaired by the Dean of Sydney, Lance Shilton, and included four clergymen from the Anglican Church, several of whom had already expressed fervent opposition to all aspects of the occult. One of these members, Rector Peter Hobson of St Michaels, Surry Hills, was already conducting exorcisms to banish the ‘spirits’ of Hare Krishnas, tobacco smoking, Theosophy, homosexuality, spiritualism and other ‘deviant’ practices.

The Commission of Inquiry was required to examine the current fascination with the occult, especially among young people; to explore the biblical basis of spiritualism and associated practices, as well as provide warnings against dabbling in the occult, and to examine the various current expressions of the occult and its effects. The report of the Commission would then be published to provide guidelines ‘about the attitudes Christian people ought to take and any action the Church as a whole ought to pursue’.

The Commission of Inquiry received submissions from Christians, occultists, academics, teachers and psychologists and released its report on 13 August 1975. The report stated that the ‘most sinister’ of all modern ‘crazes’ was occultism and Satanism, spread by the mass media; it was further alleged that these practices were quickly becoming respectable. The report suggested that interest in the occult was related to the increase in violence and pornography in literature since occultism could provide pornography with a religious base to work from. The general conclusion of the Inquiry as to why there was such a current fascination with the occult reflected the opinions of several churchmen: the failure of organised religion, the loss of personal identity and meaning in life resulting from the sterility of modern technological society, and the fact that this in turn left a vacuum filled by alternative belief systems disapproved of by the Church. The Commission was also interested in a
submission by one of its members, Dr David Collison, a practising psychiatrist, who had developed the concept of a ‘possession syndrome’. This syndrome was said to be characterised by mental disturbance following involvement in occult practices. Dr Collison maintained that the ‘possession syndrome’ failed to respond to conventional medical treatment but could be effectively treated by using exorcism. Collison had, at this time, already begun using exorcism to treat patients afflicted by the syndrome. Collison counselled his colleagues that psychiatric disturbances resulting from involvement in the occult were becoming much more common and could lead to great mental suffering and disturbance, and perhaps even suicide.  

The Commission of Inquiry was concerned about the paraphernalia of the occult, including tarot cards, ouija boards and various ‘alternative publications’, and recommended that the media should present the occult in a realistic way, mentioning the harmful effects as well as the fascination. The Commission of Inquiry also maintained that there was a need for restrictions on occult literature and equipment, just as there were already restrictions on objects linked to violence or pornography. The Commission recommended that the space currently devoted to horoscopes and fortune-telling in popular magazines and newspapers should be replaced by articles on the Christian faith, since this was the religion ‘nominally accepted by the majority’.  

For several weeks following the release of the Commission of Inquiry report, the popular media in Sydney featured sensationalist headlines and articles based on its findings. There were also several illustrations of medieval witches, and sinister photographs of modern occult practitioners. Rosaleen Norton was interviewed by Gus de Brito of the *Sunday Mirror* in August 1975, to obtain her response to the Commission of Inquiry report. Norton, who at the time was living in a basement flat in Roslyn Gardens, Kings Cross, told de Brito that she agreed with Dean Shilton’s view that amateurs meddling in the occult could get into difficulties:
Magic can send you round the bend…It is as dangerous as drugs. [People attempting to use magic or witchcraft rituals without sufficient knowledge] can release various entities that they don't know anything about, and such people have no idea how to handle these entities... 131

Norton also told de Brito that she disagreed with the Commission of Inquiry’s proposed ban on ouija boards. Theoretically, she conceded, school children could contact spirits using equipment like this, but she personally ‘couldn’t see any danger in it’. 132

Norton’s interview with de Brito was one of her final contacts with the popular media. Norton was now living as a virtual recluse 133 and by the mid-1970s had begun restricting her day-to-day contacts to a few close friends and her sister Cecily, who now lived down the corridor in the same block of flats. 134

Towards the end of 1978 Norton became suddenly ill and required hospital tests. She was advised by her doctor that she had cancerous growths in her colon and that a surgical operation was required. It was initially thought that this surgery was successful but the cancer quickly recurred. In November 1979 Norton was taken to the Roman Catholic Sacred Heart Hospice for the
Dying at St Vincents Hospital, Sydney. She died on 5 December 1979, survived by her older sister Cecily Boothman.  

**Events following Norton’s death**

Many of Norton’s paintings remained in storage at the time of her death. The Sydney-based hotelier, Don Deaton, proposed an auction of these paintings, which he maintained were his property. Deaton owned the Hotel Manly, the Prince of Wales in Haymarket, and also a pub at Collector, a small country town located on the Federal Highway north of Canberra. Norton drank regularly at the Prince of Wales and sometimes paid for her gin and tonics with paintings. When the Apollyon café in Kings Cross was marked for demolition in 1970 to make way for the Eastern suburbs freeway, Norton asked Deaton to take the paintings which had been on display there, and store them in the basement of the Prince of Wales. All of the paintings which would later be exhibited for auction were works from this collection. Deaton later maintained that by virtue of his agreement with Norton the paintings were his to sell, a point strongly disputed by Norton’s sister Cecily, who believed that the paintings now belonged to her as next of kin.  

In February 1981 advertisements appeared in several Sydney newspapers announcing a forthcoming art auction at the Wentworth Hotel to be held on 2 March 1981. Artworks included on the auction schedule included *Changing Times* by Sali Herman, *Bomboro Castle* by Sir Arthur Streeton, *Wimmera Landscape* by Arthur Boyd and twelve works by Norton. The latter included *Masque of Eidolons*, a drawing which had been published in *The Art of Rosaleen Norton*, a large and garish oil painting titled *Devil Worship*, and minor works like *The Rabbit* and *The Gomblins*. Few of these paintings were sold at the Wentworth Hotel auction and they would not be seen again in public for nearly two years.  

Despite the obscenity charges which had caused his bankruptcy in 1957, Glover was keen to republish *The Art of Rosaleen Norton* as a facsimile edition. Glover was able to regain the copyright to Norton’s paintings from the Official Receiver in Bankruptcy in May 1981 and this coincided with an accident compensation payment to him of around $11,000, an amount sufficient to finance the new publication. It was proposed by Glover that apart from the addition of four colour plates and a new introduction, *The Art
of Rosaleen Norton would be republished in a format identical to the 1952 edition.\textsuperscript{139} Glover also suggested to Deaton that he display a selection of

![Plate 19: Walter Glover (far right) at the Exiles Bookshop launch, October 1982](image)

Norton’s works in a gallery to accompany the release of the facsimile edition. On 1 October 1982, Deaton opened a one-week exhibition in the upstairs gallery at Exiles Bookshop near Taylor Square, for the specific purpose of selling off the remaining paintings by ‘slow auction’.\textsuperscript{140} Intending purchasers were asked to indicate their choice of painting and to provide a maximum bid for the selected work. Deaton would later inform the successful bidders of their purchases.

Few of the works exhibited at Exiles Bookshop showed the skill of Norton’s early paintings and drawings from the late 1940s. Thirty-seven paintings were displayed, including \textit{The Cauldrons}, \textit{Asmodeus}, \textit{Dionysus}, \textit{The Bells}, a large work called \textit{The Seance}, and an obscure and amateurish painting titled \textit{Fur Fur the Storm Demon}. At the conclusion of the exhibition the paintings did not go to individual buyers but to a single collector, Jack Parker, who purchased them \textit{in toto} for $5000.

Like Deaton, Parker was a hotelier and his intention was to display Norton’s works at the Southern Cross Hotel, St Peters, in south Sydney. However, the paintings were not popular with patrons of Parker’s hotel. Interviewed by a journalist from the Sydney \textit{Daily Telegraph}, Parker reported that two thirds of
his patrons, most of them truck-drivers, strongly disliked the paintings.\textsuperscript{141} Parker later sold the paintings to a private buyer.

In 1984 Glover issued a small-format limited edition publication titled \textit{A Supplement to The Art of Rosaleen Norton}. Published with a spiral binding and colour prints individually mounted on cream art paper, the \textit{Supplement} was of considerable interest because it contained reproductions of twenty works shown at the University of Melbourne in 1949. At the time of the publication of the facsimile edition of \textit{The Art of Rosaleen Norton} in 1982, many of these paintings had not yet come to light. However, following a radio interview during the publicity campaign for the facsimile edition of \textit{The Art of Rosaleen Norton}, Glover was contacted by Mrs Y. Raphael-Oeser, whose late husband had been Professor of Psychology at the University of Melbourne at the time of the 1949 Rowden White exhibition. Mrs Raphael-Oeser provided confirmation that many of Norton’s original works had been photographed as colour slides at that time, making quality reproduction of these artworks possible.\textsuperscript{142} These early (c.1949) works were a notable component of the \textit{Supplement to The Art of Rosaleen Norton}.

At the time of Norton’s death in December 1979, Gavin Greenlees was still a full-time patient in Alma Mater Nursing Home in Kensington. Three years later, in December 1982, a two-act play titled \textit{Rosaleen – Wicked Witch of the Cross}, based on the relationship between Norton and Greenlees, was staged at the Tom Mann Theatre, Sydney. Both Glover and Greenlees were able to attend the opening night performance of this play, watching as they were portrayed by actors on stage.\textsuperscript{143} Written by Barry Lowe and directed by Roddie Thomas for the Hullabaloo Theatre Company, the production starred Jane Parker as Rosaleen and Alan Archer as Pan. Glover’s role was performed by Peter Laurence and Greenlees’ role by Christopher Lyons. The play was unconvincingly acted and was not acclaimed a critical success. However it did attempt to portray Norton sympathetically as ‘a victim of an era in which her lifestyle had no hope of being understood’. The programme notes accompanying the play explained that while the script was based on the life and times of Rosaleen Norton ‘poetic licence [had] been taken with some episodes in her life and there [was] no intention that the play be literally factual’.\textsuperscript{144}
Glover was amused by the play but Greenlees, who had spent many years in hospitals and psychiatric institutions, found it upsetting and disturbing. Greenlees was greatly saddened by Norton’s death. He had not been able to attend her funeral, and although he was still granted permission to visit Norton’s sister Cecily from time to time, the loss of his former friend and lover produced a substantial void in his life.

At the time of the performance of the play, in December 1982, Greenlees was writing a novel and studying European literature. He was also preparing for a trip to Germany with his language tutor. Greenlees later returned to Sydney from Germany and took up residence in a flat in Woollahra, in Sydney’s eastern suburbs. On 5 December 1983, exactly four years to the day after Norton’s death, Greenlees’ body was found in his Woollahra residence, slumped over a table next to a bowl of soup. Police investigating his death found no suspicious circumstances. Greenlees was fifty-four years old.

1 Norton was born in Dunedin around 4 a.m on 2 October 1917 during a violent thunderstorm. She later related that, perhaps because of this dramatic start to her life, she would develop an enduring fondness for storms and the “night-side” of human existence. In her autobiographical article ‘I was born a Witch’ [Australasian Post, Sydney, 3 January 1957], Norton writes: ‘Storms arouse in me a peculiarly elated, almost drunken sensation. Night is for me the time when all my perceptions are alert, when I feel most awake and function best.’

4 During an interview with the psychologist L.J. Murphy at the University of Melbourne on 27 August 1949 (see Appendix A), Norton portrayed her mother as ‘a very difficult woman, hysterical, emotional and possessive’. She held a grudge against her mother because, as Norton put it, ‘she wouldn’t fight fair’.
5 See Murphy:1949, loc cit: ‘He fought clean. If I disobeyed him he would smack me when I was a child and make me do what he wanted me to do without all the emotional upsets that I had with my mother.’
6 Ibid. Norton advised Murphy: ‘I disliked school and I disliked the other children – I hated the way they “crawled” to the teacher. I used to love making the teachers mad by getting the other children to do naughty things. They used to follow me, but I don’t think they liked me. Yet I always took the blame when anything went wrong.’
8 Ibid.
9 Ibid: ‘A big furry night-spider of the orb-weaving type soon took to spinning nightly over the open tent door. I became very fond of this being, whom – regardless of sex – I named Horatius, because she guarded me from invasion single-handed. Most of my family were terrified of her, so I could stay up until morning if I felt like it, secure from interruption as long as she loomed in her great circular web over my doorway.’
11 Ibid.
12 Ibid: ‘Some typical early examples include a ghostly ‘lady in a grey dress’ who was often standing beside my bed when I was 5 or 6; an apparition of a shining dragon [at 5], which together with other elements in this vision had, as I later discovered, profound symbolic significance for occultists; and a dream of a small weather-board house surrounded by pepper trees, called ‘Railway Cottage’, which I located in waking life some three or four months later in Chatswood, a suburb which at the time of the dream I had never visited. My only reaction on actually seeing ‘Railway Cottage’, in the weather-board if not exactly the flesh, was a feeling of ‘Oh yes, there it is.’ While on the subject of psychism, a recurrent experience of my early years is worth mentioning as I now recognise it as a trance condition similar to those practised in certain forms of Yoga. My name for it was ‘Big Things and Little Things’, and it always began with a floating state, as though disembodied. Then came a feeling of growing and expanding. Larger and larger I grew, until size became so unthinkable that it ceased to exist, and I encompassed all things and was everywhere. After a timeless pause again came movement, this time of contraction and shrinking down, down until I had returned to my starting point; but the sense of dwindling still continued. Down through successive stages becoming smaller and smaller, until at last I was a point too tiny to exist at all; a nothing that was somehow still sentient. Soon the growing, expanding process was repeated, back to the original size - and so on. It was rhythm suggesting some vast form of breathing. At seven-years-old two small blue marks very close together appeared on my left knee, and they are there still. I have since learned that two (or sometimes three) blue or red dots together on the skin are among the traditional witch marks. Although, of course, I didn’t know this at the time, I remember noticing them the year we arrived in Australia, and wondering what they were: they seemed important in some way that I couldn’t define.’
15 Smith’s Weekly had been founded in 1919 by two journalists, Robert Clyde Packer and Claude McKay, and Englishman Sir James Joynton Smith, the son of a Cockney gasfitter. Published originally as a tuppenny paper, Smith’s Weekly demanded a ‘fair go’ for the workers, denounced ‘Bolshies’, the Yellow Peril, quack doctors and prostitutes, and also took a strong line against bureaucrats, inter-racial sexual relationships and white bread – as distinct from wholemeal. Despite its polemical overtones, however, the broadsheet attracted some of the best known graphic illustrators of the day, including Stan Cross, Syd Miller, George Finey, Cecil Hartt, Jim Russell, Virgil Reilly, Lance Driffield, Charles Hallett and George Donaldson. Later, Normal Mitchell, Les Dixon, Eric Jolliffe and Emile Mercier would also become associated with it. Over the years the paper became famous for promoting the Digger cause. Indeed, most of its readers were returned servicemen. Its appeal was very much to the jingoism of the day and to that extent its scope was limited to a specific generation of readers. The popularity of Smith’s Weekly began to wane after World War II and in October 1950 it finally yielded to the imminent onset of television as the pre-eminent medium of news and popular entertainment.
17 Quoted in G. Blaikie, *Remember Smith’s Weekly?*, loc cit: 89.
18 Ibid: 90.
19 Ibid.
20 Ibid.
21 Ibid.
22 Ibid: 91.
25 Personal communication to the author in 1981, two years after Norton’s death.
26 R. Norton, ‘Hitchhiking Witch’, loc cit: 10. Norton’s rent at the Ship and Mermaid Inn was eight shillings per week.
27 The Kabbalah is the mystical tradition within Judaism (see Chapter Two for an account of its important contribution to the Western esoteric tradition). Although many Kabbalistic texts date from the 13th century CE, the scholar Gershom Scholem has referred to the Kabbalah as a form of Jewish Gnosticism, its emanationist cosmology resembling much earlier, possibly pre-Christian origins. The Kabbalah, with its central motif of the Tree of Life, consisting of ten creative, spiritual emanations from the Godhead [*Ain Soph Aur*, the Limitless Light] is central to the western esoteric tradition and the magical procedures of the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn. See G. Scholem, *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism*, Schocken, New York 1961, and *Jewish Gnosticism, Merkabah Mysticism and Talmudic Tradition*, Jewish Theological Seminary of America, New York 1961.
28 This was the published by-line on the cover of *Pertinent*, May 1944.
29 Quoted in a summary of Australian newspapers and periodicals listed in the magazine *Artist’s Market*, c.1940. Batt also included the following editorial statement: ‘We want simplified articles calculated to stimulate Australian cultural achievement; no political bias required. Direct, succinct writing and thinking only. *Pertinent* despises pseudo-intellectuality, and will consider any material which can help, whilst entertaining, Australians to take an added interest in the cultural emancipation of themselves in order that they may become citizens, not only of a subservient country, but of an independent cultural nation.’
30 *Pertinent*, Sydney, December 1941.
31 *Pertinent*, Sydney, November 1941.
32 Ibid.
33 The first was ‘Winter Night Thoughts’ in *Pertinent*, June 1943: 54; the second was ‘Caricature of Women’, *Pertinent*, September 1943: 49.
34 In the September issue of *Pertinent* (1943:48) Greenlees provided a concise autobiography of his early literary achievements. His first story, ‘The Mistereesee Man in the Aairoplan’ was written in 1936. His first published works of verse were ‘Rumours’ and ‘The City’ which were included in *ABC Weekly* in 1942.
36 ‘Paul’ was a science-fiction author named David R. Evans. Evans had sent a copy of one of Rosaleen Norton’s drawings, *Challenge*, to the noted American fantasy collector and literary agent, Forrest J. Ackerman. This drawing, which depicted a naked woman embracing a spider, was published in Ackerman’s newsletter and Norton would later claim on this basis that her occult art was well known in the United States.
37 *Pertinent*, Sydney, June 1943:33.
38 Ibid.
39 In ‘Hitchhiking Witch’, loc. cit., Rosaleen Norton refers to Ian Stapleton as ‘John Bolton’, acknowledging that this was not his real name. In fact, Ian Stapleton was co-editor of the Melbourne University newspaper, *Farrago*, and a picture of Stapleton, Greenlees and Norton was published in the Melbourne *Truth* on 27 August 1949: 21.
40 Exhibition catalogue, *The Art of Rosaleen Norton*, Rowden White Library, University of Melbourne, 1-23 August 1949. Forty-six artworks were listed.
41 The raid followed a visit to the exhibition by two policemen, Detective John Olsen and Inspector Tannahill on 3 August. Olsen spoke to Norton about the pictures, discussing with her various complaints he had received about the drawings being ‘lewd and disgusting’. One person had described the works as ‘stark sensuality running riot’, while another claimed the exhibition produced ‘as gross a shock to the average
spectator as a witch’s orgy’. Norton was not impressed by these responses to her work. ‘Obscenity,’ she countered, ‘like beauty, is in the eye of the beholder. This figleaf morality expresses a very unhealthy attitude.’ Quoted in the Daily Telegraph, Sydney, 4 August 1949.

42 Abrahams stated that this publication had already been approved by Mr Justice Reed on behalf of the Commonwealth. See Sydney Morning Herald, Sydney, 20 August 1949.

43 These works were reproduced in the Supplement to the Art of Rosaleen Norton, a small-format limited edition publication issued by Walter Glover, Sydney 1984. Norton wrote to Professor Oeser on 12 April 1955 enclosing £3/10/- for a set of 27 large prints from the Rowden White exhibition [copy of letter in the collection of the author]. The present location of these prints is unknown. Glover utilised colour slides provided by Professor Oeser’s widow, Mrs Y. Raphael-Oeser, for the publication of the Supplement.

44 F.C. Folkard, The Rare Sex, Murray, Sydney 1965: 187.

45 Personal communication to the author, 1981.

46 Beresford Lionel Conroy worked as a duco sprayer. He and Norton had met in 1935 and married at the registrar general’s office, Sydney on 24 December 1940. Conroy enlisted as a commando during World War Two and served with the AIF in northern New Guinea, leaving Norton behind in Sydney. When Conroy returned, Norton demanded a divorce, and this was finally settled in 1951. Conroy later remarried and had three children. According to his son Lionel, Conroy rarely spoke of his first marriage to Rosaleen Norton. Comments published on-line at www.takver.com/history/rosaleen.htm.

47 According to Boothman, Greenlees’ father used to bully his son and try to convince him to turn away from fantasy poetry to ‘real writing’, Boothman maintained that Rosaleen stimulated Gavin to explore his inner world. Together they investigated mystical symbolism and discussed surrealist literature. They also enjoyed the same sorts of music, especially Mozart and Sibelius, and they both explored meditative and hypnotic techniques in order to induce visionary states of consciousness.


49 Vagrancy was defined legally as having insufficient lawful means of support. Norton was charged with vagrancy on several occasions during the 1950s and 1960s. On 26 January 1964 she went to live with her sister Cecily in Kirribilli in order to sustain a plea of not guilty against a vagrancy charge.

50 According to Walter Glover Jnr., when his father was working as a journalist he used to periodically visit the courtroom adjoining Central Police Station ‘and take note of the human flotsam that had fallen foul of the law’. Interview with Ned McCann, August 1998, documented on-line at http://nedmccann.blogspot.com.

51 Born in 1911, Glover had left school at thirteen and worked for various trade journals like Decoration and Glass, Package Parade and Signs and Showcards. During World War Two he served in New Guinea as a sergeant in the Australian Army, rising eventually to the rank of captain in the Army Education division. After the War he became a freelance publisher and worked part-time as editor of The Pastrycook’s Review.

52 Personal communication to the author, 1981.

53 Ibid.

54 Glover’s original idea was to print Norton’s illustrations on sheets using an office litho machine, and to tie the sheets together with pink ribbon. He therefore arranged for his solicitor, Bob Benjafield, to formalise a contract with Norton and Greenlees which provided them with royalties as an advance against future sums due from the book. Officially Glover was to pay Norton and Greenlees £8 a week each, rising to a maximum of £200, against a 15 percent royalty. In fact, because the book was a year in production, the actual sum paid was much greater than this. Significantly, it enabled Norton and Greenlees to avoid the serious charge of vagrancy even though they ceded their artistic copyrights in doing so.

55 This specific phrase was used by Norton in her manuscript notes accompanying the drawing Black Magic reproduced in The Art of Rosaleen Norton. Norton also described the controversial drawing in these terms during the 1953 obscenity hearings: see Daily Telegraph, Sydney, 8 February 1953.

56 The remainder of the poem reads as follows:

Units of gravity begotten on science by vertigo
He is the living dictionary of those fashions
Wherein those elegant suites, panelled in fur and fine mirrors
In fruit and gems, ambassadors tread gathering their reasons,
Like hunters, sly silhouettes, throughout the long night
watches
And strangely fashioned diplomats, in silence,
Stake their claims for the lands, unknown to them, that in
daylight
Will approve or condemn their work.

‘Night, night’ ... Here are those scenes we all rehearse
When the profile of fixed and obvious purpose fades.
Here rule those iron necessities that in the patter of passing
shapes
Their children, begotten in turning mirrors of the world
You seem to elude, more truly hidden
When daylight’s popular music obscure the visible lamps
Although among them, another one, made of our restless
Other, lives
A worker in dark-rooms of space
Moving along a bridge of royal hearts
That, turned to inward dances,
Take all that love and turmoil to their own.

Here are our favourite playful ghosts -
The seance of hands, the travelogue of medieval cities
Wherein a great scholar laboured once
Disturbed by the centuries who mutter dryly their
crepuscular lore
Behind a curtain, amid the more curious exhibits -
Figures born from the changing labyrinth
But spanned by the rainbow of his triumphant art.

57 Personal communication to the author, 1981.
58 Personal communication to the author, 1981.
59 For details of this trial see the Daily Telegraph, Sydney, 5 February 1953 and The Sun, Sydney,
5 February 1953.
60 Ibid.
61 Ibid.
62 Titled Odium Psychopathologicum, the poem was published in the second edition of The Art of Rosaleen
Norton, Sydney 1982:

Behold, my friends the empty space
That doth this volume thus disgrace.
The drawing that should fill its place
Hath vanished:
Banned and banished!
O Puritanic Harpies, rage!
Thy breed alone doth this disgrace,
That mirrored saw its own foul face;
With mind as empty as yon space,
Whose culture (O enlightened Age!)
Is even as a missing page.
Enraged Caliban
(Whose knowledge is, to thy perdition,
Limited as this edition; 
Snipping art, in art’s expression, 
Secrets of thine own repression, 
Howl thy malice! Ban - 
Yet know, O Ape of little sense 
‘Honi soit qui mal y pense!’

64 Personal communication from Walter Glover to the author, 1981.
65 No-one taking a copy of the book out of Australia could legally bring it back in.
66 Personal communication from Walter Glover to the author, 1981.
67 See The Sun, Sydney, 28 November 1955.
70 Appearing before Stipendiary Magistrate Blackmore, Hoffmann at first refused to take the oath, stating that she was not a Christian. She later told the Court that she was a Buddhist, and that ‘the evil eye of Buddha would follow Constable Ikin around for the rest of his days’. See ‘Black Masses in Sydney’, loc.cit.
72 It later came to light that the incident had been totally fabricated: the participants in the ‘Black Mass’ were university students who had donned ceremonial robes and used specimen bones from the Anatomy Department to create a bizarre, satanic atmosphere of ‘sacrifice’. Unfortunately, such episodes only served to increase public interest in Norton and claims of alleged ‘witchcraft and black magic’ activities in Kings Cross continued to appear regularly in the tabloid press during the 1950s.
73 In her autobiographical article ‘I was born a Witch’ [loc cit.: 5] Norton specifically stated: ‘Instinctive kinship and sympathy with animals is an inherent part of me; I hate to see them abused in any way, while cruelty to them is one of the few things that literally makes me see red.’
74 For a summary of the charges see ‘Pedlars of Lewd Films had a Devilish Ordeal’, Daily Telegraph, Sydney, 9 October 1955.
75 Ibid.
76 Ibid.
77 Ibid.
78 In an interview with Squire magazine, Sydney April 1965; 45, Norton referred to the act of alleged ritual flagellation in these terms: ‘This rite, incidentally, wasn’t anything to do with witchcraft. It was just a private thing.’
79 Daily Telegraph, Sydney, 9 October 1955.
80 Ibid.
85 The exact date of publication is unclear. A small advertisement announcing the release of The Art of Rosaleen Norton appeared in Truth [Sydney] on 14 September 1952. An article titled ‘Artist’s Sex Book Called Fantastic’ which appeared in the same magazine a week earlier suggests that the book may have first become available to the public on 8 September 1952. It is possible that Goossens may not have become aware

Prior to arriving in Australia in 1947, Goossens had been friendly with both Cyril Scott, author of a well known esoteric book An Outline of Modern Occultism. Goossens was also a close associate of the composer Philip Heseltine, who was an associate of Aleister Crowley and shared his interest in magic and paganism (see Chapter Five).

89. In addition to their shared interest in the pagan traditions, Goossens, Norton and Greenlees also shared a love of classical music. They discussed the possibility of working together on a musical rendition of Edgar Allan Poe’s The Fall of the House of Usher: Greenlees was to write the libretto, Norton would paint the backdrops, and Goossens would compose the music. However, this project, did not proceed. Personal communication to the author from Walter Glover, 1981.
88. Ibid. It would appear that Goossens was also interested in sexually explicit material, for he closed his letter by adding ‘...and I want to take more photos.’ Some form of sexual magic practice may have been associated with the photographs because Goossens confirmed in a police interview with Vice Squad detective Bert Travenar that he had been involved in group sex activities with Norton and Greenlees ‘four or five times’.
89. Gavin Greenlees confirmed to Walter Glover in 1982 that the ceremonial masks brought back to Sydney by Sir Eugene Goossens [he had recently been knighthed] in March 1956 were intended for use in magical rituals held in the Brougham Street residence. Personal communication from Walter Glover to the author, 1981.
90. For further details of this case see news clippings held by the Australian Archives, Department of the Navy, SP551, log books of HMC, HMS, HMA ships, 1855-1957.
91. Ten weeks after being apprehended at Mascot Airport, Goossens boarded a flight to Rome, travelling incognito as Mr E. Gray, never to return to Australia again. Soon afterwards Goossens separated from his wife and he then tried to restore his career by working occasionally for the BBC in London. However news of the Goossens controversy had already reached the London music world and the conductor was unable to salvage his reputation. Goossens died in England from a ruptured ulcer in June 1962, shortly after returning from a trip to Switzerland where he had visited one of his daughters by an earlier marriage.
94. Goossens was knighted at Buckingham Palace in June 1955.
95. Greenlees was admitted to Callan Park Hospital on 7 October 1955.
98. Greenlees was discharged from the Alma Mater Nursing Home in 1983, having come to this medical facility several years after first being admitted to Callan Park Hospital.
101. These autobiographical articles were ‘I was born a Witch’, Australasian Post, Sydney, 3 January 1957; ‘Witches want no Recruits’, Australasian Post, Sydney, 10 January 1957, and ‘Hitch-hiking Witch’, Australasian Post, Sydney 7 February 1957.
105. ‘This particular photograph appeared in Dave Barnes’ ‘I am a Witch’, loc cit; and also R.Norton, ‘Hitch-hiking Witch’, loc cit: 14. In the latter article it was described as ‘fancy dress...not to be taken seriously’. Norton was quoted as saying: ‘Familiar spirits are said to take the form of cats, everyone knows that!’
113 D. Barnes, ‘I am a Witch’, loc cit.
115 Hexes are magical conjurations of a positive or negative nature and involve spells and incantations. See also Chapter Five.
116 Norton’s 1960s paintings were not of the same calibre as the major works exhibited at the Rowden White gallery in 1949. However, it was generally works from this period that surfaced after Norton’s death in 1979 and were then sold at various auctions.
118 Ibid.
119 Norton’s other sister, Phyllis, who was the second of the three sisters, had died in 1946, having spent most of her married life in Armidale.
121 See fn. 112 for details.
122 N. Javes, loc. cit. 1969. Norton made similar claims during an interview with Kerry McGlynn in 1972, reported in the Sunday Telegraph, Sydney, 16 July 1972. Norton told McGlynn: ‘Of course I have put curses on people, but only when they deserved it. If someone does something to me that hurts me, then I get back at them. I put a curse on them and it results in an illness, and accident – things like that.’
123 In all probability Norton would have modified the dates for the Wiccan Sabbats to make them more relevant to the cycle of the seasons in the Southern Hemisphere. Sabatt dates currently observed by Wiccans in Australia are as follows: Lammas/Lughnassadh – 2 February; Halloween/Samhain – 30 April; Candlemas/Imbolc – 1 August; Beltane – 31 October.
124 See also K. McGlynn, ‘Going to the Devil’, Sunday Telegraph, Sydney, 16 July 1972, where similar claims were made. The number of close magical followers was almost certainly exaggerated. Norton’s magical group in Brougham Street, Kings Cross, was very small – fewer than a dozen members – and Norton’s attic was too restrictive for large ritual gatherings. Norton rarely led witchcraft ceremonies in open rural areas, parks or nature reserves.
125 These elements were aspects of a more eclectic spirituality which had entered popular Australian culture, influenced by American and British fashions, following the rise of the counter-culture in California, London and some centres in Europe. See R. Ellwood: The Sixties Spiritual Revival (Rutgers University Press, New Brunswick, New Jersey 1996) N. Drury, The New Age: The History of a Movement (Thames & Hudson, New York, 2004) and N. Drury and G. Tillett, Other Temples, Other Gods: The Occult in Australia (Methuen, Sydney 1980) for an overview of these trends.
126 See N. Drury and G. Tillett, Other Temples, Other Gods: The Occult in Australia, loc cit.
127 From an Anglican pamphlet [no date] outlining the aims of the Anglican Commission of Inquiry.
128 See N. Drury and G. Tillett, Other Temples, Other Gods: The Occult in Australia, loc cit.
129 Ibid.
130 Ibid. A selection of media headlines from the period is included in this publication.
132 Ibid.
133 Norton was now living at 1/82 Roslyn Gardens, Kings Cross, with her two pet cats, amidst a litter of easels, paintings and books, and enjoyed watching the fish swimming in her aquarium. She also spent a lot of time listening to classical music; Mozart, Stravinsky, Beethoven, Bach and Sibelius were her favourite composers. Although her flat had a dark and gloomy sitting room because it was located below street level, it opened out onto a leafy courtyard. In the summer months Norton liked sitting in the sun near her French windows, beside a red pot containing an umbrella plant, reading her books on magic and mysticism. I first obtained an interview with her in 1977 while she was living in this apartment, material from which was used in my book Inner Visions: Explorations in Magical Consciousness, Routledge & Kegan Paul, London 1979 and also in the introduction to the 1982 edition of The Art of Rosaleen Norton.
134 Norton remained at 1/82 Roslyn Gardens, Kings Cross until November 1979 when she was taken to the Roman Catholic Sacred Heart Hospice for the Dying at St Vincents Hospital, Sydney.
135 It is alleged that shortly before she died in the Hospice she told her friend Victor Wain: ‘I came into this world bravely; I’ll go out bravely’; personal communication to the author from Victor Wain, who attended Norton in Sacred Heart Hospice. After Norton’s death her older sister, Cecily Boothman, provided me with a
range of family material and photographs which were incorporated into my biography of Norton: *Pan’s Daughter*, Sydney, 1988. Boothman checked drafts of the text for factual inaccuracies. Boothman also advised me [personal communication, 1981] that Norton left a will, ‘written in scratchy handwriting’, leaving her athame, or magical dagger, and other ritual magical equipment to Bill Turnbull, who was a member of her magical group. Norton bequeathed a number of books and drawings to Boothman, and she also left an artwork of a cat – her last painting – to her friend Eve Finney. At Boothman’s request these details were not included in the text of *Pan’s Daughter*.

136 Personal communication from Walter Glover, 1981.
137 Personal communication from Cecily Boothman, 1981.
138 Personal communication from Walter Glover, 1981.
139 The 1982 facsimile edition of *The Art of Rosaleen Norton* had a print run of 1000 copies for general trade distribution. An additional fifty limited-edition copies were numbered and bound in red leather for collectors. Publication proceeded in an uncontroversial manner and no charges of obscenity were brought against the book’s re-release.

140 Exiles Bookshop was also the venue for the simultaneous launch of Glover’s facsimile publication.
142 Mrs Y. Raphael-Oeser also sent Glover the transcript of psychologist L.J. Murphy’s interview with Norton in Melbourne, 1949.
143 I attended the opening night performance as a guest of Glover, and met Greenlees for the first time on this occasion. Greenlees had been granted leave from the Alma Mater Nursing Home, allowing him to attend.
144 For reports of the play see *Campaign*, Sydney, January 1983: 50-51 and February 1983: 40.
145 Greenlees’ response to the play was clear: Glover and I discussed it with him after the performance.
146 Personal communication from Greenlees to the author, December 1982.
147 Reported in the *Daily Mirror*, Sydney, 13 December 1983.
Chapter Two

SOURCES OF THE WESTERN ESOTERIC TRADITION

This chapter explores the principal sources of the Western esoteric tradition which in turn helped generate the revival of modern magic in the 20th century. It also provides the basis for a subsequent exploration of the major shift that occurred shortly after 1900 when Western magic in Britain began to polarise into distinctive Left-Hand and Right-Hand paths – a theme examined in detail in Chapter Three. One of the central arguments in this thesis is that Rosaleen Norton can only be effectively evaluated as an occultist and visionary artist if she is placed within an appropriate magical-historical context. I believe that in a broad sense that context is the 20th century Western esoteric tradition per se, rather than the more localised socio-historical setting of post-World War Two Australia – which does not, in and of itself, provide us with sufficient points of reference to explore Norton’s magic or visionary art in depth. It seems to me that although Norton unquestionably made her mark in Australia during the 1950s and 1960s as the controversial and bohemian ‘Witch of Kings Cross’, and although many elements in her colourful story are distinctly local, her eclectic cosmology and remarkable forays into hypnotic trance states and the magic of sexuality are more universal in scope and demand much broader examination. While Norton was perceived by the local Sydney media as a deviant witch and Devil-worshipper – a renegade who had turned her back on the conventional morality and religious beliefs of her era – she is actually much more complex than that, and also substantially more interesting, as I will seek to demonstrate in subsequent chapters of this thesis.

In magical terms, as I will show in Chapters Four, Five and Six, Norton looked well beyond Australian shores for the sources of her occult inspiration – to the extent that in some ways she was hardly an Australian phenomenon at all. As a young artist seeking to establish herself in the late 1940s, she clearly believed she had no true contemporaries who could really share her artistic journey. In the short essay included in the catalogue accompanying her major exhibition at the University of Melbourne in 1949 (see Chapters One and Six), Norton emphasized that the world-view driving her particular form of ‘supernatural’ art was entirely different from the parochial concerns of other young Australian artists, whom she
believed were ‘hampered by a pathetic obsession with merely temporal values’. 1 [my emphasis in italics]. Norton went on to state:

The work in this exhibition is remarkable in its uninhibited return to that storehouse of timeless archetypal imagery on which the visionaries of all ages have drawn, a return which owes nothing to contemporary fashion...

Writing in the third person Norton said of her own artistic approach: ‘Her imagery… [is used] to symbolize the intangible forces of which human life is the playground’, and she also noted that

the artist [ie. Norton herself] has none of the intellectual’s embarrassment before the ‘supernatural’; her art is a healthy reaction from the narrow materialism of the 30’s towards an integral statement of man’s experience, human, demonic and divine. 2

With this statement Norton immediately stakes her credentials on her determination to embrace the big picture – she is not concerned with the temporal and materialistic issues of her time but wishes instead to explore the sacred and ‘demonic’ potentialities of human experience. Here she is telling us as early as August 1949 – at the still quite youthful age of 31 – that she has a thoroughly antinomian bent and is willing to ‘go against the grain’ by rejecting the mainstream values and concerns of her contemporaries and depicting ‘timeless archetypal imagery’ in her artworks. As noted in Chapter One, at only twelve years of age Norton was already preparing to dispense with the Christian beliefs and practices [eg. Anglican confirmation] adopted by her immediate family and by 80 per cent of her fellow Australians. So, from an early age, Norton demonstrates that she is willing to strike out on her own. This – in large degree – is what makes her particular career as a practitioner of visionary art and pagan, chthonic magic, so fascinating. Norton is clearly a creature out of step with her own time and place, and it seems to me that we have no choice but to follow Norton’s unique expression of antinomianism and locate her own, specific context within the Western esoteric tradition itself – for only then does her true identity emerge, and her magical and visionary contribution to that tradition become more obvious.

As I have noted in Chapter One and will discuss in more detail in Chapter Four, the principal deities in Norton’s personal cosmology were far removed from her local context. They were mythic beings whose origin lay in ancient cultures from the Mediterranean and Middle Eastern world – among them Pan, Hecate, Lilith and Lucifer. And her occult and metaphysical sources were similarly diverse, encompassing the Jewish
mystical Kabbalah, esoteric Buddhism, Kundalini yoga, Voodoo, medieval demonology and 19th century Theosophy.

Within the context of the Western esoteric tradition itself, as will become more clearly evident in Chapters Three, Four and Five, Norton was strongly influenced in her magical practice by two well known British occultists – Aleister Crowley (1875-1947) and Dion Fortune (1890-1946) – both of whom are listed in the relatively short and concise bibliography in *The Art of Rosaleen Norton*. Of the two, Crowley emerges as by far the stronger influence: a fusion of Crowleyian sex magic and the libertine worship of Pan and other chthonic deities was enthusiastically embraced by Norton during the mid-1950s (see Chapters Three and Five). Fortune is very much a lesser influence, but her novel about Pan, *The Goat-Foot God* (1936), was certainly an inspiration to Norton, as was Fortune’s highly regarded volume on practical Kabbalah and the Tree of Life, *The Mystical Qabalah* (1935). Both of these books are listed in Norton’s bibliography and Norton drew on many of Fortune’s Kabbalistic references as part of her magical and artistic process.

Crowley and Fortune are pivotal figures in the history of 20th century Western magic: both – at different times – were members of the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn, an organization that could justifiably be regarded as the very embodiment of the Western esoteric tradition since it brought together within a single organization a wide range of Western mystical traditions and magical perspectives that had developed over many centuries. I am therefore arguing in this thesis that Norton cannot be understood without first considering the nature of the Western esoteric tradition as a whole: it then becomes necessary to locate her approach more specifically within that tradition. Chapters Two and Three deal essentially with Norton’s magical-historical context and Chapters Four, Five and Six with her unique approach to Western magic and visionary trance-art. The Golden Dawn itself is therefore an appropriate point of departure for what later becomes an exotic and colourful foray into trance magic, libertine sexuality and chthonic visionary art – an exploration of the unique occult phenomenon of Rosaleen Norton herself…

Established in England in 1888, the Golden Dawn drew on a range of ancient and medieval cosmologies and incorporated them into a body of ceremonial practices and ritual grades centred on the Kabbalistic Tree of Life, an important motif within the Jewish mystical tradition which, as a unified but nevertheless complex symbol, represents the sacred ‘emanations’ of the Godhead. In addition to the Kabbalah, which
occupied a central position in the cosmology of the Golden Dawn, the organisation also drew on the Hermetic tradition which had its roots in Neoplatonism and underwent a revival during the Renaissance. Roscrucianism, Freemasonry and the medieval Tarot were also significant elements, as indicated below. Collectively these mystical and cosmological sources represent key elements of the modern Western esoteric tradition as exemplified by the ceremonial practices in the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn. As I will seek to demonstrate in Chapters Four, Five and Six, the Kabbalah, in particular, exerted a strong influence on Norton’s artistic oeuvre and magical practice. Norton named key artworks after different sephiroth on the Kabbalistic Tree of Life (see Chapter Six) and she also called on Jewish archangels in her ceremonial banishing rituals (see Chapter Five). Uriel, in particular, had special significance as the archangel associated with the element Earth, and was also assigned symbolically to the direction North – the location of her sacred Pan altar (see Chapter Five).

The medieval Kabbalah
According to Gershom Scholem (1897-1982), widely regarded as one of the pre-eminent authorities on the origins and symbolism of the Kabbalah, the medieval Kabbalah belongs to an emanationist cosmological tradition that has its origins in Gnosticism. Indeed, Scholem has referred to the Kabbalah as a form of Jewish Gnosticism. In its most fundamental sense the Kabbalah can be defined as a mystical commentary on the Pentateuch: the written Torah, or ‘five books of Moses’. The Hebrew word Kabbalah (which translates as ‘that which has been received’) refers to an oral or secret tradition and as Scholem has observed, the Zohar, the central text of the medieval Kabbalah, compiled in written form by the Spaniard Moses de Leon circa 1280 CE, has spiritual links with earlier schools of Gnosticism and Neoplatonism. In all three there are references to the concept of sacred emanations from the Godhead, to the idea of the pre-existence of the soul and its descent into matter, and to the sacred names of God.

Although the Kabbalah did not exist in written form until the Middle Ages, it is thought that the Sefer Yetzirah, or Book of Creation, was composed in Palestine between the third and sixth centuries CE. The Sefer Yetzirah describes how God created the world by means of the 22 letters of the Hebrew alphabet and the 10 sefirot – a term that appears for the first time in Hebrew literature. The 10 sefirot of the Tree of Life (also spelt sephiroth) are a central symbolic aspect of the Kabbalah.
Another early Kabbalistic text, *Sefer ha-Bahir*, emerged in Provence – where there was a Jewish community – between 1150 and 1200. Interest in the Kabbalah subsequently spread across the Pyrenees into Catalonia and then to Castile. In *circa* 1280, the Spanish Jewish mystic Moses de Leon (1238–1305) began circulating booklets among his fellow Kabbalists. These texts were written in Aramaic, and de Leon claimed that he had transcribed them from an ancient book of wisdom composed in the circle of Rabbi Shim’on bar Yohai, a famous disciple of Rabbi Akiva, who lived and taught in Israel in the second century. These booklets gradually formed the text known as *Ha-Zohar ha-Qadosh*, usually referred to as the *Zohar (The Book of Splendour)*. Although Moses de Leon may have drawn on early material received through the secret oral tradition, it is now thought that he himself was probably the author of the *Zohar*.

According to the *Zohar*, God first taught the doctrines of the Kabbalah to a select group of angels. After the creation of the Garden of Eden, these angels shared the secret teachings with the first man, Adam. They were then passed to Noah, and subsequently to Abraham, who took them to Egypt. Moses was initiated into the Kabbalah in Egypt, the land of his birth, and King David and King Solomon were also initiated. No one, however, dared write them down until Rabbi Shim’on bar Yohai.12 In the Kabbalah all aspects of manifested form, including the sacred archetypes or manifestations of the Godhead, are said to have their origin in *Ain Soph Aur* – also referred to as *En-Sof*13 or *Ein-Sof*14 – ‘the limitless light’, a realm of being entirely beyond form and conception which ‘has neither qualities nor attributes’. In Kabbalistic cosmology the subsequent emanations which emerge from this profound Mystery, and which constitute the spheres upon the Tree of Life [*Otz Chiim*], reveal different aspects of the sacred universe but are nevertheless considered as part of a divine totality. *Ain Soph Aur*, writes Scholem, ‘manifests... to the Kabbalist under ten different aspects, which in turn comprise an endless variety of shades and gradations’.15 These emanations nevertheless reflect the essential unity of the Godhead, and because the human form is said to have been created ‘in the image of God’ the spheres on the Tree of Life are also spheres within the body of Adam Kadmon, the archetypal human being.16 In the Kabbalah the quest for mystical self-knowledge is therefore regarded essentially as a process of regaining undifferentiated One-ness with the Divine.

According to the Kabbalah, the mystical universe is sustained by the utterance of the Holy Names of God: the ten emanations or *sephirot* on
the Tree of Life are none other than ‘the creative names which God called into the world, the names which He gave to Himself’.\footnote{17} According to the Zohar:

In the Beginning, when the will of the King began to take effect, he engraved signs into the divine aura. A dark flame sprang forth from the innermost recess of the mystery of the Infinite, En-Sof \[\text{Ain Soph Aur}\] like a fog which forms out of the formless, enclosed in the ring of this aura, neither white nor black, neither red nor green, and of no colour whatever. But when this flame began to assume size and extension it produced radiant colours. For in the innermost centre of the flame a well sprang forth from which flames poured upon everything below, hidden in the mysterious secrets of En-Sof. The well broke through, and yet did not entirely break through, the ethereal aura which surrounded it. It was entirely unrecognisable until the impact of its breakthrough a hidden supernal point shone forth. Beyond this point nothing may be known or understood, and therefore it is called Reshith, that is ‘Beginning’, the first word of Creation.\footnote{18}
Scholem writes that the 'Primordial Point' was thought of by the majority of Kabbalists not as Kether, the Crown (normally considered the first emanation upon the Tree of Life) but as the Great Father, Chokmah or Wisdom, which is the second sephirah. In Kabbalistic cosmology the energy of the Great Father unites with that of Binah, the Great Mother (Understanding), and from her womb all archetypal forms come forth.19

As Christian Ginsburg notes in his seminal book The Kabbalah: Its Doctrines, Development and Literature, 'It is not the En-Sof who created the world, but this Trinity... the world was born from the union of the crowned King and Queen... who, emanated from the En-Sof, produced the Universe in their own image.' 20 In a symbolic sense the seven subsequent emanations beneath the trinity of Kether, Chokmah and Binah constitute the seven days of Creation. 21 The Tree of Life, with its ten sephiroth or emanations of divine consciousness, therefore encompasses a symbolic process by which the Infinite becomes tangible.22 The ten spheres on the Tree of Life are as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sphere</th>
<th>Name</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kether</td>
<td>The Crown</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chokmah</td>
<td>Wisdom (The Father)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Binah</td>
<td>Understanding (The Mother)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chesed</td>
<td>Mercy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Geburah</td>
<td>Severity, or Strength</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tiphareth</td>
<td>Beauty, or Harmony (The Son)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Netzach</td>
<td>Victory</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hod</td>
<td>Splendour</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yesod</td>
<td>The Foundation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Malkuth</td>
<td>Kingdom, or Earth (The Daughter)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

These emanations align themselves into three pillars, the outer two being the Pillar of Mercy headed by Chokmah (symbolising light and purity) and the Pillar of Severity headed by Binah (symbolising darkness and impurity). Beneath them lies the Garden of Eden, with its four rivers Chesed, Geburah, Netzach and Hod converging in Tiphareth, which is located at a central point on the Middle Pillar. The occult historian A.E.Waite – a leading member of the Golden Dawn – has suggested that the Middle Pillar can be regarded as the Perfect Pillar, for it reaches to the Crown, Kether. 23 The other two pillars provide a duality of opposites and represent the ‘Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil’. The sixth emanation on the Tree of Life, Tiphareth, is associated symbolically with the divine Son and is regarded in the western esoteric tradition as the sphere of spiritual rebirth. The final emanation on the Tree of Life, Malkuth, ‘The World’, is represented symbolically by the Daughter, Shekinah, who in turn is a reflection of the Great Mother, Binah.24
In addition to recognising ten sephiroth upon the Tree of Life, the medieval Kabbalists also divided the Tree into ‘four worlds’ of creative manifestation. God was said to be present in each of these four worlds and each in turn was represented symbolically by a letter in the Tetragrammaton,25 the sacred name JHVH (consisting of the four Hebrew letters Yod, He, Vau, He) usually translated as Jehovah, or Yahweh, meaning ‘Lord’. The four worlds are as follows:

Atziluth, the Archetypal World
This level of existence is closest to the unmanifested realm of Ain Soph Aur and contains only one sephirah, Kether, which is described as ‘the hidden of the hidden. It is the emergence of God’s Will, His creative urge. It is the infinite, the initiation of all that can and will be. It is infinity.’26

Briah, the World of Creation
This world contains two sephiroth, Chokmah and Binah, representing the Great Father and the Great Mother and reflecting the highest expression of the sacred male and female principles. Their union gives rise to the World of Formation.27

Yetzirah, the World of Formation
This world contains the sephiroth Chesed, Geburah, Tiphareth, Netzach, Hod and Yesod. As indicated by its name, Yesod literally provides the ‘foundation’ for all that has preceded it in the creative process of sacred emanation from the highest realms of the Tree of Life.

Assiah, the Physical World
This world represents the final materialization of God’s Will in the sphere of Malkuth on the Tree of Life and is represented by Shekinah, the Daughter, who is spoken of variously as ‘the Bride of the Divine Son in Tiphareth’, ‘the Bride of Kether’ and the ‘Daughter of Binah’. Shekinah personifies the Divine Feminine on Earth.28

Each sephirah is also said to contain an entire Tree of Life. The ‘Malkuth’ of the first sephirah emanates the ‘Kether’ of the following sephirah, and so on, through the ten emanations on the Tree. Each of these ten spheres is therefore considered a mirror of the Divine. According to the Jewish mystical tradition nothing exists beyond God, and as John Ferguson has observed in relation to the spiritual quest in the Kabbalah: ‘We must see God as the First Cause, and the universe as an emanation from his Will or Wisdom. The finite has no existence except in the light of the Infinite, which contracted so that the finite might be...Man is the highest point of the
created world, and his soul contains animal and moral elements, but also an element of pure spirit, which in the righteous ascends to God.29

The Hermetic tradition
During the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries the Hermetica, or Hermetic tradition, gained intellectual and philosophical influence in Europe. Hermetic philosophy has its roots in Hellenism.30 During the Renaissance, Florence became a cultural centre where esoteric and metaphysical perspectives were strongly supported and it was in the royal courts under the rule of Cosimo and Lorenzo de Medici, that the Hermetic tradition received significant endorsement. In 1460 a monk named Leonardo da Pistoia brought with him to Florence a collection of Greek manuscripts that had been discovered in Macedonia and which would later become known as the Corpus Hermeticum, or Hermetica. These texts were presented to Cosimo de Medici (1389-1464), the Italian merchant prince who ruled Florence and who was also a noted collector of Greek manuscripts. In 1462 Cosimo passed the Hermetic texts to his young court scholar, Marsilio Ficino (1433-1499), requesting that he translate them into Latin. This work was completed in 1463 and Cosimo was able to read the translation before his death the following year.31

The Hermetic material was essentially a body of Greek mystical and philosophical writings that drew on Platonism, Stoicism and Neoplatonism and then subsequently emerged within a Gnostic-Egyptian context. The Hermetic texts date from the latter half of the second century CE through to the end of the third century.32 In these writings the central figure, Hermes Trismegistus (Thrice Greatest Hermes) is presented as a wise spiritual teacher, a Gnostic master who is a composite of Hermes and Thoth.33 In the Hermetic model of the universe all things were believed to have come from God and the world was therefore part of a sacred Unity. The universe itself was divided into three worlds, or emanations. The lowest sphere was the world of Nature, which in turn received divine influences from the more sanctified realms above. At the next level were the stars, spirits and ‘guardians’. Higher still was the supercelestial world of nous, the world of angelic spirits who were thought to have a superior knowledge of reality because they were closer to the Godhead, the sacred source of Creation. According to the Hermetic perspective the transcendent act of achieving a state of Oneness with God entailed liberating oneself from the constrictions of temporal life and entering the realm of pure and divine Thought.34

Ficino's work on the Corpus Hermeticum was developed by Giovanni Pico, Count of Mirandola (1463-1494). Pico combined Ficino's Hermetic
Neoplatonism with an extensive knowledge of astrology, the Kabbalah, Christianity and ‘high magic’ (*mageia*). Like Ficino, Pico conceived of a universe that emanated from the Godhead. However Pico's conception was not simply that of the devotional mystic. According to Pico, not only could man come to know God but he could also become a type of god himself – an attitude to divinity also found among contemporary magical practitioners (see below and also Chapters Three and Seven):

...he who knows himself in himself knows all things, as Zoroaster first wrote. When we are finally lighted in this knowledge, we shall in bliss be addressing the true Apollo on intimate terms... And, restored to health, Gabriel ‘the strength of God’, shall abide in us, leading us through the miracles of Nature and showing us on every side the merit and the might of God.

According to Pico, *mageia* or high magic, could provide humanity with access to the inner workings of Nature and the cosmos. *Mageia* could be employed ‘in calling forth into the light, as if from their hiding places, the powers scattered and sown in the world by the loving-kindness of God’. The role of the sacred magician, the practitioner of *mageia*, was to raise earth (matter) to the level of heaven (spirit). In the *Asclepius*, Hermes Trismegistus similarly urges his followers to become ‘god-like’:

...he takes in the nature of a god as if he were himself a god...He is united to the gods because he has the divinity pertaining to gods... He takes the earth as his own, he blends himself with the elements by the speed of thought, by the sharpness of spirit he descends to the depths of the sea. Everything is accessible to him; heaven is not too high for him, for he measures it as if he were in his grasp by his ingenuity. What sight the spirit shows to him, no mist of the air can obscure; the earth is never so dense as to impede his work; the immensity of the sea's depths do not trouble his plunging view. He is at the same time everything as he is everywhere.

It was primarily the high magic or *mageia* of the Hermetic tradition that attracted the founding members of the Golden Dawn because, at its most profound level, high magic (or ‘theurgy’) proposed an archetypal process of mythic renewal. The magical quest, as delineated within the Hermetic and Gnostic traditions, was to be ‘reborn’ from the limited and restricted world of material form into the realm of Spirit. This in turn became a guiding maxim within the Western esoteric tradition up until the time of the Golden Dawn. However a polarising split subsequently occurred within this tradition with the introduction of Crowley’s doctrine of *Thelema*: thereafter an influential chthonic element was introduced to 20th century magical practice which led many occult devotees away from the quest for mythical renewal and towards accentuated occult individualism and/or esoteric anarchy (see Chapter Three).
The medieval Tarot

The earliest specific references to Tarot cards date back to 1442 and the d’Este court of Ferrara, although Tarot cards may have been invented a few years earlier, originating in northern Italy between 1410 and 1425. It seems likely that the earliest Tarot cards were associated with the aristocratic courts of either Ferrara or Milan; most of the Tarot decks which survive from 15th century Italy reflect the style and fashion of the nobility from that era. Interest in the Tarot subsequently spread from Italy to France and Switzerland. The modern Tarot deck is descended from the Piedmontese Tarot which was widely known in northern Italy and France by the beginning of the 16th century. This pack consisted of 78 cards divided into 22 cards of the Major Arcana and 56 cards of the Minor Arcana. The Major Arcana are the so-called ‘court’ or mythological cards, while the Minor Arcana consists of four basic suits, swords, wands, cups and pentacles, which parallel the four suits in the modern (early 20th century) Rider-Waite Tarot deck.

The widespread occult belief that the Tarot cards conceal a hidden symbolic language based on esoteric themes has led to a plethora of fanciful explanations relating to the Tarot’s actual origins and purpose. Even today, some enthusiasts continue to claim that the Tarot cards originated in ancient Egypt and are associated with an esoteric wisdom tradition dating back thousands of years. Such a view was first proposed by French theologian Antoine Court de Gébelin (1725-1784), author of *Le Monde Primitif* (nine volumes), published in Paris between 1775 and 1784. His essay on the Tarot is included in volume VIII of this work, published in 1781. According to Court de Gébelin the Tarot cards had been invented by ancient Egyptian priests; their seventy-eight page book, disguised as a pack of playing cards, escaped the fire that destroyed their ancient libraries.

One of Court de Gébelin’s followers, a wig-maker named Jean-Baptiste Alliette (1738-1791), reversed his name to Etteilla and in 1783 published a book titled *Manière de se récréer avec le Jeu de Cartes nommées* in which he claimed that the Tarot, otherwise known as *The Book of Thoth* (after the ancient Egyptian god of wisdom), had been created by seventeen Magi, 171 years after the Deluge. He further claimed that one of these Magi, Athotis, was descended from Mercury and Noah. Alliette associated the Tarot with the Hermetic tradition, maintaining that it had been conceived by Hermes Trismegistus and that the text of *The Book of Thoth* had been written on leaves of gold in a temple three leagues from Memphis. Alliette also emphasized the role of the Tarot in fortune-
telling, creating a deck of cards and an accompanying book titled *Manière de tirer: Le Grand Etteilla où tarots Egyptiens*, specifically for the purpose of divination.  

While Court de Gébelin and Alliette promoted the concept of an Egyptian origin for the Tarot, the French ceremonial magician Eliphas Lévi (Alphonse-Louis Constant, 1810-1875) maintained that the origins of the Tarot could be traced to an even earlier cultural epoch. Lévi, whose esoteric writings are listed in Rosaleen Norton’s bibliography, possessed a copy of the *Grand Etteilla* Tarot deck but believed that the Tarot cards represented a secret esoteric alphabet that had links with the ancient Jewish mystical tradition. According to Lévi, the Tarot originated with

![Plate 22: Eliphas Lévi, the French ceremonial magician who proposed merging the Kabbalistic Tree of Life with the Major Arcana of the Tarot. Lévi was a major influence on the Golden Dawn](image)

Enoch, the oldest son of Cain, and provided the universal key to the Kabbalah. In one of his major works, *Dogme et Rituel de la Haute Magie* [1856], Lévi proclaimed that the twenty-two cards of the Major Arcana (the mythological cards of the Tarot) could be directly attributed to the twenty-two letters of the Hebrew alphabet and therefore linked to the Tree of Life.

Lévi’s concept of merging the Kabbalistic Tree of Life with the Major Arcana of the Tarot was developed by the French physician Dr Gerard Encausse (1865-1916), who wrote under the name of Papus. In 1889 Papus published an influential work titled *The Tarot of the Bohemians* which was illustrated with images from the Tarot of Marseilles. (This work is
also listed in Norton’s bibliography.) Papus provided a text-commentary on the symbolism of each letter of the Hebrew alphabet in direct association with the Tarot cards of the Major Arcana and his Tarot card images incorporated letters of the Hebrew alphabet next to their titles, thereby reinforcing the idea that the Tarot and the Jewish mystical tradition were symbolically interconnected. The concept of mapping the Major of Arcana of the Tarot as a network of symbolic pathways upon the Tree of Life was subsequently adopted by the ceremonial magicians of the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn and the Fraternity of the Inner Light, founded by Dion Fortune. Two other Golden Dawn members, Arthur Edward Waite (Frater Sacramentum Regis) and Pamela Colman Smith (Soror Quod Tibi id Aliis), created the well-known Rider-Waite Tarot deck (first published by Rider & Co., London, in 1910), which has remained one of the most popular Tarot decks up to the present day.

**Rosicrucians and Freemasons**

In addition to the Kabbalah, Hermetica and medieval Tarot, the Western esoteric tradition has also been strongly influenced by two mystical fraternities, the Freemasons and Rosicrucians, both of which played a key role in the late 19th and early 20th century magical revival. Rosicrucianism and Freemasonry build on mystical themes of spiritual transformation and renewal that have become an intrinsic component of modern magical perspectives.

Modern Freemasonry has 18th century origins. The Masonic Grand Lodge of England was established in London in 1717. The formation of the Grand Lodge represented the beginning of what is known as ‘speculative’ Freemasonry, the present-day fraternal order which does not require that its members should be working stonemasons. However Freemasonry as a tradition derives originally from the practices of the highly skilled stonemasons and cathedral builders who worked on large-scale constructions in Italy, France, Spain, Germany and England during the early Middle Ages. As early as the 14th century these so-called Operative, or Working Masons formed lodges and recognised ‘degrees’ in order to maintain their professional skills and standards. An itinerant builder was required to answer veiled questions and respond to special signs and passwords in order to establish his credentials as a Master Mason. In due course an elaborate system of Masonic rituals developed, sheathed in secrecy and maintained by oaths of fidelity and fraternity. By 1723 there were approximately 30 lodges in England; the Grand Lodge of England developed rapidly into the central governing body overseeing these lodges, thereby bringing a sense of coherence and stability to British
By the end of the 18th century there were also Masonic lodges in most European countries.

Rosicrucianism, meanwhile, has 17th century origins. The Rosicrucian fraternity announced their existence in Germany with the release of four pamphlets in 1614-16. The first of these documents was the *Fama Fraternitatis, dess Löblichen Ordens des Rosenkreutzes* [The Declaration of the Worthy Order of the Rosy Cross] issued in Kassel in 1614 together with a satirical work by the Italian writer Trajano Boccalini titled *Allgemeine und General Reformation, der gantzen weiten Welt* [The Universal and General Reformation of the Whole Wide World]. In 1615 an anti-Papal document entitled the *Confessio Fraternitatis* also appeared in Kassel, published in Latin. This in turn was followed by a fourth work published in Strasbourg in the German language in 1616, titled *Die Chymische Hochzeit Christiani Rosenkreutz* [The Chemical Marriage of Christian Rosencreutz, (or Rosycross)]. The last of these, an allegorical rather than a polemical work, is especially important in the context of contemporary magical thought because of its alchemical themes and spiritual rebirth symbolism, and its direct later influence on the Inner Order ritual grades of the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn.

Both the *Fama* and the *Confessio* contained brief information on the life of the mythical figure Christian Rosencreutz and the formation of his Order. The *Fama* was translated into English by the alchemist and mystic Thomas Vaughan (1622-1665) and published in 1652 under Vaughan’s *nom de plume*, Eugenius Philalethes. The *Fama* related that Brother C.R. has travelled extensively and received the wisdom of the East. The text also proposed that the many learned magicians, Kabbalists, physicians and philosophers in Germany should collaborate with each other because until now they have kept ‘their secrets close only to themselves’. The writer explains how the ‘faults of the Church and the whole *Philosophia Moralis* [can] be amended’ and reformed through this new sacred knowledge. The writer then goes on to explain how the Rosicrucian fraternity came into existence, initially with four members and later with a much expanded following. The text also mentions that members of the Brotherhood meet annually in the House of the Holy Spirit [a building called Sancti spiritus] and that a vault has been discovered where the original Brother Rosencreutz is buried.

Many who read the Rosicrucian pamphlets sought to contact the Fraternity without success: ‘The Brothers, if they existed seemed invisible and impervious to entreaties to make themselves known.’ This lack of public
McIntosh believes that later developments within the Rosicrucian movement also placed considerable emphasis on the alchemical secrets of transmutation and knowledge of the Philosopher’s Stone or the Elixir of Life. Michael Maier (1568-1622), a Lutheran physician with a strong interest in Hermetica, was one of the first writers to emphasize the alchemical aspects of Rosicrucianism through such publications as *Symbola Aureae Mensae* (1617) and *Themis Aurea* (1618). Maier also defended the authenticity of the Rosicrucian brotherhood, even though he claimed at the time that he was not a member. Lyndy Abraham describes the Philosopher’s Stone in her *Dictionary of Alchemical Imagery* (1998) as ‘the most famous of all alchemical ideas. The Stone is the arcanum of all arcana, possessing the power to perfect imperfection in all things, able to transmute base metals into pure gold and transform earthly man into an illumined philosopher.’ The Philosopher’s Stone also had a Christian dimension that Maier would have found especially relevant. Abraham writes: ‘It [ie. the Stone] is the figure of light veiled in dark matter, that divine love essence which combines divine wisdom and creative power, often identified with Christ as creative Logos.’ The figure of Christian Rosencreutz himself embodies both Christian and alchemical ideas: he is, as the English Rosicrucian philosopher and scientist Robert Fludd observed, a symbol of spiritual renewal, ‘a light, as if it were the Sun, yet winged and exceeding the Sun of our heaven, arising from the tomb... a picture of the making of the perfect man’.

The Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn

The Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn was formally established in London on 12 February 1888 when its three founding figures, Samuel Liddell Mathers (1854-1918), Dr William Wynn Westcott (1848-1925) and Dr William Robert Woodman (1828-1891) signed a document headed ‘Order of the G.D.’ All three were members of the Societas Rosicruciana in Anglia (SRIA) and it was through this esoteric Masonic organisation that they had met each other. Westcott had recently acquired a manuscript in
cipher form which had been discovered among the papers of a deceased member of the SRIA, and he claimed to have found among the leaves of the cipher manuscript the name and address of a certain Fraulein Anna Sprengel, said to be an eminent Rosicrucian adept. On her authority, and following a lengthy correspondence, Westcott announced in Masonic and Theosophical circles that he had been instructed to found an English branch of her German occult group, calling it the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn. The first official document defined the purpose of the Golden Dawn as a secret society dedicated to the pursuit of ‘occult science’. The text began as follows:

For the purpose of the study of Occult Science, and the further investigation of the Mysteries of Life and Death, and our Environment, permission has been granted by the Secret Chiefs of the R.C. to certain Fratres learned in the Occult Sciences, (and who are also members of the Soc.Ros.in Ang.) to work the Esoteric Order of the G.D. in the Outer; to hold meetings thereof for Study and to initiate any approved person Male or Female, who will enter into an Undertaking to maintain strict secrecy regarding all that concerns it. Belief in One God necessary. No other restrictions.

Three points in this document are of particular interest. The first is the reference to ‘Secret Chiefs’: from the very establishment of the Order it was claimed that these mysterious personages provided the spiritual authority for the Golden Dawn and this would prove to be a point of contention in later years. The second is that the founders of the Golden Dawn had decided to admit both male and female members, thus differentiating the new organisation from mainstream Freemasonry: this is significant because, in addition to being members of the Societas Rosicruciana in Anglia, Mathers, Westcott and Woodman were all Freemasons, and traditionally Freemasonry admitted only male members. The third is that the new magical order required its members to believe in ‘One God’. The inference here was that the Golden Dawn would be grounded philosophically in a monotheistic spiritual tradition. This was further clarified in the text of the new Golden Dawn ‘pledge form’ which specified that the preferred religion should be Christianity: ‘Belief in a Supreme Being, or Beings, is indispensable. In addition, the Candidate, if not a Christian, should be at least prepared to take an interest in Christianity.

The latter document also clarified the earlier statement that the Golden Dawn was dedicated to the ‘investigation of the Mysteries of Life and Death’ by confirming that it was not prepared to admit candidates to the
Order who were Mesmerists 86 or Spiritualists 87 ‘or who habitually allow[ed] themselves to fall into a completely passive condition of Will’. 88 This, too, is a crucial point. Central to the development of the Golden Dawn as a magical organisation would be the development of the ‘magical will’, sometimes capitalised as Will to connote a higher spiritual purpose. As I will emphasise throughout this thesis, the development of the magical will is itself a defining characteristic of the Western esoteric tradition.

Establishment of the Golden Dawn temples
Westcott invited his colleague from the SRIA, Samuel Liddell Mathers, to expand the cipher material so that it could form the basis of a ‘complete scheme of initiation’89 and this proposal had a positive outcome. Mathers developed the five Masonic grades into a workable system suitable for the practice of ceremonial magic and as a result the Isis-Urania Temple of the Golden Dawn was established in London on 1 March 1888 with Mathers, Westcott and Dr Woodman confirmed as leaders of the Order.90 In a relatively short time it would be followed by other branches: the Osiris Temple in Weston-super-Mare, the Horus Temple in Bradford, the Amen-Ra Temple in Edinburgh and the Ahatoor Temple in Paris.91

In due course the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn would attract a distinguished membership including such figures as the distinguished homeopath Dr Edward Berridge; the Scottish Astronomer Royal, William Peck; Arthur Edward Waite, an authority on the Kabbalah, Rosicrucianism and the Holy Grail legends; the distinguished poet William Butler Yeats, who would later win the Nobel prize; well known physician and pioneer of tropical medicine, Dr R.W. Felkin; lawyer John W. Brodie-Innes; the well-known fantasy novelists Arthur Machen and Algernon Blackwood; and the controversial ritual magician and adventurer Aleister Crowley. The Order also included within its membership several notable women, among them Annie Horniman, later a leading patron of Irish theatre; artist Moina Bergson, sister of the influential French philosopher Henri Bergson and future wife of Samuel Mathers;92 Celtic revivalist Maude Gonne; actress Florence Farr; and in later years the Christian Kabbalist Violet Firth, better known as the magical novelist Dion Fortune.93
Ritual degrees and the Tree of Life

As Freemasons, Westcott and Mathers were strongly attracted to the concept of ritual degrees, and the grades of the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn were formulated in a manner that would align them
symbolically with the *sephiroth*, or levels of mystical consciousness upon the Kabbalistic Tree of Life. Four of the five ritual grades had Latin names: Zelator (corresponding to the *sephirah* Malkuth on the Tree of Life), Theoricus (corresponding to Yesod), Practicus (corresponding to Hod) and Philosophus (corresponding to Netzach).94 There was also a ‘Neophyte’ grade which, in a symbolic sense, was located below the Kabbalistic Tree of Life because at this stage the candidate who had just entered the Golden Dawn had not yet embarked on the magical exploration of the higher spheres on the Tree. Occult historian Francis King notes that immediately after admission to the grade the Neophyte was given the first ‘Knowledge Lecture’, a document that contained various Hermetic teachings together with instructions on the meditations the candidate was to perform as part of his psycho-spiritual training. The Neophyte was also given the rubric of the ‘Qabalistic Cross and the Lesser Ritual of the Pentagram’ so that he or she might copy, learn and practise it, ‘thus arriving as some...comprehension of the way to come into contact with spiritual forces.’95

Plate 24: The Golden Dawn version of the Tree of Life, combining the ten *sephiroth* and the interconnecting paths, represented by the Major Arcana of the Tarot
When Westcott, Mathers and Dr Woodman established the Isis-Urania Temple in London in 1888, they conferred upon themselves a Second Order ritual grade which implied that they were the ‘Secret Chiefs’ incarnate: the grade $7^\circ = 4^\circ$ corresponded to the sephirah Chesed, the fourth emanation on the Tree of Life and the sphere symbolically associated with the Ruler of the Universe (represented cosmologically by Jehovah/Yahweh in Judaism, Zeus in ancient Greece and Jupiter in ancient Rome). As the leaders of the Isis-Urania Temple, Westcott, Mathers and Woodman interacted with incoming members by using secret magical names, for as a matter of principle Golden Dawn members could only be allowed to know the magical names of their peers and those with lower grades beneath them. Mathers was known as *Deo Duce Comite Ferro* and later ‘S Rioghail Mo Dhream’, Westcott was *Non Omnis Moriar* and *Sapere Aude*, and Woodman *Magna est Veritas et Praevalebit* and *Vincit Omnia Veritas*.  

The three grades of the Second Order were Adeptus Minor (corresponding to Tiphareth on the Tree of Life), Adeptus Major (corresponding to Geburah) and Adeptus Exemptus (corresponding to Chesed). By passing through the $5^\circ=6^\circ$ ritual grade of Adeptus Minor the ceremonial magician entered what Mathers called ‘the Vault of the Adepts’. The candidate was bound symbolically on the ‘Cross of Suffering’ while also witnessing ‘the resurrection of the Chief Adept, who represented Christian Rosencreutz, from a tomb within an elaborately painted, seven-sided vault’.  

*The spiritual realm of the ‘Secret Chiefs’*

As indicated above, the fourth emanation on the Kabbalistic Tree (Chesed) lies just below the supernal triad of Kether, Chokmah and Binah. Between the supernal triad and the seven lower sephiroth upon the Tree is a symbolic divide associated with a transitional sephirah known as Daath (knowledge), which is often referred to by magical practitioners as the Abyss. The Abyss symbolically distinguishes the transcendent nature of the Godhead (above) from the domain of Creation (below). In the Jewish mystical tradition symbolic forms are rarely ascribed to levels of mystical reality above the Abyss because, essentially, they lie beyond the realm of Creation. Despite the transcendental nature of the supernal triad on the Kabbalistic Tree of Life, Mathers and his wife conceived of a mystical Third Order which corresponded to the exalted levels of spiritual awareness above the Abyss. They proposed the ritual grades of Magister Templi (corresponding to Binah), Magus (corresponding to Chokmah) and Ipsissimus (corresponding to Kether) and declared that the sacred domain of the Third Order was also the spiritual home of the ‘Secret Chiefs’
referred to in the founding charter of the Golden Dawn. Mathers spoke of ‘the Great White Lodge of the Adepti’, but was less than forthcoming when it came to describing how contact with the Secret Chiefs could actually be achieved. Nevertheless, he did take the credit for establishing the inspirational connection that sustained the Golden Dawn:

Prior to the establishment of the Vaults of the Adepts in Britannia (the First of the Golden Dawn in the Outer being therein actively working... it was found absolutely and imperatively necessary that there should be some eminent Member especially chosen to act as the link between the Secret Chiefs and the more external forms of the Order. It was requisite that such Member should be me, who, while having the necessary and peculiar educational basis of critical and profound occult archaeological knowledge should at the same time not only be ready and willing to devote himself in every sense to a blind and unreasoning obedience to those Secret Chiefs... 103

However, Mathers was unable to supply his followers with any detailed information about the actual identity of the mysterious Secret Chiefs who represented the source of his magical authority:

I do not even know their earthly names. I know them only by certain secret mottoes. I have but very rarely seen them in the physical body; and on such rare occasions the rendezvous was made astrally by them at the time and place which had been astrally appointed beforehand. For my part I believe them to be human and living upon this earth but possessing terrible superhuman powers. 104

By claiming exclusive access to the Secret Chiefs, Mathers was acting in a way that would have a substantial impact on the future development of the Golden Dawn: he was effectively claiming privileged access to a unique source of sacred power. And Mathers would soon be able to exert his total authority over the Golden Dawn in a more literal and specific way. Dr Woodman had died in 1891 and Westcott had already begun to redirect his attention away from the Golden Dawn towards the Societas Rosicruciana in Anglia, which became his administrative responsibility from 1892 onwards. 105 Westcott finally resigned from the Golden Dawn in 1897 because rumours relating to his involvement in the Golden Dawn were affecting his professional career as Crown Coroner. 106 The death of Woodman and the resignation of Westcott left Mathers effectively in control of both the Inner and Outer Orders of the Golden Dawn, even though he and his wife were now based in Paris, having moved there in 1894.
Mathers’ autocratic leadership and its consequences

At the time of his assumption of total control of the Golden Dawn, Mathers was engaged in literary research at the Bibliothèque de l’Arsenal, where much of his time was taken up translating the French manuscript of a lengthy and important 15th century grimoire titled The Sacred Magic of Abramelin the Mage. Mathers was now referring to himself as MacGregor Mathers, MacGregor of Glenstrae and Count of Glenstrae to feign some sense of rank and importance. Supported financially by wealthy Golden Dawn member Annie Horniman (Soror Fortiter et Recte), a tea heiress and key senior member of the London Isis-Urania Temple, Mathers was presiding over the Ahathoor Temple in Paris while simultaneously attempting to maintain dominance over the various Golden Dawn branches across the Channel. However when Annie Horniman queried various aspects of the funding of Mathers' stay in Paris, Mathers accused her of insubordination and expelled her from the Order.

Mathers’ autocratic style and the expulsion of Annie Horniman from the Golden Dawn caused considerable disquiet among Order members and he caused even more consternation the following year when, in a letter to senior Order member Mrs Florence Farr Emery (Soror Sapientia Sapienti Dono Data) dated 16 February 1897, he charged her with ‘attempting to make a schism’ in the Golden Dawn and expelled her from the Order as well. The expulsion of Annie Horniman and Mrs Emery from the Golden Dawn would lead to three years of internal bickering and dissension among Order members.

A crucial confrontation occurred in April 1900 when another Golden Dawn member, Aleister Crowley, who was regarded as an ally of Mathers, arrived in London from Paris, where he had been initiated by Mathers into the 5°=6° degree. On 17 April, Crowley (Frater Perdurabo) and a Golden Dawn colleague, Miss Elaine Simpson (Soror Donorum Dei Dispensatis Fidelis) broke into the Second Order members’ meeting rooms in an effort to seize Order property, acting on Mathers’ direct authority. Two days later Crowley was involved in a direct confrontation with Second Order members William Butler Yeats (Frater Daemon est Deus Inversus) and Edward A.Hunter (Frater Hora Et Semper) at the same meeting rooms. Hunter later provided a statement, describing Crowley’s somewhat melodramatic performance: ‘About 11:30 Crowley arrived in Highland dress, a black mask over his face, and a plaid thrown over his head and shoulders, an enormous gold or gilt cross on his breast, and a dagger by his side.’ Yeats and Hunter barred Crowley from access to the Order’s premises and Crowley subsequently called for a constable to intervene: the
As a direct consequence of this confrontation, at a meeting of twenty-two Second Order members of the Isis-Urania Temple on 21 April 1900, a resolution was passed expelling Mathers and Miss Simpson from the Order of the Golden Dawn and also refusing admission to Crowley, whose $5^\circ=6^\circ$ degree initiation in Paris had not been recognised by the London Second Order members. Mathers’ exclusive hold on the Order of the Golden Dawn had effectively come to an end.

Golden Dawn splinter groups
In spite of the reaction against Mathers’ autocratic rule, several members of the Golden Dawn formed splinter groups inspired by their own versions of the ‘Secret Chiefs’. Mrs Florence Farr Emery headed a Golden Dawn Second Order offshoot known as the Sphere Group, that at first was said to be controlled by an Egyptian Adept and later drew on the inspirational symbolism of the Cup of the Stolistes, an image of the Holy Grail. Much of the Sphere Group’s activities were devoted to inner plane work, including astral explorations, skrying, colour-meditation and spirit-communication. Meanwhile, Dr R.W. Felkin (Frater Finem Respice), together with several members of the London Isis-Urania Temple and the Edinburgh Amen-Ra Temple, founded the Order of the Stella Matutina (Morning Star) and continued to strive for contact with the Secret Chiefs even though they had broken their allegiance to their former leader. Felkin had named his Order the Stella Matutina because Venus (the Morning Star) was believed to be the guardian planet of the Isis-Urania Temple. Prominent members of the Amoun Temple of the Stella Matutina in London included John W. Brodie-Innes (formerly a leading member of Amen-Ra Temple in Edinburgh, where he was known as Frater Sub Spe), Annie Horniman, Percy Bullock, Arthur Edward Waite and William Butler Yeats. In its later years, Israel Regardie, editor of the major four-volume source-work, The Golden Dawn, would also join the Stella Matutina.

Magical symbolism in the Golden Dawn
As Israel Regardie notes in relation to the Neophyte grade, for the Golden Dawn magician the ultimate mythic attainment was to come forth ritually into the Light, for this was the very essence of spiritual rebirth. The process of ascending the Kabbalistic Tree of Life by means of visualisation and ceremonial magic involved powerful acts of creative imagination: the magician had to feel that he or she was fully engaging with each sphere of
consciousness in turn. However the monotheistic nature of the Kabbalistic Tree of Life presented the Golden Dawn occultists with a paradox, for while they acknowledged the sacred unity of the Tree of Life in all its emanations they also believed that they had to focus their creative awareness upon a sequence of specific archetypal images if they were to ‘ascend’ to the Light. Their solution was to regard the Kabbalistic Tree of Life as a matrix upon which the archetypes of the great Western mythologies could be charted and interrelated as part of a sacred unity. It then became possible to correlate the major deities from the pantheons of ancient Egypt, Greece, Rome and Celtic Europe in what was effectively a cumulative approach to the western mythological imagination. In due course other magical objects would also be charted symbolically upon the Tree, including various precious stones, perfumes, minerals and sacred plants – each being assigned to specific gods and goddesses in a ceremonial context. These charted mythological images were known to the Golden Dawn magicians as ‘magical correspondences’.

Occult historian Ithell Colquhoun notes that S.L. Mathers and Wynn Westcott began compiling the lists of magical correspondences during the 1890s but this work would subsequently be commandeered by Aleister Crowley and published under his own name:

A manuscript arranged in tabular form and known as *The Book of Correspondences*, the compilation of which Mathers and Wynn Westcott had together begun in the early days of their association, was circulated by them among their more promising students during the 1890s. Allan Bennett had a copy which he passed on to [Aleister] Crowley, or allowed him to copy again. Years later Crowley, while convalescing in Bournemouth, had the bright idea of adding a few columns to it. He then gave it the title of *Liber 777*, wrote an introduction and notes and, in 1909, published the whole as his own work, ‘privately’, under the imprint of the Walter Scott Publishing Co. Ltd., London and Felling-on-Tyne. This is the explanation of Crowley’s claim to the feat of composing the whole within a week and without reference books. Certain of the columns were repeated in his *Magick in Theory and Practice* (1929) and in Regardie’s *The Golden Dawn*. A new impression of the original was *Liber 777 Revised*, brought out in by the Neptune Press, London in 1955... the authorship of Mathers, who had done most of the initial work, went unrecognised.  

The listings in *Liber 777* included references to ancient Egyptian and Roman deities as well as listings for western astrology, plants, precious stones and perfumes. The following are selected listings from Crowley’s version of Mathers’ and Westcott’s *Book of Correspondences* published in Table 1 in *Liber 777*:  

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124

125
Table of Correspondences

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level</th>
<th>Kabbalah</th>
<th>Astrology</th>
<th>Egyptian</th>
<th>Roman</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Kether</td>
<td>Primum Mobile</td>
<td>Ptah, Hadith</td>
<td>Jupiter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Chokmah</td>
<td>Zodiac/Fixed Stars</td>
<td>Amoun, Thoth</td>
<td>Janus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Binah</td>
<td>Saturn</td>
<td>Isis, Nephthys</td>
<td>Juno, Cybele, Hecate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Chesed</td>
<td>Jupiter</td>
<td>Amoun</td>
<td>Jupiter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Geburah</td>
<td>Mars</td>
<td>Horus</td>
<td>Mars</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Tiphareth</td>
<td>Sol (Sun)</td>
<td>Ra</td>
<td>Apollo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Netzach</td>
<td>Venus</td>
<td>Hathoor</td>
<td>Venus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Hod</td>
<td>Mercury</td>
<td>Anubis</td>
<td>Mercury</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Yesod</td>
<td>Luna</td>
<td>Shu</td>
<td>Diana</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Malkuth</td>
<td>The Elements</td>
<td>Seb</td>
<td>Ceres</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The following perfumes, precious stones and plants were considered appropriate in rituals corresponding to the invoked god or goddess for each of the ten sephiroth and are also listings from Crowley’s Table 1:126

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level</th>
<th>Precious Stones</th>
<th>Perfumes</th>
<th>Plants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Diamond</td>
<td>Ambergris</td>
<td>Almond in flower</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Star Ruby, Turquoise</td>
<td>Musk</td>
<td>Amaranth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Star Sapphire, Pearl</td>
<td>Myrrh, Civet</td>
<td>Cypress, Opium Poppy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Amethyst, Sapphire</td>
<td>Cedar</td>
<td>Olive, Shamrock</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Ruby</td>
<td>Tobacco</td>
<td>Oak, Nux Vomica, Nettle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Topaz</td>
<td>Olibanum</td>
<td>Acacia, Bay, Laurel, Vine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Emerald</td>
<td>Benzoin, Rose, Sandlewood</td>
<td>Rose</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Opal</td>
<td>Storax</td>
<td>Moly, Anhalonium lewinii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Quartz</td>
<td>Jasmine</td>
<td>Mandrake, Damiana</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Rock Crystal</td>
<td>Dittany of Crete</td>
<td>Willow, Lily, Ivy</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Liber 777 and its precursor The Book of Correspondences helped codify the modern magical imagination. The listings themselves are of historic significance because they represented an early attempt to systematise archetypal images and ‘mythic’ levels of consciousness at a time when psychology itself was still in its infancy. Liber 777 and The Book of Correspondences predate by well over a decade Carl Jung's work with the primordial images’ of the unconscious mind, later referred to as the ‘archetypes of the collective unconscious’.127

From a psychological perspective it is clear that the magicians of the Golden Dawn regarded the Tree of Life as a complex symbol representing the realm of sacred inner potentialities. To simulate the gods and goddesses through acts of magic was to become like them. The challenge was to identify oneself with the mythological and archetypal images of the psyche through a process of direct encounter: the act of engaging the gods, whether
through ritual or by some other means like visualisation, meditation or magical trance, was essentially a process of discovering one’s inner potential. As Aleister Crowley observed in *Magick in Theory and Practice* (1929): ‘...the Gods are but names for the forces of Nature themselves’ and ‘the true God is man. In man are all things hidden...’

The magicians in the Golden Dawn had therefore to imagine that they were partaking of the nature of each of the gods in turn, embodying within themselves the very essence of the deity. Their rituals were designed to control all the circumstances which might assist them in their journey through the subconscious mind and the mythic imagination. They included all the symbols and colours of the god, the utterance of magical names of power, and the burning of incense or perfume appropriate to the deity concerned. In Golden Dawn ceremonial workings, the ritual magician imagined that he or she had become the deity whose forms were imitated in ritual. The traditional concept of the gods (or God) ruling humanity was reversed so that it was now the ritual magician who controlled the gods, uttering the sacred names that sustained the universe. As Eliphas Lévi had written in his seminal text *The Key of the Mysteries*, ‘... all magic is in a word, and that word pronounced Kabbalistically is stronger than all the powers of Heaven, Earth and Hell. With the name of Yod, He, Vau, He, one commands Nature...’

In passing through the ritual grades from Malkuth to Netzach, the Outer Order members of the Golden Dawn focused their magical activities on the mythic levels associated with the lower sephirot of the Tree of Life, specifically the spheres of Malkuth, Yesod, Hod and Netzach. In doing so, they developed specific techniques for the expansion of spiritual awareness. These included a rich application of magical symbols and mythic imagery in their ritual adornments, ceremonial procedures and invocations, all of which were intended to focus the imagination during the performance of a given magical ritual. In one of his most important books, *The Tree of Life*, Israel Regardie describes magical ritual as ‘a deliberate exhilaration of the Will and the exaltation of the Imagination, the end being the purification of the personality and the attainment of a spiritual state of consciousness, in which the ego enters into a union with either its own Higher Self or a God’.

*Dion Fortune and the Inner Light*

Apart from Crowley, whose post-Golden Dawn conversion to Thelemic sex magic is described in Chapter Three, one of the other notable figures to emerge from the Golden Dawn was Dion Fortune (1890-1946). Fortune is
also of interest because, like Crowley, she appears to have influenced Rosaleen Norton through her published work. Norton lists two of Dion Fortune’s books in the bibliography of *The Art of Rosaleen Norton: The Mystical Qabalah* (1935) – widely regarded among esoteric practitioners as one of the best practical sourcebooks in its field – and *The Goat-foot God* (1936), a novel dedicated to the Great God Pan.133

Dion Fortune was born Violet Mary Firth on 6 December 1890 at Bryn-y-Bia, in Llandudno, Wales. Her father, Arthur Firth, was a solicitor but for her own reasons Violet liked to emphasise a close connection with the better known Firth family of Sheffield, a leading steel-producing company, and she would later take its family motto as her own.

Although details of her early professional life are scanty it is known that she worked as a therapist in a medico-psychological clinic in East London and later studied psychoanalysis in classes held at the University of London by a Professor Flugel, who was also a member of the Society for Psychical Research.134 Strongly influenced by the theories of Freud, Adler and Jung, Firth became a lay psychoanalyst in 1918. In Jung’s thought, especially, she found correlations between the ‘archetypes of the collective unconscious’ and a realm of enquiry which would increasingly fascinate her: the exploration of sacred mythological images invoked by occultists during their rituals and visionary encounters.

According to Fortune’s biographer, Alan Richardson, her first contact with occult perspectives seems to have come through her association with an Irish Freemason, Dr Theodore Moriarty. Firth probably met Moriarty at the clinic where she worked; he in turn was involved in giving lectures on occult theories in a private house in the village of Eversley in northern Hampshire. Dr Moriarty’s interests were both Theosophical and metaphysical, encompassing such subject matter as the study of psychology and religion, the so-called ‘root races’ of lost Atlantis,135 mystical and Gnostic Christianity, reincarnation, and the occult relationship between mind, matter and spirit. It is not clear whether Dr Moriarty had any personal connection with the Golden Dawn magicians – many of whom were also Freemasons. But Violet Firth had a close friend, Maiya Tranchell-Hayes (later Mrs Maiya Curtis-Webb), whom she had known from childhood and who was also an occult devotee, and through her she was introduced to the Golden Dawn Temple of the Alpha and Omega in 1919.136 Based in London, this temple was a southern offshoot of the Scottish section of the Golden Dawn headed by Dr. J.W. Brodie-Innes. Maiya Tranchell-Hayes became her teacher at the Alpha and Omega
temple, and Firth found the magical ceremonies powerful and evocative. However she also felt there was a sense of gloom in this particular group. According to Firth: ‘The glory had departed ... most of its original members were dead or withdrawn; it had suffered severely during the war, and was manned mainly by widows and grey-bearded ancients.’ A year later Firth joined a London temple headed by Mrs Moina Mathers, who was continuing the esoteric work of her husband following his untimely death from influenza in the epidemic of 1918.

In the Temple of the Alpha and Omega, Violet Firth took the magical name *Deo Non Fortuna*, ‘by God and not by luck’, which was also the Latin motto inscribed upon the Firth family crest. She subsequently became known in esoteric circles as Dion Fortune, a contraction of her magical name, and in 1922 formed her own meditative group. Originally established as The Christian Mystic Lodge of the Theosophical Society, it soon became known as The Fraternity of the Inner Light. For a time, following an agreement with Moina Mathers, Fortune’s meditative group served as ‘an Outer Court to the Golden Dawn system’ but when Fortune had a significant disagreement with Mrs Mathers in 1924 she then set up a temple of her own in Bayswater. Fortune’s temple was loosely affiliated with the Stella Matutina, the splinter group established by Dr R.W. Felkin and other Golden Dawn members following the rift with MacGregor Mathers.

Dion Fortune's contribution to Western esoteric thought dates from the formation of the Fraternity of the Inner Light. Here she increasingly engaged herself in the mythological dimensions of magic, venturing into what she now came to regard as the collective pagan soul of humanity, tapping into the very heart of the Ancient Mysteries. Reversing the male-dominated, solar-oriented tradition which MacGregor Mathers had established in the Golden Dawn, Fortune committed herself completely to the magical potency of the archetypal Feminine, and began exploring Goddess images in the major ancient pantheons. She was also intrigued by the symbolic and sexual polarities in magic, including those of the Black Isis. Isis is best known as the great goddess of magic in ancient Egyptian mythology, as the wife of the sun-god Osiris and the mother of Horus. It was Isis who succeeded in piecing together the fragments of Osiris's body after he had been murdered by Set, and it was she who also tricked Ra into revealing his secret magical name. However Fortune was apparently interested in a different aspect of Isis, a dimension that the tantric magician Kenneth Grant has called the ‘primordial essence of Woman (*sakti*) in her dynamic aspect’. While Isis was a lunar goddess and the Moon is
traditionally considered ‘passive’, a receptacle or reflector of light, the Black Isis was said to destroy all that was ‘inessential and obstructive to the soul's development’. This in turn led to an exploration of the magic of sexuality. According to Grant, the basis of Fortune's work at this time involved ‘the bringing into manifestation of this sakti by the magically controlled interplay of sexual polarity embodied in the priest (the consecrated male) and the specially chosen female.’ Together they enacted the immemorial Rite and this formed a vortex on the inner planes ‘down which the tremendous energies of Black Isis rush(ed) into manifestation’.144 If Grant is correct, and he met Fortune during the 1940s around the same time that he knew Crowley,145 this was clearly a type of visionary magic that ventured into new realms, encompassing the use of transcendent sexual energies and the fusion, in ritual, of male and female polarities. It seems to have involved some form of Western magical Tantra, and was a clear departure from the Golden Dawn, which tended to downplay the sexual dimensions of magic.146 (The nature and historical origins of sex magic, as practised in Crowley’s Ordo Templi Orientis, are discussed in Chapter Three.)

While the sexual aspects of the most secret Inner Light rituals remain a matter of speculation, it is clear that Fortune's main emphasis was not so much on physical magical activities as on astral encounters with the mythic archetypes of the mind. The Fraternity of the Inner Light continued the experimental work with magical visualisation that had first been undertaken in the Golden Dawn during the 1890s, and the Inner Light magicians developed a practical approach to magical ‘path-workings’, visualisations involving guided imagery,147 as a direct means of exploring the subconscious mind. An important essay titled The Old Religion, written by a senior member of Fortune's group, Charles R.F. Seymour,148 confirms that the Inner Light members believed that inner-plane ventures of this kind could arouse ‘ancient cult memories’ from previous incarnations. Fortune believed that the key to understanding human life and achievement lay in understanding the nature of reincarnation,149 and the archetype of the Great Mother, in particular, could be thought of as a symbolic embodiment of the World Memory, a concept which has a parallel in the Theosophical concept of the Akashic Records.150 According to Fortune it was possible to access details of earlier incarnations through contact with the Great Mother, and in this way the nature of one's sacred purpose could be determined. In The Old Religion Seymour explains that it was this shared belief in the spiritual authenticity of ‘ancient cult memories’ that united the members of their esoteric group:
Most of the members of these groups have, in the past, served at the altars of Pagan Religions and have met, face to face, the Shining Ones of the forests and the mountains, of the lakes and seas... In the course of these experiments it was discovered that if anyone of the members of a group had in the past a strong contact with a particular cult at a certain period, that individual could communicate these memories to others, and could link them with cult memories that still lie within the Earth memories of Isis as the Lady of Nature.\footnote{151}

Plate 25: Homage to the Great Goddess

_The Rise of Wicca and Goddess worship_

Modern witchcraft is often referred to as Wicca, from the Old English words wicca (masculine) and wicce (feminine) meaning ‘a practitioner of witchcraft’ The word wiccan, meaning ‘witches’ occurs in the Laws of King Alfred (circa 890 CE)\footnote{152} and the verb wiccian, ‘to bewitch’,\footnote{153} was also used in this context. Some witches believe the words connote a wise person; Wicca is often referred to by practitioners as the ‘Craft of the Wise’.\footnote{154}

Modern witchcraft, whose 20\textsuperscript{th} century origins are discussed below, is a Nature-based religion with the Great Goddess as its principal deity. In Wicca the Great Goddess can take many different forms, associated with a range of mythological pantheons: these include Artemis, Astarte, Athene, Dione, Melusine, Aphrodite, Cerridwen, Dana, Arianrhod and Isis,\footnote{155} among many others. Alternatively reference may be made in general terms to the Great Mother or Mother Nature. The high priestess, who is the ritual leader of an individual group of witchcraft practitioners, or coven, incarnates the spirit of the Goddess in a ceremonial context when her senior male partner, the high priest, ‘draws down the Moon’ into her body. In modern witchcraft, the high priestess is regarded as the receptacle of wisdom and intuition and is symbolised by the sacred ritual cup, whereas her consort is represented symbolically by a short ritual sword or dagger known as an ‘_athame_’. Witchcraft rituals associated with the so-called Third Initiation (see below) feature the act of uniting dagger and cup in a symbol of sexual union, and there is also a comparable relationship in Celtic mythology between the sacred oak tree and Mother Earth.
Accordingly the high priest, or consort, is sometimes known as the Oak
King, a reference to the sacred Oak of the Celts, and at other times as
Cernunnos, ‘The Horned One’.  

Wiccan covens vary in size although traditionally the membership number
is thirteen, consisting of six men, six women and the high priestess.
When the group exceeds this number, some members leave to form a new
coven. Following their initiation into a coven, Wiccans are given magical
names which are used in a ritual context and among coven members.
Wiccan ceremonies are held at specific times of the year. The coven
meetings held through the year at full moon are called esbats: there are
usually thirteen of these meetings in a calendar year. The major gatherings
in the witches’ calendar, the so-called Greater Sabbats, are related to the
cycle of the seasons and the traditional times for sowing and harvesting
crops. In the Northern Hemisphere the four Greater Sabbats are held on the
following dates each year:

- **Candlemas**, known by the Celts as *Imbolc*: 2 February
- **May Eve**, or *Beltane*: 30 April
- **Lammas**, or *Lughnassadh*: 1 August
- **Halloween**, or *Samhain*: 31 October

In addition, there are four minor Sabbats: the two solstices at midsummer
and midwinter, and the two equinoxes in spring and autumn.

In pre-Christian times, *Imbolc* was traditionally identified with the first
signs of spring; *Beltane* was a fertility celebration when the sacred oak was
burned, mistletoe cut, and sacrifices made to the gods, and *Lughnassadh*
was related to autumn and the harvesting of crops and celebrated both the
gathering in of produce and the continuing fertility of the earth. *Samhain*
represented the transition from autumn to winter and was associated with
bonfires to keep away the winter winds. *Samhain* was also a time when the
spirits of the dead could return to earth once again to contact loved ones.
Among contemporary witches, Sabbats are a time for fellowship,
ceremonial and initiation, and ritual performances are followed by feasting,
drinking and merriment (further details are provided below).

Wiccan ceremonies take place in a magic circle which can either be
inscribed upon the floor of a special room set aside in a suburban house and
designated as the ‘temple’, or marked on the earth in a suitable meeting
place: for example, in a grove of trees or on the top of a sacred hill. The
earth is swept with a ritual broomstick for purification and the four
elements are ascribed to the four directions: Earth in the north, Air in the East, Fire in the south and Water in the west. The ritual altar is traditionally placed in the north. Beings known as the ‘Lords of the Watchtowers’ are believed to govern the four quarters and are invoked in rituals for blessings and protection.

Within the circle and present on the altar are a bowl of water, a dish of salt, candles, a symbolic scourge (representing will and determination), a cord to bind candidates in initiation, and consecrated symbols of the elements: a pentacle or disc (Earth / feminine); a cup (Water / feminine); a censer (Fire / masculine) and a wand (Air / masculine). The high priestess has her personal athame, or ritual dagger, and the sword of the high priest rests on the ground before the altar.

Contemporary Wicca recognises three initiations. The first confers witch-status upon the neophyte, the second promotes a first-degree witch to the position of high priestess or high priest, and the third celebrates the bonding of the high priestess and high priest in the Great Rite, which involves either real or symbolic sexual union and is perceived as a ‘mystical marriage’. There is also usual practice in Wicca that a man must be initiated by a woman and a woman by a man, although a parent may initiate a child of the same sex. Most covens do not admit anyone under the age of twenty-one.

Wiccans recognise the three-fold aspect of the Great Goddess in her role as Maid (youth, enchantment), Mother (maturity, fulfilment), and Crone (old age, wisdom). This symbolic personification of the three phases of womanhood is represented, for example, by the Celtic triad Brigid - Dana - Morrigan, the Greek goddess in her three aspects Persephone - Demeter - Hecate, or by the three Furies, Alecto (goddess of beginnings) - Tisiphone (goddess of continuation) - Megaera (goddess of death and rebirth). The universal presence and three-fold nature of the Great Goddess is particularly emphasised by feminist Wicca groups in their development of ‘women’s mysteries’. As American neopagan Zsuzsanna Budapest writes in her *Holy Book of Women’s Mysteries*: ‘Images abound of the Mother Goddess, Female Principle of the Universe and source of all life... the Goddess of Ten Thousand Names.’

In Wicca, magic is usually classified as ‘black’ or ‘white’, a distinction related to personal intent. Black magic is pursued in order to cause harm to another person through injury, illness or misfortune and may also be practised in order to enhance personal power as a consequence. By
definition, white magic is practised with a positive intent, seeks a beneficial outcome, and is often associated with rites of healing, with eliminating evil or disease, or with the expansion of spiritual awareness. (This is somewhat different from the distinction often made between the left-hand and right-hand paths in magic – sometimes identified as ‘black’ and ‘white’ respectively – see Chapter Three.)

The so-called Wiccan Rede, or code of ethics, specifically prohibits Wiccans from causing harm. The Rede is a statement of principle that all Wiccans are asked to adhere to: Eight words the Wiccan Rede fulfil: An it harm none, do what ye will. The Pagan Federation in London has expanded upon the Wiccan Rede, issuing a statement that all neopagans are asked to accept as a basic philosophy of life:

Love for and Kinship with Nature: rather than the more customary attitude of aggression and domination over Nature; reverence for the life force and the ever-renewing cycles of life and death.

The Pagan Ethic: ‘Do what thou wilt, but harm none.’ This is a positive morality, not a list of thou-shalt-nots. Each individual is responsible for discovering his or her own true nature and developing it fully, in harmony with the outer world.

The Concept of Goddess and God as expressions of the Divine reality; an active participation in the cosmic dance of Goddess and God, female and male, rather than the suppression of either the female or the male principle.

Gerald Gardner and the 20th century British witchcraft revival
Although the roots of modern witchcraft date from the 1930s (see below), the British Witchcraft Act [1604], which prohibited the practice of witchcraft, was not finally repealed in the United Kingdom until 1951. Prior to this date, books advocating the practice of witchcraft were legally restricted from publication in that country. One of the principal figures associated with the revival of British witchcraft, Gerald Brosseau Gardner (1884-1964), published a semi-autobiographical title, High Magic’s Aid, in 1949 under the nom de plume Scire but was legally required to portray it as a work of fiction. Gardner’s first non-fiction title on Wicca, Witchcraft Today, was published in London in 1954, followed by The Meaning of Witchcraft in 1959.

Gardner was born at Blundellsands, a few miles north of Liverpool. Gardner was of Scottish descent and came from a wealthy family: his father was a partner in the family firm Joseph Gardner and Sons, founded in 1748, one of the largest hardwood importers in the world. Gardner
received his share of the family inheritance when his father died in 1935 and was financially independent from this time onwards.

For many years Gardner lived in the East, in such countries as Ceylon, Borneo and Malaya. In 1936 he returned to England with his wife Donna and began planning his retirement. Interested in exotic folk-traditions, Gardner joined the Folk-Lore Society in March 1939 and became interested in witchcraft around this time. When returning to England Gardner had brought with him a large and valuable collection of swords and daggers. Fearing that this collection could easily be destroyed during war evacuation plans then current in London, Gardner and his wife decided to move to the country, purchasing a large brick house in Highcliffe, near the New Forest in Hampshire. Shortly after moving to Highcliffe, Gardner made contact with a group of local occultists that included Mrs Mabel Besant-Scott, daughter of the well known Theosophist Dr Annie Besant. Known as the Rosicrucian Order Crotona Fellowship (founded in 1920 by George Sullivan, otherwise known as Brother Aureolis), its members held theatrical performances at the Rosicrucian Theatre in nearby Christchurch. Some members of the Crotona Fellowship, specifically various members of the Mason family, claimed to be members of an existing hereditary witchcraft coven and it was through contact with this fringe group within the Crotona Fellowship that Gardner was subsequently introduced to witchcraft.

**Gardner’s initiation**

According to Jack Bracelin’s biography of Gardner, *Gerald Gardner: Witch*, a few days after the outbreak of World War Two in September 1939 Gardner was taken to a ‘big house’ owned by a wealthy lady known as ‘Old Dorothy’ and was initiated there. Bracelin’s account of the initiation reads as follows:
Gardner felt delighted that he was to be let into their secret. Thus it was that, a few days after the war had started, he was taken to a big house in the neighbourhood. This belonged to ‘Old Dorothy’ – a lady of note in the district, ‘county’ and very well-to-do. She invariably wore a pearl necklace, worth some £5000 at the time. It was in this house that he was initiated into witchcraft...he was stripped naked and brought into a place ‘properly prepared’ to undergo his initiation... It was halfway through when the word Wica [sic] was first mentioned.

Additional details are also provided in Gardner’s book *Witchcraft Today* (1954):

I soon found myself in the circle and took the usual oaths of secrecy which bound me not to reveal any secrets of the cult. ...I was half-initiated before the word ‘Wica’ which they used hit me like a thunderbolt, and I knew where I was, and that the Old Religion still existed. And so I found myself in the Circle, and there took the usual oath of secrecy, which bound me not to reveal certain things.

Bracelin’s biography records how Gardner felt after the ceremony was over. Gardner is reported to have said: ‘It was, I think, the most wonderful night of my life. In true witch fashion we had a dance afterwards and kept it up until dawn.’

Gardner accepted the view of his initiators that the hereditary witches of the New Forest region were a surviving remnant of an organised pagan religion that had existed and operated in England until the seventeenth century, a view expressed by Dr Margaret Murray (1862-1963) in her controversial book *The Witch-cult in Western Europe* (1921) – a work listed in Rosaleen Norton’s bibliography. Murray was a distinguished academic who specialized in near-Eastern archaeology and who had undertaken excavations in Egypt, Petra and southern Palestine. Murray believed that, as a broad-based fertility religion, the roots of pagan medieval witchcraft could be dated back to Paleolithic times. In a later book, *The God of the Witches* (1933), Murray focused specifically on the figure of the Horned God whom she believed to be the oldest male deity known to humanity. Murray maintained that the origins of the Horned God could be traced back to the Old Stone Age and that his pagan worship had extended across Europe to the Near East up until the seventeenth century. According to Murray, the Horned God provided a prototype for the Christian Devil; his principal form in north-western Europe was the Gallic deity Cernunnos. Gardner would have been familiar with Dr Murray’s writings through his membership of the London Folk-Lore Society and probably met her there in person. She later provided an introduction for Gardner’s *Witchcraft Today* (1954). 

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Gardner moved back to London in late 1944 or early 1945 and spent the following ten years consolidating his views on witchcraft and how it should be practised. According to Philip Heselton, author of a recent history of Wicca, the years from 1944 to 1954 ‘were an important period in Gardner’s life, in the development of his ideas and in the development of what is now known as “Wicca” or “Gardnerian Witchcraft”’. One of Gardner’s formative influences was the ceremonial magician Aleister Crowley, who was now well-known as an advocate of Thelemic sex magic (see Chapter Three). Crowley had retired to a boarding-house named Netherwood on the Ridge in Hastings.

Gardner first visited Crowley in Hastings with his friend and fellow witch, Arnold Crowther, in 1946. Crowther (1909-1974) had met Crowley during his wartime travels and it was he who arranged for the two occultists to meet. The encounter is significant because it has been suggested that Crowley may have composed a set of witchcraft rites for Gardner known as the Book of Shadows. Gardner maintained that the rituals in his Book of Shadows had been passed to him by members his coven but it is clear that Gardner also borrowed heavily from Crowley’s writings, especially Magick in Theory and Practice (1929). The respected Wicca historian Aidan Kelly maintains that Gardner ‘borrowed wholesale from Crowley’.

Doreen Valiente, who was initiated into Gardner’s coven in 1953 and later became his high priestess, felt that some of the Crowleyian material which Gardner had incorporated into Wiccan practice was either too ‘modern’, or inappropriate. Much of this material would be written out of the ceremonial procedures between 1954 and 1957, as Gardner and Valiente worked together developing the rituals which would form the basis of the so-called ‘Gardnerian tradition’ in contemporary witchcraft. Making specific

Plate 27: Doreen Valiente, co-founder with Gardner of modern Wicca
reference to the contributions by Crowley, Valiente confirmed in 1989 that she had to rewrite Gardner’s *Book of Shadows*, ‘cutting out the Crowleyanity as much as I could’. Nevertheless Gardner and Crowley apparently had several meetings during the intervening months before Crowley died in December 1947. As a result of these meetings, during which the two men discussed their respective magical paths, Gardner became a member of Crowley’s sex-magic order, the Ordo Templi Orientis (see Chapter Three); Crowley is known to have charged Gardner £300 for dues and fees. This theoretically authorised Gardner to establish a charter of the O.T.O. although he never did so. Gardner’s magical name in the O.T.O. was *Scire* (meaning ‘to know’).

It is likely that in addition to the ritual input from Crowley and subsequent modifications by Valiente, several aspects of what is now referred to as ‘Gardnerian witchcraft’ were probably Gardner’s own invention. Aidan Kelly believes that Gardner may have introduced the ‘duotheistic’ idea of the God and Goddess into modern witchcraft and that he initially proposed that the Horned God and the Goddess should be considered equals in Wiccan rituals, even though the Goddess has since become dominant. Another innovation that may have originated with Gardner himself was the modern tendency for witches to work naked, or ‘sky-clad’, in their rituals. Gardner was an enthusiastic naturist and, as Valiente has noted, he had ‘a deep-rooted belief in the value of going naked when circumstances favoured it’. For him, according to Valiente, ‘communal nakedness, sunshine and fresh air were natural and beneficial, both physically and psychologically.’ However, it is also possible that Gardner may have derived the concept of ritual nudity from the book *Aradia: Gospel of the Witches*, written by American folklorist Charles G. Leland and published in 1889. Leland first learned about Aradia from a hereditary Etruscan witch called Maddalena, while he was visiting Italy. Aradia was the daughter of the Roman Moon goddess Diana and Leland’s text includes details of Diana’s role as Queen of the Witches. *Aradia: Gospel of the Witches* mentions that devotees of Diana were instructed to be naked in their rituals as a sign of personal freedom.

While Gardner’s approach to ritual nudity appears well-intentioned, according to occult historian Francis King other, less appealing, sexual tendencies also found their way into Gardner’s witchcraft practices. According to King, ‘Gardner was a sado-masochist with both a taste for flagellation and marked voyeuristic tendencies. Heavy scourging was therefore incorporated into most of his rituals’ and what Gardner called the “Great Rite” was sexual intercourse between the High Priest and the High Priestess while surrounded by the rest of the coven.
In 1951 Gardner moved to Castletown on the Isle of Man, where a Museum of Magic and Witchcraft had already been established in a 400-year-old farmhouse by an occult enthusiast, Cecil Williamson. Gardner bought the museum from Williamson, became the ‘resident witch’, and added his own collection of ritual tools and artefacts. Gardner’s Museum of Magic and Witchcraft attracted considerable media attention, as did the publication of Gardner’s later books. The release of *Witchcraft Today* in 1954 placed Gardner in the media spotlight and the ensuing publicity led to the rise of new covens across England. In Australia, Gardner received publicity in the tabloid press and was dubbed ‘the boss of Britain’s witches’. It was during this period that Rosaleen Norton made contact with him, sending him a copy of her book *The Art of Rosaleen Norton* (see Chapter Five).

In 1964 Gardner met Raymond Buckland (1934 - ), a London-born Englishman of gypsy descent who had moved to America two years earlier. Prior to meeting each other Buckland had developed a ‘mail and telephone relationship’ with Gardner while he was living on the Isle of Man and Buckland subsequently became Gardner’s spokesperson in the United States, responding to American correspondents on Gardner’s behalf. In 1964, Gardner’s high priestess, Monique Wilson (Lady Olwen) initiated Buckland into the Craft in Perth, Scotland. It was Buckland who subsequently introduced Gardnerian witchcraft to the United States.

Gardnerian witchcraft is now the dominant form of international Wicca with covens operating in a range of English-speaking countries, including Britain, the United States, Australia and New Zealand. In 1992, Aidan Kelly estimated that there were between 2000-4000 active Wiccan covens in the United States while data from 1994 suggests that at that time Australian covens would number in the low hundreds. Gardner himself did not live long enough to experience the international impact of the witchcraft movement he had helped create and, based on his own published opinions regarding the future of witchcraft, would probably have been surprised by the ongoing contemporary interest in Wicca. Gardner died at sea on 12 February 1964, returning to England from a trip to Lebanon, and was buried the following day in Tunis. Considered within a historical context, Gardner’s major contribution to the 20th century magical revival was in working with Doreen Valiente to create a series of magical practices that would help define the nature of contemporary Wicca, both in Britain and internationally.
Esbats and Sabbats

In their ceremonies Wiccans honour both the lunar and the solar cycles of Nature. Esbats are monthly meetings of the coven held at the time of full moon. Because there are thirteen months in the lunar calendar, there are usually thirteen esbats each year. The solar cycle in Wicca is marked by the eight sabbats mentioned earlier (referred to collectively as the Wheel of the Year; these are the solstices, equinoxes and the four points between). Wiccan high priestess Margot Adler believes that these Wiccan festivals ‘renew a sense of living communion with natural cycles, with the changes of the season and the land’.

Each of the esbats has its own name which in turn is linked symbolically to the time of the year in which it occurs. Wiccans believe that esbats are marked by a sense of heightened psychic awareness resulting from the lunar energy of full moon; according to the leading British witch Alex Sanders (1916-88) it is during the esbat that ‘the Goddess has her greatest power’. For this reason Wiccans often perform specific magical workings at this time, followed by feasting and drinking. The word ‘esbat’ itself is thought to derive from the Old French word *s’esbattre*, meaning ‘to frolic and amuse oneself’.

Esbats are sometimes referred to as ‘lesser’ Wiccan celebrations. As Doreen Valiente has noted, ‘the esbat is a smaller and less solemn occasion than the sabbat’. The Sabbats, on the other hand, are celebrations which link contemporary Wicca directly with festivals honoured by the Celts and Druids, although as occult historian James W. Baker has observed, some aspects of the ‘Wheel of the Year’ are not Celtic in origin and are part of an ‘invented tradition’.

As noted above, the four so-called Greater Sabbats are those of Candlemas (2 February), May Eve (30 April), Lammas (1 August) and Halloween (31 October): the traditional Druidic names for these celebrations are Imbolc (or Oimele), Beltane (or Beltain), Lughnassadh and Samhain respectively. The Lesser Sabbats are those marked by the midsummer and midwinter solstices and the equinoxes in spring and autumn. Considered as a whole, the Wheel of the Year represents not only the cycle of the seasons but more specifically the cycle of Nature’s fertility. This is also reflected in the major Wiccan initiations, which culminate in the sacred marriage of the God and Goddess, whose union, according to Wiccan belief, brings forth new life.
The symbolic associations of the Greater Sabbats are as follows, commencing with Halloween, or Samhain, the traditional beginning of the pagan year:

**Halloween / Samhain**: This is a celebration to honour the dead. As the dying sun passes into the nether world, Samhain is said to be the time of the year when the thin veil between the everyday world and the afterlife is most transparent, allowing Wiccans to communicate more readily with the spirits of the departed. In mythic terms, Samhain is the season during which the dying God sleeps in the underworld awaiting rebirth. At the same time the seed of new life gestates within the womb of the Great Mother, who in this cycle is regarded as the Queen of Darkness. The Farrars write that Samhain ‘was on the one hand a time of propitiation, divination and communion with the dead, and on the other, an uninhibited feast of eating, drinking and the defiant affirmation of life and fertility in the very face of the closing dark’.

**Candlemas / Imbolc**: Imbolc has been described as ‘the quickening of the year, the first stirrings of Spring within the womb of Mother Earth’. The Irish name *Imbolc* means ‘lactation’ and this Sabbat is related to the beginning of the lambing season which commences at this time. Imbolc is very much a fertility celebration. The focus is on light and new life, ‘the strengthening spark of light beginning to pierce the gloom of Winter’. For this reason Imbolc is sometimes referred to by Wiccans as the Feast of Lights. In mythic terms Imbolc is associated with the youthful Goddess, or Virgin.
May Eve / Beltane (Beltain): Beltane marks the beginning of Summer and is also a fertility celebration. The name of this Sabbat may derive from the Celtic deity Bel or Balor, god of light and fire: in ancient times ‘bel-fires’ were lit on the hilltops to celebrate the return of life and fertility to the world. Wiccans often celebrate Beltane by dancing the Maypole, offering garlands of May blossom to their partners, and celebrating the love and passion between men and women. Beltane is also a popular time for ‘handfastings’, or Wiccan weddings. In mythic terms, Beltane honours the mating of the Sun God with the fertile Earth Goddess.

Lammas / Lughnassadh: The Old English word hlaf-maesse, from which the Anglo-Saxon celebration of Lammas derives its name, means ‘loaf feast’. Lammas is the time of year when the first corn is harvested. Known to the Druids as Lughnassadh, this Sabbat marks the season of Autumn and was traditionally a celebration to Lugh, the Celtic sun god. Lughnassadh is associated with the waning power of the sun but is also regarded by Wiccans as a suitable time to reflect upon the fruits of the earth. Wiccans gather at Lammas to celebrate the gifts of abundance that have come forth from the womb of the Goddess. Lughnassadh represents fulfilment: the act of reaping ‘all that has been sown’.

While Wicca is primarily regarded as a religion of the Goddess, the mythic cycle of the Greater Sabbats provides clear evidence that the role of the Sun God is also significant. The Celts acknowledged that just as the Goddess waxed and waned through her lunar cycles as Maiden, Mother and Crone, so too did the Sun God pass through cycles of death and rebirth. In Wicca the God of fertility has two personas, representing the God of the Waxing Year and the God of the Waning Year. The Oak King represents the initial phase of expansion and growth and is associated with the time of year when the days grow longer. The Holly King represents withdrawal and rest, and is associated with the time when the days grow shorter. Janet and Stuart Farrar note that the Oak King and Holly King ‘are the light and dark twins, each the other’s “other self”...They compete eternally for the for the favour of the Great Mother; and each, at the peak of his half-yearly reign, is sacrificially mated with her, dies in her embrace and is resurrected to complete his reign.’

The three initiations of Wicca
Esbats and Sabbats are collective celebrations which involve the entire Wiccan coven. However, the three Wiccan initiations, or degrees, relate primarily to the spiritual development of the individual. Wiccan initiations
are essentially rites of passage intended to bring about a transformation of consciousness in the person involved. Anthropologist Lynne Hume writes that, with regard to Wicca: ‘The intention of initiation is to allow the candidate to enter a new dimension of reality; to die to as her previous self and be reborn as her witch self. It is not so much an acquisition of knowledge but rather the experience of the process that is crucial.238 ... The process of initiation relies primarily upon the will of the person to make the journey towards the Mystery.’239

**The First Initiation:** Covens often request that candidates for this initiation should fast for several days before the ceremony. Candidates may also be advised to spend time meditating on Nature. Immediately before the first initiation takes place, the candidate is asked to bathe and is then brought naked (‘sky-clad’) and blindfolded to the sacred circle: usually the candidate’s hands are bound with ritual cords.240 The state of nakedness represents a casting aside of the old persona.

While the new initiate-to-be waits outside the circle, the Great Goddess and Horned God are invoked into the high priestess and high priest for the duration of the rite. At the outer rim of the circle the candidate is challenged at the point of a sword, an act intended to heighten the candidate’s sense of vulnerability and exposure. However once the new candidate has been accepted within the circle, he or she is welcomed by the initiator, who kneels and bestows kisses upon the new candidate:

> Blessed Be thy feet that have brought thee in these ways
> Blessed Be thy knees that shall kneel at the sacred altar
> Blessed Be thy phallus/womb without which we would not be
> Blessed Be thy breasts formed in beauty and in strength
> Blessed Be thy lips that shall utter the sacred names. 241

Wiccan high priestess Vivianne Crowley notes that in this ritual process ‘the body is honoured and reverenced’: the essential message of the First Initiation is one of acceptance.242

First degree witches are introduced during the ritual to the practical tools of witchcraft. They are also shown how to cast a magical circle and how to call the watchtowers of the four elements from North, East, South and West. Following their initiation, they will also be expected to develop an increasing familiarity with the principles and philosophy of witchcraft.243
Initiates usually take a new magical name and will be known by this name among other coven members.

**The Second Initiation:** In passing through the Second Initiation, Wiccans attain the rank of high priestess or high priest. Some Wiccan covens require three years of ritual work before they grant the second degree to one of their members. In the second degree a stronger connection is made between the initiator and the initiated, and candidates will need to find an opposite sex partner with whom they can work compatibly in partnership. Contemporary high priestess Vivianne Crowley has described the Second Initiation in Wicca as a journey into the depths of the unconscious mind.

An important feature of the second degree rite includes a mystery play called the *Legend of the Goddess*, in which the initiate and other coven members enact the descent of the Goddess into the Underworld. In the *Legend* the Goddess goes forth into the underworld to seek an answer to the question: *Why dost thou causeth all things that I love and take delight in to fade and die?* Here the Goddess encounters the God in his role as the Dark Lord of Death. Within the coven, male and female participants are expected to respond differently to the *Legend of the Goddess* because issues related to the ‘polar opposites’ of the psyche are likely to arise. According to Crowley, for a man to find his true self he must encounter the divine feminine. For a woman the process involves overcoming passivity: ‘She is challenged to go forth and to seek experience.’

According to Vivienne Crowley, whereas the First Initiation involved confronting vulnerability and exposure, the aim of the Second Initiation is ‘the transformation of the inner world’. At the end of the *Legend of the Goddess*, writes Crowley, ‘the seeker is given a new message: that from the dark world of the unconscious and the Land of Death may come rebirth.’ Janet and Stewart Farrar have transcribed this section of the ritual text as follows:

...there are three great events in the life of man: Love, Death and Resurrection in the new body; and Magic controls them all. For to fulfil love you must return again at the same time and place as the loved one, and you must remember and love them again. But to be reborn you must die and be ready for a new body; and to die you must be born; and without love you may not be born...

The *Legend* closes with the God and Goddess instructing each other in these mysteries: ‘She teaches him the mystery of the sacred cup which is the cauldron of rebirth, and in return he gives her the necklace which is the
circle of rebirth. The rite concludes with the initiator announcing to the four quarters that the initiate has been consecrated as a high priest or high priestess.

**The Third Initiation:** The third degree in Wicca is referred to as the Great Rite and is bestowed upon two individuals who are already a couple, that is to say, ‘husband and wife or established lovers’. The Great Rite is perceived by Wiccans as a sacred marriage: the ritual union of the Goddess and the God. From a mystical perspective the ritual itself also points towards transcendence, for, in the sacred marriage between Goddess and God, the duality of sexual polarity referred to in the Second Initiation ceases altogether: ‘The Goddess and the God are united as One.’

During the first part of the ritual the Goddess and the God are invoked into the high priestess and high priest by their initiators. However in the second part of the ritual they interact as incarnate deities themselves:

... they themselves have the Divine forces invoked into them so that the Sacred Marriage may be performed between the Goddess and the God.

Wiccans undertaking the Third Initiation do not necessarily consummate their ritual union physically. When the union is enacted symbolically – for example, by ritually plunging the athame into the chalice – it is said to be performed *in token.* However, when two partners taking the role of God and Goddess wish to physically enact their sacred sexual union, the high priest offers the third degree to his partner *in token,* and the high priestess returns it to him *in true.* The final part of the Great Rite, involving either the real or symbolic act of sexual union, is performed in private after other coven members have left the circle.

The Great Sabbats and the three initiations of Wicca focus on concepts of fertility, the cycles of the seasons and the sacred union of the Goddess and the God. Through their celebrations Wiccan practitioners emphasize a process of renewal which in turn is reflected psychologically and spiritually within their own inner being. As Lynne Hume observes:

In spite of its seemingly theatrical mode, its tools and paraphernalia, ritual is only a means to an end. Ritual is the *outer form* whose purpose is to act as catalyst to the *inner process...* Neither ritual nor magic are intended to convert the sceptical or astound the novice, but are used as tools to transform the individual.
Feminism and Goddess spirituality

In the United States the late-1960s psychedelic counterculture, associated especially with the Bay Area around San Francisco fuelled a fascination with diverse wisdom traditions and various forms of ‘alternative spirituality’ and esoteric teachings from around the world. The psychedelic revolution itself was short-lived but in its aftermath, during the early 1970s, the eclectic fusion of Eastern mysticism, Western esoterica, indigenous spirituality, metaphysics and popular self-help psychology, gave rise in turn to what is now known as the New Age movement. This was a socio-religious movement with identifiable characteristics, and its international influence is still felt today.

Within the context of this burgeoning ‘alternative spirituality’, variations on imported Gardnerian witchcraft began to emerge in the United States during the 1970s. In particular, the blending of feminism and modern witchcraft gave rise to a more broad-based spiritual movement known as Goddess worship or Goddess spirituality. As theologian Mary Farrell Bednarowski has noted, this was a movement that rejected traditional Christianity and Judaism, seeking ‘truth in the depths of the female psyche and [finding] its energy in the worship of the “the goddess”.’ According to Bednarowski the primary task of feminist spirituality involved ‘the resacralization of the cosmos and the reimaging of the sacred.’ Resacralization in turn required the ‘reinfusion of the sacred into the universe’ and for this to occur there had to be a ‘redefining of the very nature of the sacred’.... It could not be ‘contained solely within the transcendent being of the God of the Bible.’

In her book Changing of the Gods: Feminism and the End of Traditional Religions, released in 1979, Naomi Goldenberg proposed that feminist witchcraft could create a ‘powerful new religion’ focused on the worship of the Goddess and that this new religion would encourage feminist witches to reject ‘a civilization in which males in high places imitate a male god in heaven’. Influential thinker Mary Daly similarly claimed that the new feminist witchcraft was an appropriate alternative to a model of the universe in which a male God ruled the cosmos and thereby controlled social institutions to the detriment of women:

The symbol of the Father God, spawned in the human imagination and sustained as plausible by patriarchy, has in turn rendered service to this type of society by making its mechanisms for the oppression of women appear right and fitting.
Jewish writer Judith Plaskow, co-editor of the influential feminist anthology *Womanspirit Rising* (1979), was equally emphatic, raising issues of male-dominance articulated by many women involved with the rise of Goddess spirituality at the time:

The Bible was written by men. The myths from which the Bible borrowed and which it used and transformed were written by men. The liturgy was written by men. Jewish philosophy is the work of men. Modern Jewish theology is the work of men... The problems we as women face in relation to our tradition are deep and complex, involving almost every aspect of tradition. Where then are we going to find the new words, our words, which need to be spoken? 276

In the United States, Goddess worship expanded the structure of Gardnerian coven-based witchcraft, adopting rituals that were broader in scope, more diverse, and less bound by the traditional Wiccan concept of a three-fold initiation. Although some Goddess-worshippers continued to refer to themselves as witches, others abandoned the term altogether, preferring to regard their neopagan practice as a universal feminist religion, drawing on mythologies from many different ancient cultures. 277

As the Goddess spirituality movement developed in the United States during the 1970s it would come to include such influential figures as Merlin Stone, Carol P. Christ, Margot Adler, Marija Gimbutas, Judith Plaskow, Naomi Goldenberg, Mary Daly and the Christian feminist theologians Rosemary Radford Ruether and Carter Heyward. 278 However the pioneering figures in the rise of Goddess spirituality and ‘feminist witchcraft’ were unquestionably Zsuzsanna Budapest and Starhawk who, between them, would redefine the very nature of feminist neopaganism in the United States.

Plate 28: Key figures in the American Goddess Spirituality movement.
From left to right: Margot Adler, Starhawk and Zsuzsanna Budapest
Zsuzsanna Budapest (otherwise known as Z., or ‘Zee’, Budapest) was born in Hungary in 1940, the daughter of a psychic medium. Budapest’s mother, Masika Szilagyi, who claimed shamanic ancestry, composed poems and invocations while in trance and was also a sculptress of note, often featuring pagan and goddess themes in her motifs. At the age of nineteen, Z. Budapest left Vienna, where she had been studying languages, and travelled to Illinois in order to study German literature at the University of Chicago. Later she worked in theatre in New York, exploring techniques of improvisation, before moving to Los Angeles in 1970. Soon after arriving in Los Angeles, Budapest opened an occult shop, the Feminist Wicca, on Lincoln Boulevarde in Santa Monica. The store served as a ‘matriarchal spiritual centre’, dispensing candles, oil, incense, herbs, jewellery, Tarot cards and other occult paraphernalia. It also developed as a meeting place for women wishing to perform rituals together. Soon there were groups of neopagan women meeting for ceremonies on the equinoxes and solstices and, in Budapest’s words, ‘feminist spirituality had been born again’.

In a lengthy interview with journalist Cheri Lesh, published in 1975, Budapest expressed her belief that Wicca was not an inverted form of Christianity but represented the remnants of a much older, matriarchal system of worship that recognised the feminine as the creative force in Nature. Budapest spoke of the bloody transition from a matriarchal society to a patriarchal form, in which roaming bands of warriors ravaged the great Queendoms of Anatolia, Sumer and Thrace and fragmented the ‘Great Goddess’ into a number of minor deities. This led to a much diminished status for the goddesses, who then had confined and restricted roles as a consequence. In Greek mythology, Aphrodite became simply a goddess of love and sexuality, while Artemis represented hunting, and Athena wisdom. Hera, Amphitrite and Persephone, meanwhile, became adjuncts to Zeus, Poseidon and Hades. According to Budapest, this transition was a major cultural disaster:

Mythology is the mother of religions, and grandmother of history. Mythology is human-made, by the artists, storytellers and entertainers of the times. In short, culture-makers are the soldiers of history, more effective than guns and bombers. Revolutions are really won on the cultural battlefields...Women understand this very well, since we became aware of how women’s culture had been ripped off by the ruling class. This resulted in a stunted self-image of women which resulted in insecurities, internalizing the cultural expectations of us created by male culture-makers. Most of the women in the world still suffer from this spiritual poverty.
In order to eliminate any male influence, Budapest’s practice of Dianic witchcraft has excluded men altogether. According to Budapest, women’s mysteries must be kept pure and strong, and men have no place in them:

We have women’s circles. You don’t put men in women’s circles – they wouldn’t be women’s circles any more. Our Goddess is Life, and women should be free to worship from their ovaries.283

Budapest’s most influential publication, *The Holy Book of Women’s Mysteries* [1989] includes a ‘Self-Blessing Ritual’ which she describes as a way of ‘exorcising that patriarchal “policeman”, cleansing the deep mind, and filling it with positive images of the strength and beauty of women. This is what the Goddess symbolizes – the Divine within women and all that is Female in the universe.’284 Budapest favours an equal mix of lesbian and heterosexual women in her circles to ‘balance the polarities’ in her rituals.285 Her emphasis on women’s mysteries allows the different phases of womanhood to be honoured in their own right and group ceremonies are performed for each of these phases of life.286

It was through the Feminist Wicca287 that Budapest first made contact with Miriam Simos, best known as the acclaimed neopagan author Starhawk, a Jewish woman who had rejected Judaism, Buddhism and other ‘male-dominated’ religious traditions.288 Budapest became one of Starhawk’s teachers although Starhawk claims that her spiritual knowledge also derives from dream and trance experiences.289 Starhawk formed her first coven, Compost, from a group of men and women who attended a class in Witchcraft that she taught in the Bay Area Center for Alternative Education, and she was later confirmed as high priestess of this coven.290 Starhawk became a founding member of Reclaiming, a feminist network of women and men working in the Goddess tradition to unify spirituality and politics through progressive activism,291 and during the mid-1980s she also served on the teaching faculty of theologian Matthew Fox’s postgraduate Institute at Holy Names College in Oakland, exploring the common ground between neopaganism and Fox’s renegade Roman Catholic-based Creation-centred spirituality.292

Since the late 1970s Starhawk has published several highly influential books, including *The Spiral Dance, Dreaming the Dark* and *The Pagan Book of Living and Dying*, all widely regarded as key works in the revival of Goddess worship and neopaganism. During an interview with Toronto-based writer Alexander Blair-Ewart in the mid-1990s, Starhawk explained that her Goddess perspective involved a process of re-sacralizing the world:
What’s important about witchcraft and about the pagan movement is, essentially, that it’s not so much a way of seeing reality, as it’s a different way of valuing the reality around us. We say that what is sacred, in the sense of what we are most committed to, what determines all our other values, is this living Earth, this world, the life systems of the earth, the cycles of birth and growth and death and regeneration; the air, the fire, the water, the land...

In her writings Starhawk also refers specifically to the nurturing and revitalising power of the Goddess-energy:

The symbolism of the Goddess has taken on an electrifying power for modern women. The rediscovery of the ancient matrifocal civilizations has given us a deep sense of pride in woman’s ability to create and sustain culture. It has exposed the falsehoods of patriarchal history, and given us models of female strength and authority. The Goddess – ancient and primeval; the first of deities; patroness of the Stone Age hunt and of the first sowers of seeds; under whose guidance the herds were tamed, the healing herbs first discovered; in whose image the first works of art were created; for whom the standing stones were raised; who was the inspiration of song and poetry – is recognized once again in today’s world. She is the bridge, on which we can cross the chasms within ourselves, which were created by our social conditioning, and reconnect with our lost potentials. She is the ship, on which we sail the waters of the deep self, exploring the uncharted seas within. She is the door, through which we pass to the future. She is the cauldron, in which we who have been wrenched apart simmer until we again become whole. She is the vaginal passage, through which we are reborn...

Starhawk’s seminal work *The Spiral Dance* and Z. Budapest’s *Holy Book of Women’s Mysteries* have influenced the rise of American Goddess spirituality in the same way that Gerald Gardner and Doreen Valiente’s writings helped to establish the foundations of British Wicca. According to Starhawk, the sacred presence of the Goddess remains at the very heart of all forms of feminist witchcraft: ‘The Goddess is around us and within us. She is immanent and transcendent ... the Goddess represents the divine embodied in Nature, in human beings, in the flesh.’ Starhawk also maintains that the encounter with the Goddess should be based on personal experience, and not on religious doctrine or belief:

In the Craft, we do not believe in the Goddess – we connect with Her; through the moon, the stars, the ocean, the earth, through trees, animals, through other human beings, through ourselves. She is here. She is within us all. She is the full circle: earth, air, fire, water and essence – body, mind, spirit, emotions, change.

Starhawk’s concept of deity is essentially monotheistic for she regards the Goddess as the source of all life, the ground of all being:
The Goddess is first of all earth, the dark, nurturing mother who brings forth all life. She is the power of fertility and generation; the womb, and also the receptive tomb, the power of death. All proceeds from Her, all returns to Her. 297

Feminist writer Carol P. Christ offers a similarly all-encompassing view of the Goddess:

The earth is the body of the Goddess. All beings are interdependent in the web of life. Nature is intelligent, alive and aware. As part of nature, human beings are relational, embodied, and interdependent...The symbols and rituals of Goddess religion bring these values to consciousness and help us build communities in which we can create a more just, peaceful, and harmonious world.298

However, as Margot Adler has noted in Drawing Down the Moon (1981), many neopagans regard themselves as polytheists or pantheists, rather than monotheists, and there is no general agreement on the nature of sacred reality. 299 Adler also notes that some Wiccans distinguish between the Goddess of the moon, earth and sea, and the God of the woods, hunt and animal realm, in what amounts to a type of ‘duotheism’.300 British Wiccan writer Vivianne Crowley seeks to resolve this issue in a different way when she says: ‘All Gods are different aspects of the one God and all Goddesses are different aspects of the one Goddess... ultimately these two are reconciled in the one divine essence.’301

**Summary of main points**

a) This chapter has argued that Rosaleen Norton’s magical-historic context extends well beyond post-World War Two Australia to the Western esoteric tradition itself.

b) The Western esoteric tradition includes Jewish Kabbalah, alchemy, the Hermetic tradition, the medieval Tarot, Rosicrucianism and Freemasonry.

c) The principal elements of the Western esoteric tradition provided the basis for the establishment in England in 1888 of the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn which – more than any comparable organisation – facilitated the 20th century magical revival in Britain (and later internationally).
d) The Golden Dawn adopted a Masonic grade structure based on the symbolism of the Kabbalistic Tree of Life. Its central activities included the practice of ceremonial and visionary magic and its principal focus was the mystical experience of spiritual rebirth, associated with the sphere of Tiphareth located symbolically in the centre of the Tree of Life. The Golden Dawn began to fragment around 1900. Its principal rituals were subsequently published in the United States by Israel Regardie (four volumes: 1937-1940).

e) Influential members of the Golden Dawn who would later establish their own magical organisations included Aleister Crowley (1875-1947) – who formulated the sex-magick doctrines of Thelema (from 1904 onwards), incorporating them into the Argenteum Astrum and the Ordo Templi Orientis (see Chapter Three) – and Dion Fortune (1890-1946), who established the Fraternity of Inner Light in 1922. (Norton was influenced by both Crowley and Fortune and lists major works by these authors in her concise bibliography in The Art of Rosaleen Norton, 1952.)

f) Modern witchcraft, frequently known as Wicca, is a more recent development in the Western esoteric tradition and originated in England in the late 1930s with the initiation of Gerald Brosseau Gardner (1884-1964) in the New Forest region of Hampshire. Gardner formulated the principles of modern Wicca with Doreen Valiente (1922-1999), thereby establishing what is sometimes referred to as an ‘invented tradition’. Gardner was influenced by the sex-magick of Aleister Crowley although this component was substantially modified by Valiente. Nevertheless, some Thelemic elements remain in modern Wicca.

g) Wicca focuses on the worship of the Great Goddess who in turn has three aspects – Maid, Mother and Crone – associated symbolically with youth, maturity and old age respectively. Wicca has a coven structure (maximum membership of thirteen) and recognises four major Sabbats during the year, each associated with the cycle of the seasons and the traditional times for sowing and harvesting crops. The four major Sabbats are Candlemas (also known as Imbolc) celebrated in the North Hemisphere on 2 February; May Eve/Beltane (30 April); Lammas/Lughnassadh (1 August) and Halloween/Samhain (31 October). Essentially a fertility religion, modern Wicca recognises three major initiations culminating in the
Great Rite, which involves symbolic or actual sexual union of the High Priestess and High Priest within a consecrated ritual setting.

h) ‘Gardnerian’ witchcraft was exported from Britain to the United States by Raymond Buckland in 1964 and during the 1970s fused with modern feminism, giving rise to an eclectic expression of feminist spirituality known as Goddess Worship. Influential members of the Goddess movement in the United States include Z.Budapest (1940- ) and Starhawk (aka Miriam Simos, 1948 - ), both of whom continue to retain a leadership role in the movement. Goddess spirituality recognises ‘the Divine within women and all that is Female in the universe’.

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1 R. Norton, artist’s statement contained in the exhibition catalogue The Art of Rosaleen Norton, Rowden White Library, University of Melbourne, 1-23 August 1949.
2 Ibid.
4 Ibid.
5 The Kabbalistic Tree of Life is referred to in the Jewish mystical tradition by its Hebrew name Otz Chiim and represents a process of sacred emanation from the Godhead. The Tree is a composite symbol consisting of ten spheres, or sephiroth, through which the creation of the world – indeed, all aspects of creation – have come about. The ten sephiroth are aligned in three columns headed by the first three emanations, Kether (The Crown), Chokhmah (The Great Father / Wisdom) and Binah (The Great Mother/Understanding). Collectively the ten sephiroth on the Tree of Life symbolise the process by which the Infinite Light and Formlessness of the Godhead (Ain Soph Aur) becomes manifest in the universe. The seven emanations beneath the supernal triad of Kether, Chokhmah and Binah (ie. the remaining sephiroth Chesed, Geburah, Tiphareth, Netzach, Hod, Yesod and Netzach) represent the ‘seven days of Creation’.
6 See G.G. Scholem, Jewish Gnosticism, Merkabah Mysticism and Talmudic Tradition, Jewish Theological Seminary of America, New York 1960: 1-3. Gnosticism focuses on the quest for gnosis [ancient Greek: ‘spiritual knowledge’]. The origins of Gnosticism remain a matter of debate, but there is broad consensus that Gnosticism as a historical movement parallels the rise of early Christianity. Some scholars, like Hans Jonas (author of The Gnostic Religion, Boston 1958) have seen in Gnosticism residues of pre-Christian Iranian dualism while others believe that it developed in response to the failure of Jewish apocalyptic expectations and have dated its origins to around 70 CE, coinciding with the fall of the Jerusalem Temple. Others regard Gnosticism as a response to the failure of Christian messianic expectations – where some early Christian devotees, feeling that the Messiah had not returned as soon as had been hoped, turned away from religious faith towards spiritual inner knowledge. Gnostic thought was certainly well established by the second century of the Christian era. The unearthing of a major Gnostic library near the town of Nag Hammadi in upper Egypt in 1945 provided a rich body of source material on the Gnostic philosophies. Until this time much of the existing Gnostic scholarship had been based on other surviving Gnostic commentaries written by Church Fathers like Irenaeus, Clement and Hippolytus, who were hostile to Gnostic tenets. The Nag Hammadi codices, a collection of texts written in Coptic, revealed the syncretistic nature of Gnosticism, demonstrating that as a movement Gnosticism incorporated elements from Christianity, Judaism, Neoplatonism and the Greek mystery religions as well
as material from Egypt and Persia. Essentially Gnosticism was a call for transcendence, a movement seeking a return to the Spirit and a movement away from the constrictions of the material world which was regarded as a source of pervasive evil. James M. Robinson, editor of the English translation of the Nag Hammadi Library, has explained the Gnostic philosophy in the following terms: ‘In principle, though not in practice, the world is good. The evil that pervades history is a blight, ultimately alien to the world as such. But increasingly for some the outlook on life darkened; the very origin of the world was attributed to a terrible fault, and evil was given status as the ultimate ruler of the world, not just a usurpation of authority. Hence the only hope seemed to reside in escape...And for some a mystical inwardness undistracted by external factors came to be the only way to attain the repose, the overview, the merger into the All which is the destiny of one's spark of the divine.’ (See J.M. Robinson, Introduction to The Nag Hammadi Library in English, Harper & Row, San Francisco 1977: 4).

In the Gnostic conception there is a clear divide between the spiritual world which is good, and the physical world which is evil, that is to say, a clear demarcation between the cosmic and the divine on the one hand, and the physical, or material, on the other. The Gnostic texts portray humanity as being increasingly separated from the sustaining realm of divinity and spirit, and this in turn provides a rationale for spiritual transcendence, for in the Gnostic conception there is a vital need to liberate the ‘divine spark’ entombed in the physical world.

7 Admittedly, not all scholars agree on this point. The late Ioan P. Couliano believed that Scholem overstated the connection between Kabbalah and Gnosticism (see Couliano’s The Tree of Gnosis, HarperCollins, San Francisco 1992: 42 et seq.). However Scholem states quite emphatically that the Kabbalistic text Bahir – which pre-dates the Zohar – makes it clear that the ‘thirteenth century Kabbalists became the heirs of Gnostical symbolism’. See Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism, Schocken, New York 1961: 214.

10 In addition to Scholem see also M. Idel, Kabbalah: New Perspectives, Yale University Press, New Haven 1988: 119 for parallels between Gnosticism and the Kabbalah.
12 D.C. Matt, The Essential Kabbalah, loc cit: 3.
13 See G.G. Scholem, Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism, loc cit.: 12.
15 See G.G. Scholem, Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism, loc cit.: 209.
19 Ibid.
22 Ibid: 41.
27 J. Bonner, Qabalah, loc cit. 1995: 25.
30 Hermetic scholar Dan Merkur has emphasized in a recent article that Gnosticism and Hermeticism are frequently, and wrongly, confused with each other – they present completely different concepts of God. Merkur writes: ‘Like the God of Stoicism, the Hermetic God was omnipresent and omniscient through the material cosmos. In Gnosticism, by contrast, God was transcendent, and the physical universe was an evil place created by an evil Demiurge. Hermetic ethics celebrated the divine within the world; Gnostic ethics
were abstemious, ascetic efforts to escape from the world.’ See D. Merkur, ‘Stages of Ascension in Hermetic Rebirth’, *Esoterica* 1 (1999): 81.

31 Ficino’s texts are now held in the Medici Library in Florence.


33 In Greek mythology, Hermes was the messenger of the gods, the protector of sacrificial animals and also god of the wind. He conducted the souls of the dead on their passage to the Underworld. In ancient Egyptian mythology, Thoth is a scribe and moon god and is best known as god of wisdom and magic. He also invented numbers and writing, and measured time. Thoth presided with his consort, Maat, in the Judgement Hall, where the hearts of the deceased were weighed against the feather of truth. Thoth recorded all judgements made in relation to the dead. The ancient Greeks identified Thoth with Hermes. See J.E. Zimmerman, *Dictionary of Classical Mythology*, Harper & Row, New York 1964 and P. Turner & C.R. Coulter, *Dictionary of Ancient Deities*, Oxford University Press, 2000.

34 Ibid.

35 Pico also distinguished between ‘bad’ magic, which had to do with demons and devils, and ‘natural’ magic, which was essentially ‘good’ and compatible with God’s freedom of will. See D.P. Walker, *Spiritual and Demonic Magic from Ficino to Campanella*, Sutton Publishing, Stroud, UK 2000:54-55.


38 Ibid: 112.


40 Ibid.


42 One of the earliest known Tarot decks is the 15th century Visconti-Sforza deck associated with the fourth Duke of Milan, Francesco Sforza. This deck consisted of 78 cards and featured the four suits of spade [spades], bastoni [diamonds], coppe [hearts] and denari [clubs]. It also featured 22 Major Arcana cards, including *Il Matto*, The Fool. See S.R. Kaplan, *Tarot Classic*, loc.cit.: 24.


44 See, for example, *Ishbel’s Temple of Isis Egyptian Tarot*, Llewellyn Publications, St Paul, Minnesota 1989.


47 This translates as *A Way to Entertain Oneself with the Pack of Cards called Tarots*. It was published in Amsterdam and Paris in 1783.


51 Lévi’s personal set of cards was catalogued for sale in 1940 through Dorbon’s, a well-known Parisian antique book dealer. See R. Decker, T. Depaulis and M. Dummett, *A Wicked Pack of Cards: the Origins of the Occult Tarot*, loc.cit.: 91. The deck had been heavily adorned with Hebrew letters, drawings and personal comments.


53 First published in one volume in Paris by Germer Baillière, 1856.


56 The Tarot of Marseilles is a 18th century French adaptation of earlier Italian Tarot decks. According to occult historian Fred Gettings this deck was first printed by Nicholas Conver in Paris in 1761 but appears to be based on earlier versions produced by such printers as Arnoud (1748) and Dodal, whose designs

57 All twenty-two cards of the Major Arcana are reproduced as line drawings in *The Tarot of the Bohemians*. See second revised edition with preface by A.E. Waite, Rider & Son, London 1919.


63 The *Fama* had been circulating in manuscript form for some time, possibly as early as 1610. See C. McIntosh, *The Rosicrucians: The History, Mythology and Rituals of an Esoteric Order*, loc.cit: xviii.

64 See sections of the present chapter which describe the key influences on the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn.


66 Ibid: 166.


69 Ibid: 173.

70 Ibid: 49.

71 Except for Trajano Boccalini who had authored *Allgemeine und General Reformation, der gantzen weiten Welt*.


73 Ibid.

74 Ibid: 51.


76 Ibid: 85.


78 Ibid.


84 Traditionally women have not been admitted to the Order of Freemasons. However there have been some exceptions to this rule. Count Alessandro di Cagliostro (1743-1795) admitted women to his socalled Egyptian rite, the Duchess of Bourbon presided as grand mistress in the Grand Orient of France lodge (1775) and the Rite of Mizraim established Masonic lodges for both men and women as early as 1819. In so-called Co-Masonic orders, the rites follow orthodox Freemasonry and men and women hold corresponding ranks.
Nevertheless the form of Christianity which was adopted in the Golden Dawn, namely the spiritual rebirth symbolism of Christian Rosenkreutz, was far from the mainstream, and few orthodox Christians would have embraced the concept of assigning Christ to Tiphareth in the centre of the Kabbalistic Tree of Life alongside the many other ‘god-forms’ and archetypal mythic images associated by the Golden Dawn members with the different spheres on the Tree of Life.

Franz Anton Mesmer (1734-1815) was born in Germany and studied medicine at the University of Vienna. Here he embraced the then-current scientific view that a magnetic fluid permeated all aspects of life. Mesmer then came to the view that when this natural source of energy was blocked in the body, disease and ill-health would result. After graduating from the University of Vienna, Mesmer worked as a healer, first in Vienna and later in Paris, using magnets to ‘correct’ imbalances in the human organism. He transmitted ‘healing energy’ to his patients by making passes over his patients with his hands, or by using iron rods or wands that he had magnetized. Mesmer is now regarded as one of the pioneers of psychosomatic medicine and hypnotherapy. During the late-Victorian era of the Golden Dawn, the term ‘Mesmerist’ was used to connote a hypnotist.

Spiritualism is the belief that the spirits of the dead can communicate with the living through a psychic medium. Seances are conducted to summon a particular deceased spirit and the medium then enters a state of trance. The deceased spirit subsequently ‘possesses’ the trance medium and either addresses the gathering directly or communicates through ‘automatic’ writing, painting or drawing. Spiritualism was a popular practice in late-Victorian Britain and was widely believed to provide proof of life after death.


Samuel Mathers and Moina Bergson married in 1890.


Ibid: 57.

According to Golden Dawn historian R.A. Gilbert, the Second Order, the *Rosae Rubaeae et Aureae Crucis* had existed since the earliest days of the Golden Dawn, but had worked no actual rituals. ‘Members who advanced to become adepts of the Second Order did so by means of passing examinations.’ See R.A. Gilbert, *A.E.Waite: Magician of Many Parts*, loc. cit: 107.


Quoted in F. King, *Ritual Magic in England*, loc. cit: 44. The ‘Vault of the Adepts’ was a ritual crypt representing the burial tomb of Christian Rosenkreutz.


Ibid.


Publication of this text would later be financed by Frederick Leigh Gardner, a collector of esoterica, the grimoire being issued by John M. Watkins, London, in 1898, but it was not a commercial success in Britain. The Chicago-based De Laurence Company issued a pirated edition in the United States in 1932 and this was more successful. It reprinted in 1939 and 1948.
There were twelve people in the “Sphere Working”, evenly divided into six women and six men. Every Sunday from noon to 1pm. in their own separate homes but working simultaneously, they began by creating an image of the Cup of Stolistes (Holy Grail) containing a burning heart that represented the ‘mixed colours of Malkuth’ see W.E. Butler, The Magician: His Training and Work, Aquarian Press, Chicago 1945:140. For the ‘mixed colours of Malkuth’ see W.E. Butler, The Magician: His Training and Work, Aquarian Press, Chicago 1945:140. For

The Golden Dawn each of the different sephiroth on the Tree of Life was ascribed a colour, for the purpose of visualisation and meditation. In his work on Kabbalistic meditation, The Middle Pillar, Israel Regardie (who was a member of the Stella Matutina) provides the following correlations between specific colours and the sephiroth on the Tree: Kether:white; Chokmah:grey; Binah:black; Daas [Daath]:lavender-blue; Chesed:blue; Gevurah [Geberah]: red; Tipheres [Tiphareth]: gold; Netzach:green; Hod: orange; Yesod: puce; Malkus [Malkuth]: ‘mixed colours’ (these are usually interpreted in the Golden Dawn system as citrine, olive, russet and black). See I. Regardie, The Middle Pillar, Aries Press, Chicago 1945:140. For the ‘mixed colours of Malkuth’ see W.E. Butler, The Magician: His Training and Work, Aquarian Press, London 1959:81.

Colour meditation is a practise whereby a practitioner visualises various colours because of their perceived healing properties. Red, orange and yellow are stimulants, whereas green, blue, indigo and violet are relaxants and each of these colours are believed to have specific healing effects. In the Golden Dawn each of the different sephiroth on the Tree of Life was ascribed a colour, for the purpose of visualisation and meditation. In his work on Kabbalistic meditation, The Middle Pillar, Israel Regardie (who was a member of the Stella Matutina) provides the following correlations between specific colours and the sephiroth on the Tree: Kether:white; Chokmah:grey; Binah:black; Daas [Daath]:lavender-blue; Chesed:blue; Gevurah [Geberah]: red; Tipheres [Tiphareth]: gold; Netzach:green; Hod: orange; Yesod: puce; Malkus [Malkuth]: ‘mixed colours’ (these are usually interpreted in the Golden Dawn system as citrine, olive, russet and black). See I. Regardie, The Middle Pillar, Aries Press, Chicago 1945:140. For the ‘mixed colours of Malkuth’ see W.E. Butler, The Magician: His Training and Work, Aquarian Press, London 1959:81.

Although only a clerk and infantryman by profession – he had been a private in the Hampshire Infantry Volunteers – Mathers believed that the Jacobite title of Count of Glen Strae had been bestowed on one of his ancestors by King James II.


Crowley had been initiated into this degree by Mathers on 16 January 1900. See F. King, Ritual Magic in England, loc.cit: 67.

Five members of Isis-Urania’s Second Order remained loyal to Mathers. They were: Dr Edward Berridge (Frater Resurgam); George C. Jones (Frater Volo Noscere); Mrs Alice Simpson (Soror Perseverantia et Cura Quies); Miss Elaine Simpson (Soror Fidelis) and Col. Webber (Frater Non Sine Numine). See F. King, Ritual Magic in England, loc.cit: 69.

M.K. Greer, Women of the Golden Dawn, loc.cit: 257. Greer explains how the Cup Of Stolistes had been created as a sacred image based on the specific sephiroth from the Kabbalistic Tree of Life: ‘There were twelve people in the “Sphere Working”, evenly divided into six women and six men. Every Sunday from noon to 1pm. in their own separate homes but working simultaneously, they began by creating an image of the Cup of Stolistes (Holy Grail) containing a burning heart that represented Tipheres. The sephiroth of the “middle pillar” (Kether, Daath, Tipheres, Yesod and Malkuth) were aligned in a central column, with Kether envisaged as a flame arising from the top of the Cup and Malkuth forming its base. The remaining six sephiroth were doubled (to form twelve) and arched toward the four directions, creating a sphere around Tipheres. Each person took one of the twelve sphere positions, envisioning themselves not only as the corresponding sephira, and they consciously projected appropriately coloured rays of light to the nearest sephiroth on the central column and to the sephiroth above and below them.’ The visualisations focused the energy initially on the Second Order meeting rooms and were then expanded in range to cover the whole of London, the entire planet and then the Universe itself. The purpose of these visualisations says Greer was to ‘transmute evil into good through the actions of the greater forces on the lesser’ (Ibid: 257).

Skrying, or scrying, is a form of divination in which the practitioner gazes at a shiny or polished surface to induce a trance-state in which images appear as part of a ‘psychic’ communication. Crystal balls, mirrors, polished metal and cups of clear liquid have all been used for the purpose of skrying. An essay titled ‘Of Skrying and Travelling in the Spirit-Vision’, written by Soror V.N.R. (Moina Mathers) was included in Israel Regardie’s monumental work, The Golden Dawn, vol 4, Aries Press, Chicago 1940: 29-42.

Colour meditation is a practise whereby a practitioner visualises various colours because of their perceived healing properties. Red, orange and yellow are stimulants, whereas green, blue, indigo and violet are relaxants and each of these colours are believed to have specific healing effects. In the Golden Dawn each of the different sephiroth on the Tree of Life was ascribed a colour, for the purpose of visualisation and meditation. In his work on Kabbalistic meditation, The Middle Pillar, Israel Regardie (who was a member of the Stella Matutina) provides the following correlations between specific colours and the sephiroth on the Tree: Kether:white; Chokmah:grey; Binah:black; Daas [Daath]:lavender-blue; Chesed:blue; Gevurah [Geberah]: red; Tipheres [Tiphareth]: gold; Netzach:green; Hod: orange; Yesod: puce; Malkus [Malkuth]: ‘mixed colours’ (these are usually interpreted in the Golden Dawn system as citrine, olive, russet and black). See I. Regardie, The Middle Pillar, Aries Press, Chicago 1945:140. For the ‘mixed colours of Malkuth’ see W.E. Butler, The Magician: His Training and Work, Aquarian Press, London 1959:81.


Israel Regardie (1907-1985), a one-time secretary to Aleister Crowley, joined the Stella Matutina in 1933, attained a ritual grade of Theoricus Adeptus Minor and then left in December 1934. Between 1937 and 1940 he published a four-volume treatise The Golden Dawn (Aries Press, Chicago), which included the bulk of the Golden Dawn’s rituals and teachings, thereby providing an invaluable source of esoteric material that might otherwise have faded into obscurity. See www.hermeticgoldendawn.org/regardie.htm
Within the Golden Dawn system of ritual grades this would not actually be achieved until the candidate had attained the Second Order 5°=6° degree associated with Tiphareth, the sphere of ‘spiritual rebirth’.


Crowley’s *Liber 777* listings included several psychoactive plants: opium poppy, nux vomica, mandrake, peyote (*Anhalonium lewinii*) and damiana, a sure sign that these were his additions and not part of the original Mathers/ Westcott listings. Moly is a mythical plant: it was given by Hermes to Odysseus to protect him from the magic of Circe. See C. Ratsch, *The Dictionary of Sacred and Magical Plants*, Prism Press, Dorset, 1992:127.

According to Jung’s colleague, Dr Jolande Jacobi, Jung at first referred to ‘primordial images’ and later to the ‘dominants of the collective unconscious’. It was ‘only later that he called them archetypes’. Jacobi notes that Jung took the term ‘archetype’ from the *Corpus Hermeticum* and from *De Divinis nominibus* by Dionysius the pseudo-Areopagite. See J. Jacobi, *The Psychology of C.G. Jung*, Routledge & Kegan Paul, London 1942:39.


The Kabbalistic sphere of Malkuth, for example, was associated with the earth, crops, the immediate environment and living things. Yesod was linked symbolically to the Moon and was regarded as the sphere of ‘astral imagery’, the dream-world and the element Water. Yesod was also the seat of the sexual instincts and corresponded to the genital area when ‘mapped’ upon the figure of Adam Kadmon, the archetypal human being. Hod was associated with the planet Mercury, representing intellect and rational thinking, and symbolised the orderly or structured aspects of the manifested universe. Netzach was linked to the planet Venus, and was said to complement the intellectual and orderly functions of Hod. While Hod could be considered clinical and rational, Netzach represented the arts, creativity, subjectivity and the emotions. See also the mythological listings in *Liber 777* referred to above.


The concept of ‘root races’ is a 19th century Theosophical teaching which states that humanity has evolved through different phases of spiritual growth and intellectual development, each of these being known as a ‘root race’. The present state of humanity is said to be the fifth root race. It was preceded by the Atlantean (fourth) and Lemurian (third), both of which were engulfed in cataclysms. According to Madame H.P. Blavatsky the first root race consisted of ‘Celestial Men’ (see *The Secret Doctrine*,[1888] Vol.1:214) whereas the second root race were of a-sexual origin and were known as ‘The Fathers of the “sweat-born”’ (The Secret Doctrine [1897] Vol.3 :125), Theosophical Publishing House, Madras, fifth edition, 1962.


Ibid:117.

The dispute arose over the publication of Fortune’s book *The Esoteric Philosophy of Love and Marriage*, which put forward the view that a sexual relationship between two people could be considered as an energy exchange on many levels of being, not just the physical level. While this now seems reasonably innocuous, and perhaps even obvious, Moina Mathers charged Dion Fortune with ‘betraying the inner teaching of the Order’. Fortune protested that she hadn't actually received the relevant degree from Mrs Mathers’ temple and she was then ‘pardoned’. Nevertheless, the dispute with Moina Mathers continued. Soon afterwards, according to an account by Dion Fortune published in *The Occult Review*, Mrs Mathers suspended Dion Fortune for writing her book *Sane Occultism* and ceased all magical co-operation, turning her out ‘because certain symbols had not appeared in my aura - a perfectly unanswerable charge.’ See R.A. Gilbert, *Revelations of the Golden Dawn*, loc cit: 124.


146 It has been suggested in an article in Gnosis magazine (No.43, Spring 1997) that there may have been a secret sexual dimension to the rituals of the Golden Dawn, but the arguments put forward by the authors, John Michael Greer and Carl Hood, are less than convincing. It is pertinent to mention in this context that MacGregor Mathers, arguably the most influential figure in the formation of the Golden Dawn, apparently valued celibacy and virginity and never consummated his marriage to Moina Bergson (see I. Colquhoun, Sword of Wisdom: MacGregor Mathers and the Golden Dawn, loc cit.:54). Sexual magic was more the domain of occultists like Austin Osman Spare, who was never a member of the Golden Dawn, and Aleister Crowley, who developed his interest in Thlephic sex magic after leaving the Golden Dawn in 1903.

147 Magical ‘pathworkings’ were developed in the Fraternity of the Inner Light and by its more recent offshoot, Servants of the Light (SOL), and employ a guided imagery technique in which one person reads from a written text so that a subject (or subjects) may be led along ‘inner meditative pathways’ in order to experience archetypal visions. Pathworkings often utilise the symbolism of the Major Arcana, drawing on descriptions of the Tarot images associated with the ten sephiroth on the Kabbalistic Tree of Life (a symbolic connection first proposed by the 19th century occultist Eliphas Levi). Pathworkings are intended to trigger personal meditative experiences of the gods and goddesses of the various mythological pantheons.


150 The concept of the Akashic Records derives from the teachings of Madame Helena Blavatsky (1831-1891) and the Theosophical Society (founded in New York in 1875). According to the Theosophists, the Akashic Records are an astral memory of all events, thoughts and emotions since the world began. Psychics are said to be able to receive ‘impressions’ from this astral realm and some Theosophical descriptions of the legendary lost continent of Atlantis are based on this psychic approach. Akasha is a Sanskrit word meaning ‘luminous’ and Akasha is one of the five Hindu elements, or Tattvas, whose symbol is the ‘black egg’ of Spirit.


153 Ibid.


155 The goddesses named here are all included in the so-called Witches’ Charge a key element in Wiccan ritual.

156 In modern witchcraft the Horned God personifies fertility, the Celtic counterpart of the Great God Pan, the goat-footed god, who in ancient Greece personified the untamed forces of Nature and the universal life-force. There is no connection between the Horned God of witchcraft and the Christian horned Devil although, since the time of the witchcraft persecutions of the Middle Ages this has been a common error.


158 The equivalent dates for the Southern Hemisphere are as follows: Candlemas/Imbolc: 1 August; Beltane:31 October; Lammas/Lughnassadh: 2 February; Halloween/Samhain: 30 April.

159 In the Southern Hemisphere, midsummer solstice occurs on 21 December and midwinter solstice on 21 June. Spring equinox is on 21 September and Autumn equinox on 21 March.

The Lords of the Watchtowers are the Wiccan equivalent of the four archangels, Raphael, Michael, Gabriel and Uriel who are invoked as protectors in the Golden Dawn banishing ritual of the Lesser Pentagram. During his own initiation, in the New Forest in September 1939, Gerald Gardner, one of the principal figures in the modern witchcraft revival, was told by his initiators ‘The law has always been that power must be passed from man to woman or from woman to man, the only exception being when a mother initiates her daughter or a father his son, because they are part of themselves.’ See G. Gardner, *Witchcraft Today*, Rider, London 1954:78.


This is the version given by Patricia Crowther, high priestess of the Sheffield Coven, in *Lid off the Cauldron*, loc.cit: 6. The *Wiccan Rede* is regarded by some as a reformulation of Aleister Crowley’s magical dictum: ‘Do what thou wilt shall be the whole of the Law.’ (see Chapter Three). Crowley influenced Gardner in developing modern witchcraft practices and Crowley’s dictum may have contributed, directly or indirectly, to the *Wiccan Rede*. However the crucial element of ‘harm none’ was missing from Crowley’s statement of magical purpose. Graham Harvey notes that in the *Wiccan Rede* the word ‘will’ means ‘your true self’. He also mentions that although the word *an is* Anglo-Saxon for ‘if’, some Wiccans interpret it as a shortened form of ‘and’. See G. Harvey, *Listening People, Speaking Earth: Contemporary Paganism*, Hurst, London 1997:38.


*Scire* (‘to know’) was Gerald Gardner’s magical name in the Ordo Templi Orientis. Gardner joined the O.T.O. after meeting Aleister Crowley in Hastings in 1946.


Gardner was interested in the history of Malayan civilisation and had written a book titled *Keris and Other Malay Weapons*, a pioneering study of the history and folklore of local armaments, published in Singapore in 1936.

Patricia Crowther writes in *Lid off the Cauldron* (loc cit:28) that Gardner’s collection of daggers and swords came ‘from all parts of the world’.

Dr Annie Besant (1847-1933) became president of the Theosophical Society in 1891. She was involved in a number of social movements, including the Fabian Society, the Indian Home Rule League and the Boy Scouts. Together with Charles Leadbeater, she also sponsored the spiritual cause of Jiddu Krishnamurti, establishing the Order of the Star in the East to promote him as a ‘world teacher’, a role he later rejected. Dr Besant was a leader in the Co-Masonry movement and also founded the Order of the Temple of the Rose Cross in 1912. The rituals of this Order may have influenced those of the Crotona Fellowship.


The text *Gerald Gardner: Witch* by J.L. Bracelin, published by Octagon Press, London 1960, is now believed to have been written by the well known scholar of Sufi mysticism, Idries Shah (1924-1996), who met Gardner in the mid-1950s and got to know him well (See R. Hutton, *The Triumph of the Moon: A History of Modern Pagan Witchcraft*, Oxford University Press, 199: 205, 445 fn.1, and P. Heselton, *Wiccan Roots*, loc. cit.:8-9.). Shah apparently did not want to put his name to the Gardner biography so Jack Bracelin, another friend of Gardner’s, agreed that his name could be substituted instead. It is of interest that Octagon Press is an imprint best known for its Sufi publications.

The Sheffield-based witch, Patricia Crowther, a friend of Gardner’s, has suggested that if Gardner was initiated on a night of the new moon (the first after the beginning of World War Two on 3 September 1939) he would have been initiated on 13 September 1939. See P. Heselton, *Wiccan Roots: Gerald Gardner and the Modern Witchcraft Revival*, loc.cit:178.


Ibid.


Ibid.
J.L. Bracelin, Gerald Gardner: Witch, loc cit: 166.

M.A. Murray, The Witch-cult in Western Europe, Oxford University Press, 1921.

Norton mistakenly lists it as Witchcraft in Western Europe, but it is clearly this particular work by Margaret Murray that Norton is referring to.


See R. Hutton, The Triumph of the Moon, loc cit.: 196.

Ibid.

Dr Murray was also a member of the Folk-Lore Society. Philip Heselton believes that Gardner may have met her in late 1938 or early 1939 and discussed her theories of the origins of pagan witchcraft. See P. Heselton, Wiccan Roots: Gerald Gardner and the Modern Witchcraft Revival loc cit: 27.


See Chapter Three for an overview of Crowley’s sex-magic practices.


Arnold Crowther’s widow, Patricia Crowther, gives this date in her book Lid off the Cauldron (Muller, London 1981:26) although Lawrence Sutin maintains that it was May 1947 ‘according to Crowley’s diary’. See L. Sutin, Do What Thou Wilt: A Life of Aleister Crowley, St Martin’s Press, New York 2000: 409.


Ibid.


D. Valiente, An ABC of Witchcraft, loc cit:156.

The pertinent text from Aradia reads:

Sarete liberi dalla schiavitu!
E così diverrete tutti liberi!
Pero uomini e donne
Sarete tutti nudi, per fino.

(Ye shall be free from slavery!
And thus shall ye all become free!
Therefore, men and women,
Ye too shall be naked.)


Francis King probably overemphasised this particular point. Doreen Valiente is reported as having advised Janet and Stewart Farrar that when the scourge is used in ritual practice, ‘no pain should be either inflicted or expected; it is always used gently.’ Quoted in J.and S. Farrar, The Witches’ Way: Principles, Rituals and Beliefs of Modern Witchcraft, loc cit:194.


Gardner’s quest for publicity angered members of his former coven. According to Michael Howard ‘...It has... been said that Gardner’s decision to “go public”, even in fictional form, upset the Elders of his
moon bright sun and green fields’. The associated colour is orange, ‘the colour of the summer sun’. Gwydion O’Hare notes, this name alludes to ‘the visible presence of the God and Goddess reflected in the
is represented by the colour white. In April, brings the
was made for the ensuing harvest celebrations and accordingly its symbolic colour is yellow. August brings the
and is known as
. It is traditionally associated with the slaughter of animals for food prior to
and is therefore represented by the colour red. Snow Moon rises in November and is
with the first falls of snow.


This is how Gardner is described in lengthy magazine feature article published in Sydney in 1958. An earlier article (Sydney 1955) had dubbed Gardner the ‘Witchmaster’. See P. Lucas, ‘Witches in the


See R.E. Guiley, The Encyclopedia of Witches and Witchcraft, loc.cit:134. Occult historian Aidan Kelly notes that Buckland, with his wife Rosemary acting as High Priestess, subsequently founded a
coven of Gardnerian witchcraft in Bayside, Long Island. ‘Almost all the “official” Gardnerians in
America,’ writes Kelly, ‘are descendants of that coven.’ See Aidan A. Kelly, ‘An Update on Neopagan
Witchcraft in America’ in J.R. Lewis and J.G. Melton (ed.) Perspectives on the New Age, State University of New York Press, Albany, New York 1992:137. More recently it has been suggested by Mike Howard, editor of The Cauldron in the United Kingdom, that Gardnerian Wicca may have been introduced to the
United States via two separate and independent routes: via Buckland and his wife on the East Coast and via a Gardnerian practitioner named Queen Morrigan on the West Coast. Morrigan allegedly settled in


The Pan Pacific Pagan Alliance, which has regional councils in every state of Australia had a
subscription membership of 150 in January 1994, each subscription covering several people. If a single
membership extended to an individual coven, the national total would have been between 100-200 covens in 1994. See L. Hume, Witchcraft and Paganism in Australasia, Melbourne University Press, Melbourne 1997: 244-45.

Gardner was doubtful whether Wicca would survive in the long term. In Witchcraft Today [1954] he wrote: ‘I think we must say goodbye to the witch. The cult is doomed, I am afraid, partly because of
modern conditions, housing shortage, the smallness of modern families, and chiefly by education. The

In his will, Gardner bequeathed the Isle of Man museum to his High Priestess, Monique Wilson, and
she in turn ran it with her husband for a short time, before selling it to the Ripley organisation.

See Diagram of the Wheel of the Year, with accompanying dates for both Northern and Southern
hemispheres.

Quoted in J.R. Lewis (ed.), Magical Religion and Modern Witchcraft, State University of New York

The first esbat occurs in October just before the festival of Samhain (All Hallows’ Eve, or Halloween)
and is known as Blood Moon. It is traditionally associated with the slaughter of animals for food prior to
the onset of winter and is therefore represented by the colour red. Snow Moon rises in November and is
associated with the first falls of snow. Oak Moon is the full moon in December. It is linked to the colour
black and also to the oak, sacred symbol of the Dark Lord aspect of Cernunnos, since it is his wood which
is burnt at Yule. Ice Moon , represented by the colour purple, rises in January, followed by Storm Moon in
February , a time when the ice and sleet may turn to rain. This full moon is linked to the element Water,
and to the colour blue. March brings the Chaste Moon, the return of Spring from the depths of winter, and
is represented by the colour white. In April, Seed Moon is a time when the seeds in the earth bring forth
new life, and this esbat is represented by the colour green. Hare Moon rises in May and is dedicated both
to the Goddess and to fertility. Its colour is pink, symbolic of love. June brings the Dyad Moon and, as
Gwydion O’Hare notes, this name alludes to ‘the visible presence of the God and Goddess reflected in the
bright sun and green fields’. The associated colour is orange, ‘the colour of the summer sun’. The Mead
Moon rises in July and is a time for dancing and revelry. Traditionally this is the time when honey mead
was made for the ensuing harvest celebrations and accordingly its symbolic colour is yellow. August
brings the Wort Moon, a reference to the dark green abundance of harvest time. September is the month of
the Barley Moon. This is the season when grain is harvested: brown is the symbolic colour for this
esbat. Finally, Wine Moon is the esbat which arises as a consequence of the difference between the solar
and lunar calendars. Unlike the twelve-month cycle of the solar calendar there are usually thirteen full
moons in any given year, and this esbat is the thirteenth in the cycle. It honours the sacrament of wine and
its symbolic colour is burgundy red. Wine Moon precedes Blood Moon, and so the lunar cycle continues.


221 Ibid.

222 James W. Baker, in his essay ‘White Witches: Historic Fact and Romantic Fantasy’ points out that the Wiccan ‘Wheel of the Year’ is by no means purely Celtic. The major Sabbats, Samhain, Imboli, Beltane and Lughnasadh were Celtic festivals, but Yule was an Anglo-Saxon celebration. Midsummer did not feature in Celtic celebrations and the vernal equinox was not considered important either. For this reason Baker refers to the eight-fold cycle of the Wheel of the Year as a modern invention, an ‘invented tradition’. See J.R. Lewis (ed.), *Magical Religion and Modern Witchcraft*, loc. cit: 178,187.

223 See G. Harvey, *Listening People, Speaking Earth*, loc. cit: 3-12.

224 Ibid.


226 Ibid: 61


229 Ibid.


233 Ibid: 12.


236 Ibid.

237 Ibid.


239 Ibid: 134.

240 According to the Farrars, the binding is done with three red cords – one nine feet long, the other pair four-and-half feet long: ‘The wrists are tied together behind the back with the middle of the long cord, and the two ends are brought forward over the shoulders and tied in front of the neck, the ends left hanging to form a cable-tow by which the Postulant can be led. One short cord is tied round the right ankle, the other above the left knee – each with the ends tucked in so that they will not trip [the Postulant] up.’ See J.and S. Farrar, *The Witches’ Way: Principles, Rituals and Beliefs of Modern Witchcraft*, loc cit: 16.


242 Ibid.


244 Ibid: 133.

245 Single-gender Wiccan groups develop their own rules and responses in relation to this issue.


247 Ibid: 90.

248 Ibid.

249 Vivienne Crowley describes the impact of the Legend of the Goddess on male and female initiates as ‘a meeting with their contra-sexual side. For a woman, this is a meeting with her Animus and for a man a meeting with his Anima.’ See V. Crowley, *Wicca: the Old Religion in the New Millennium*, Thorsons, London 1996: 205.


251 Ibid: 89.


...
taken form in Sisterhood – in our solidarity based on a vision of personal freedom, self-definition, and in
our struggle together for social and political change. The contemporary women’s movement has created
space for women to begin to perceive reality with a clarity that seeks to encompass many complexities.
This perception has been trivialized by male dominated cultures that present the world in primarily
rational terms... [Feminist spirituality involves] the rejoining of woman to woman.’ See Carol P. Christ
Francisco 1979:272.

272 M.F. Bednarowski, ‘Women in Occult America’ in H. Kerr and C.L. Crow (ed.), The Occult in

Conversations at the End of the Century’ in J.R. Lewis and J.G. Melton (ed.) Perspectives on the New
goes even further, arguing that the resacralization of the earth is part of the process of individual
transformation: ‘When the earth is the body of the Goddess, the radical implications of the image are
more fully realized. The female body and the earth, which have been devalued and dominated together,
are resacralized. Our understanding of divine power is transformed as it is clearly recognized as present
within the finite and changing world. The image of earth as the body of the Goddess can inspire us to
repair the damage that has been done to the earth, to women, and to other beings in dominator cultures.’
1997: 91.

274 N. Goldberg, Changing of the Gods: Feminism and the end of Traditional Religions, Beacon Press,
Boston 1979:90.

275 M. Daly, Beyond God the Father, Beacon Press, Boston 1973:13.


277 In her influential book The Holy Book of Women’s Mysteries, Z. Budapest refers to the Mother
Goddess as the ‘Female Principle of the Universe and source of all life’. She is the ‘Goddess of the Ten

278 These American advocates of broad-based Goddess spirituality also had notable counterparts in the
UK and Ireland, among them Caitlin Matthews, Olivia Durdin-Robertson, Vivienne Crowley, Asphodel
P. Long, and Elizabeth Brooke.


280 Personal communication to the author, Berkeley, California, December 1984, during filming of the
television documentary The Occult Experience (Cinetel Productions for Channel Ten, Sydney).


282 Ibid.

283 Personal communication to the author, Berkeley, California, December 1984, during filming of the
television documentary The Occult Experience, loc cit.


285 Personal communication to the author, Berkeley, California, December 1984, during filming of the
television documentary The Occult Experience, loc cit.

286 Ibid.

287 According to Z. Budapest, Simos was driving past the Feminist Wicca on Lincoln Boulevarde and
came in to look. Budapest was staffing on that particular day and invited Simos to attend a forthcoming
Spring Equinox Festival. Their friendship and mutual advocacy of Goddess spirituality developed from

response to male-dominated traditions would appear to be characteristic of the rise of feminist witchcraft
in the United States since the late 1970s. Theologian Mary Farrell Bednarowski believes the rise of
feminist spirituality was a response to the ‘alienation from the cosmos’ associated with male-dominated
religions: ‘According to New Age thinkers and feminists, Judaism and Christianity espouse a deity who is
male, transcendent and “other”. This is a static deity, omnipotent, omniscient, omnipresent, static,
unchanging in his perfection. This God has created the world but does not inhabit it, for the creation,
along with humankind, is fallen. At the centre of creation, at the centre of human existence, there is
brokenness rather than wholeness, sin and estrangement rather than creativity. To be saved means
salvation from the world, from the body... The result is alienation from the rest of the cosmos as well as
estrangement from the divine.’ See M.F. Bednarowski , ‘ The New Age Movement and Feminist


290 Ibid.

291 Starhawk remains strongly committed to political activism. Her recent publication, Webs of Power: Notes from the Global Uprising, New Society Publishers, Victoria, Canada 2002, explores the relationship between magical ritual and progressive activism.

292 Following his association with Starhawk, Matthew Fox came to believe that there was a connection between the Nature-spirituality in Wicca and the sense of wholeness-in-Christ expressed in his own Creation Spirituality. However he was heavily criticised by the Roman Catholic authorities for this perception, Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger (now Pope Benedict II) referring to Fox's book Original Blessing as 'dangerous and deviant’. See T. Peters, The Cosmic Self, HarperCollins, San Francisco 1991:126-127.


299 M. Adler, Drawing Down the Moon, loc.cit: 24-25.

300 Ibid:35.

Chapter Three

ALEISTER CROWLEY AND
THE MAGIC OF THE LEFT-HAND PATH

Following the fragmentation of the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn during the period between 1900 and the end of World War One, the practice of ceremonial magic in the West became increasingly dominated by Aleister Crowley’s doctrine of *Thelema* (Greek: ‘will’), especially as the teachings of *Thelema* were introduced initially into his own magical order, Argenteum Astrum (The Silver Star, established 1907) and later into the Ordo Templi Orientis which Crowley headed from 1922 onwards (see below). Wicca would not emerge as a major esoteric movement until the 1950s and ‘60s, following the repeal in 1951 of the British Witchcraft Act forbidding the practice of witchcraft.

Since the 1960s Western magical practice in Britain and the United States has polarised, producing two major streams of occult thought led on the one hand by Crowleyian *Thelema* and its various derivative offshoots and affiliated movements, and by Wicca and Goddess spirituality on the other – the latter exported to the United States by the Gardnerian initiate Raymond Buckland in 1964 (later to merge with various forms of Goddess spirituality through the activities of influential American feminists like Starhawk, Z.Budapest and Margot Adler). Other branches of magic like the Dion Fortune-inspired Fraternity of the Inner Light and its more recent derivative, Servants of the Light (currently headed by Dolores Ashcroft-Nowicki), and revivalist movements like Druidry, Odinism and Celtic neo-shamanism, remain very much minority practices within the contemporary occult spectrum. Modern Western magic continues to be dominated by the legacy of Aleister Crowley who has become an iconic personality in popular culture, featuring on the cover of the Beatles’ famous *Sergeant Pepper’s* rock-album (1967) and inspiring a number of novels and plays by other writers as well as influencing leading rock stars like David Bowie and Led Zeppelin’s Jimmy Page.

I will argue in this thesis that even though Rosaleen Norton maintained and even actively encouraged her popular persona as a witch – a persona that was in turn fed by the popular media in Sydney during the 1950s – she nevertheless belongs very much within the Crowleyian category as an
occult practitioner. Her rebellious libertine personality and her practice of sex magic, inspired by Crowley and his teachings, align her as much with *Thelema* as with modern Wicca. The most significant deities in her personal pantheon were the chthonic figures of Pan and Hecate, rather than the universal triple-Goddess who figures so prominently in the Wiccan literature and in the neopagan practices and writings of leading figures like Starhawk, Z.Budapest and the Farrars. It is the chthonic nature of Crowleyian *Thelema* and its various derivative movements – especially the magic of the Ordo Templi Orientis (from 1922 onwards) and the Typhonian sex-magick of Kenneth Grant and his associates – that helps define this particular branch of modern magic (see below).

Plate 29: Aleister Crowley – founder of the doctrine of *Thelema*

Crowley has been branded by many as a ‘black’ magician: he was widely known in the mainstream British media as the Great Beast 666 – that is, as the Antichrist – and was described by London's *John Bull* magazine as ‘the wickedest man in the world’. However within the context of modern esotericism the familiar – perhaps even clichéd – notion of magic as either ‘black’ or ‘white’ is clearly in need of revision. As I will argue in Chapter Seven, there are distinct shades of grey along the black/white magical spectrum when it comes to classifying the various forms of contemporary magic currently practised in the West. So the question immediately arises: how should the various forms of modern Western magical practice be classified?
When one considers the spectrum of modern magical practices established in the West during the 20th century and still current today, it would seem appropriate, at least in part, to employ the terminology used by many of the actual magical practitioners themselves to distinguish between the various forms of occult practice dating from the post-Crowley period. (From an anthropological approach, this would mean taking a substantially *emic* approach to contemporary magical belief systems and practices – see Chapter Seven.) Increasingly, many of these contemporary magical practitioners identify themselves as belonging either to the Left-Hand or Right-Hand Path in Western magic (rather than identifying themselves, or allowing themselves to be labelled, as ‘black’ or ‘white’ magicians respectively). Making the distinction between Left-Hand Path and Right-Hand Path magic instead of categorising magic rigidly as black or white lessens the automatic stereotyping tendency of ‘black=evil’ and ‘white=good’ that has existed since ancient times.

**Left-Hand Path / Right-Hand Path**

Some writers maintain that the demarcation between the so-called Left-Hand or Right-Hand Path in Western magic has an exclusively Eastern origin. The anthropologist Richard Sutcliffe, who has studied contemporary Left-Hand Path magic in Britain, states quite specifically in a recently published article that ‘the notion of the Left-Hand Path is derived from the Tantric term *vama-marga* (‘left path’) ie. the Left-Hand Path in Tantrism’. Sutcliffe identifies the core practices of this occult path as the so-called ‘five m’s’: *madya, mamsa, matsya, mudra* and *maithuna*, ie. wine, flesh, fish, parched grain and intercourse’, and notes that these ‘involve the ritual transgression of certain taboos and incorporate ritual sexual intercourse’. He also notes that contemporary occultism has incorporated many ideas and techniques from both Tantrism and Yoga. Sutcliffe is undoubtedly correct in stating that Eastern mystical terms and concepts have been introduced to the Western esoteric tradition – a case in point is Crowley’s visit to Ceylon in 1901, where he was introduced to Tantric practices by his former Golden Dawn associate Allan Bennett – and it is also true that the Theosophist Madame H.P. Blavatsky referred to practitioners of the Left-Hand path when introducing Hindu and Buddhist spiritual concepts to the West in the late 19th century. However the symbolic distinction between ‘right’ and ‘left’ as ‘good’ and ‘evil’ respectively also has ancient Western origins that are quite distinct from the *vama-marga*.

The Latin term for ‘left’, *sinister*, was traditionally associated with evil and this connotation has persisted into modern times, supported by Christian cosmology. The Gospel of Matthew locates God’s followers (the sheep) on
the right and non-followers (the goats) on the left-hand side,\textsuperscript{11} and in pictures of the Last Judgement the Christian God shows his disciples their heavenly abode with his right hand and points with his left hand to Hell. The Left-Hand Path is therefore considered demonic – ‘the diabolical and the Earthly path to Hell’.\textsuperscript{12}

In a comparable manner, a quotation from the Classical period in ancient Greece referring to the hero Asclepius (later considered the founder and God of medicine and healing), employs a similar left/right distinction:

… after he (Asclepius) had become a surgeon, bringing that art to great perfection, he not only saved men from death, but even raised them up from the dead. He received from Athena blood from the veins of the Gorgon. He used blood from the left side for plagues of mankind, and he used that from the right side for healing and to raise up men from the dead.\textsuperscript{13}

Occult historian and leading member of the Golden Dawn, Arthur Edward Waite (1857-1942) was one of the first writers to refer to the ‘Brothers of the Left-Hand Path’ and the ‘Brothers of the Right-Hand Path’ in modern occult literature. Waite, who was both a devout Roman Catholic and also a practitioner of Kabbalistic ritual theurgy, refers in his \textit{Book of Black Magic and Pacts} (1898) to ‘the sovereign horror of the Brothers of the Left-Hand Path’.\textsuperscript{14} He later makes the observation in his \textit{Book of Ceremonial Magic} (1911) that ‘occult life has been entered by two classes of adepts, who have sometimes been fantastically distinguished as the Brothers of the Right and the Brothers of the Left, transcendental good and transcendental evil being specified as their respective ends’.\textsuperscript{15} Whether Waite himself believed in the validity of this viewpoint is uncertain. However, the inference is that the Left-Hand Path in magic has been regarded by many with ‘horror’ and is best avoided.

Despite the lingering association of the Left-Hand Path with ‘evil’, many practitioners aligned with this branch of modern Western magic – namely Thelemites, Satanists and also practitioners of contemporary Chaos Magick\textsuperscript{16} – nevertheless seem willing to apply this terminology to themselves. The contemporary British-born, German-based Satanist Vexen Crabtree maintains that ‘the term “Left-Hand Path” has become an umbrella term of self-designation used by certain contemporary ritual magicians and is usually taken to incorporate practitioners of Thelemic magick (beginning with Aleister Crowley), Tantrik magick and Chaos Magick (inspired by both Crowley and the magickal techniques devised by the occult artist Austin O.Spare, 1886-1956.).\textsuperscript{17} Elsewhere Crabtree adds: ‘I think all forms of Satanism are [also] considered Left Hand Path’ and he
quotes contemporary American Satanist Anton LaVey (1930-1997): ‘Satanism is not a white light religion; it is a religion of the flesh, the mundane, the carnal – all of which are ruled by Satan, the personification of the Left Hand Path’.  

It has to be acknowledged that there are certain points in common between Crowley’s advocacy of libertine individualism and Thelemic sex magick on the one hand, and LaVey’s doctrine of carnality on the other (see below). Nevertheless, I will argue in this thesis that contemporary Satanism and the other branches of the Left-Hand Path are by no means identical to each other and certain distinctions need to be made. It is significant that Crabtree himself does not identify carnality per se as a key characteristic of Left-Hand Path magic:

The Left Hand Path is solitary, individualistic, personal, based on self development, self analysis, self empowerment [italics in the text]…Frequently called ‘evil’ and ‘dark’ by non-Satanic religions, the followers of the Left Hand Path often have to remain in the darkness or face severe persecution from the religions that ironically call themselves ‘good’.  

The magical aspects identified by Crabtree as characteristic of the Left-Hand path include an emphasis on free thought (as distinct from dogma), a focus on individualism, the rejection of absolutes and moralism (sic) and an emphasis on the personal rather than the universal.

The contemporary Nordic order, Dragon Rouge (founded in 1989), which aligns itself with the so-called Draconian path in magick and shares many points in common with Kenneth Grant’s Typhonian branch of the Ordo Templi Orientis in England (see below), similarly identifies itself as belonging to the Left-Hand Path. Dragon Rouge refers to the Left-Hand Path as ‘the dark side of magic’:

The darkness is a mirror of the depths of the soul. All that is hidden inside us, our desires and our fears, is projected on the darkness…We are exploring the nightside tradition on many different levels…Dragon Rouge is a practical magical order in which the individual experience is pivotal. We are focusing on an empirical occultism and a knowledge about the unknown based on experience.

The members of Dragon Rouge also make a clear distinction between the magical paths of Right and Left:

The philosophy of the dark side is represented by the Left-Hand Path and its ideology. The Left-Hand Path is founded around a philosophy which defines two main spiritual paths. One is the Right-Hand Path. It is evident in most forms of
religion and mass movements. Its method is the magic of the light and its goal [is] that the individual melts together with God [my emphasis in italics]. The other path is the Left-Hand Path. It emphasizes the unique, the deviant and the exclusive. Its method is dark magic and antinomianism (going against the grain). The goal is to become a god…The goal of the… magic of Dragon Rouge is self-deification…To become a god means that one has transformed life from being predetermined and predestined by outer conditions, to the stage where one reaches a truly free will. Man becomes a god when he ceases to be a creation and instead becomes a creator.22

Dr Stephen Flowers, a leading member of the Temple of Set in the United States – an offshoot of the Church of Satan – similarly emphasizes self-deification and antinomianism as key characteristics of the Left-Hand Path. Flowers defines self-deification as the ‘attainment of enlightened (or awakened), independently existing intellect and its relative immortality’. This in turn depends on a heightened sense of individualism and ‘the strength…necessary for the desired state of evolution of self…attained by means of stages created by the will of the magician, not because he or she was “divine” to begin with’.23 According to Flowers, antinomianism is also an important characteristic of the Left-Hand Path because magicians following this path have to have ‘the spiritual courage to identify [themselves] with the cultural norms of “evil”. There will be an embracing of the symbols of…whatever quality the conventional culture fears and loathes.’24

As noted earlier, it was the controversial magician and former Golden Dawn member, Aleister Crowley, who first brought these controversial matters to a head through his proclamation of the doctrine of Thelema. Crowley’s teachings would polarize the Western esoteric tradition from this time onwards, seeking to shift the pursuit of ceremonial magic away from the quest for mystical transcendence (or, as the members of the Dragon Rouge express it, ‘melting into God’), towards the affirmation of the individual human will through acts of sacred sex magic. It was indeed a radical departure although, as I will seek to demonstrate below, some aspects of his doctrine reflect cosmological concepts dating back to the time of the 4th century Gnostics.

Aleister Crowley and the Magick of the New Aeon

Born at Leamington Spa, Warwickshire on 12 October 1875, Edward Alexander Crowley 25 was raised in a fundamentalist Plymouth Brethren home and soon developed an antipathy towards Christian belief and morality that would remain with him for his entire life. His father was a prosperous brewer who had retired to Leamington to study the Christian
scriptures. Crowley came to despise the Plymouth Brethren primarily on the basis of his unfortunate experiences at the special sect school in Cambridge which he was obliged to attend, and which was run by an especially cruel headmaster. Much of his school education was unhappy – marked by poor health and a vulnerability to bullying attacks – but after he went up to Trinity College, Cambridge in 1895 he was able to spend much of his time reading poetry and classical literature as well as confirming his well-earned reputation as a champion chess player. Crowley had an adventurous spirit and would later become an enthusiastic mountaineer, joining an expedition in 1902 to scale the mountain known as Chogo Ri (Mount Godwin-Austin, also referred to as K2) – at the time the highest peak in the world open to European climbers.

Crowley's direct association with the Western esoteric tradition began in London in 1898 with his introduction to George Cecil Jones, a member of the Golden Dawn (see Chapter Two). By the following year Crowley had also become a close friend of magical initiate Allan Bennett, who for a time rivalled MacGregor Mathers as a dominant figure among the English occultists of the period. Within the Golden Dawn, Bennett had taken the magical name *Frater Iehi Aour* (Hebrew: ‘Let there be Light’) and he became a mentor to Crowley. For a time Bennett and Crowley shared the latter’s Chancery Lane flat in London and it was here that Bennett tutored Crowley on applied Kabbalah and the techniques of magical invocation and evocation, as well as showing him how to create magical talismans.

Crowley quickly grasped the fundamentals of magic – or *magick*, as he would later spell it in his own writings on the subject. In one of his most influential books – *Magick in Theory and Practice*, first published in 1929 and frequently reprinted since – Crowley outlined the basic philosophy of magic as he had come to see it, which in essence involved the process of making man god-like, both in vision and in power. Crowley’s magical dictums are instructive because they reveal the particular appeal that magic had for him:

*A man who is doing his True Will has the inertia of the Universe to assist him.*  

*Man is ignorant of the nature of his own being and powers. Even his idea of his limitations is based on an experience of the past and every step in his progress extends his empire. There is therefore no reason to assign theoretical limits to what he may be or what he may do.*  

*Man is capable of being and using anything which he perceives, for everything that
he perceives is in a certain sense a part of his being. He may thus subjugate the whole Universe of which he is conscious to his individual will. 29

The Microcosm is an exact image of the Macrocosm; the Great Work is the raising of the whole man in perfect balance to the power of Infinity. 30

There is a single main definition of the object of all magical Ritual. It is the uniting of the Microcosm with the Macrocosm. The Supreme and Complete Ritual is therefore the Invocation of the Holy Guardian Angel, or, in the language of Mysticism, Union with God. 31

Crowley was initiated as a Neophyte in the Golden Dawn on 18 November 1898. He soon came to appreciate that those with the loftiest ritual grades in the Order (especially Mathers and Westcott – see Chapter Two) were able to wield profound spiritual influence over their followers by claiming rapport with the so-called ‘Secret Chiefs’ 32 whose authority was said to emanate from higher planes of spiritual reality. Keen to ascend to as high a rank as possible, Crowley took the grade of Zelator and then Theoricus and Practicus in the following two months. Initiation into the grade of Philosophus followed in May 1899. Greatly enthused by his magical research under the tutelage of Allan Bennett, Crowley also began making preparations for a substantial magical working based on the fifteenth century rituals of Abramelin the Mage, described in a grimoire that had been translated from French into English by MacGregor Mathers and which George Cecil Jones had introduced him to a year earlier. 33 Apart from allegedly providing the magician with the services of 316 spirit-advisers, the Abramelin system of magic was also said to grant the practitioner communion with the Holy Guardian Angel, an embodiment in visionary form of one's higher spiritual self. However, Crowley believed there was another potential benefit: such an experience would enable him to claim spiritual parity with Mathers in the Golden Dawn hierarchy.

Crowley delayed the actual performance of his Abramelin operation but, after attaining the grade of Philosophus within the Golden Dawn, contacted Mathers in Paris and requested ritual entry into the Second Order – the Red Rose and the Cross of Gold. In January 1900, under Mathers’ direct supervision, Crowley was admitted ‘to the Glory of Tiphareth’ – the 5°= 6° Adeptus Minor ritual grade associated with the experience of spiritual rebirth. He then returned to England where he challenged the authority of William Butler Yeats, who at the time was the leader of the Golden Dawn in England (see Chapter Two). As mentioned earlier, Yeats was unimpressed by this effrontery and Crowley was unsuccessful in his bid for ritual supremacy. The dispute, however, caused a rift in loyalties among the Golden Dawn membership since Crowley had apparently been sent by
Mathers – and Mathers, in a letter to influential Golden Dawn member Annie Horniman, had earlier claimed spiritual autocracy and infallibility over the Order as his right (see Chapter Two).

Having failed to dislodge Yeats as the head of the Golden Dawn, Crowley now suddenly switched course. Unpredictably and apparently acting on pure impulse, he withdrew from the dispute altogether and in June 1900 embarked upon a series of travels through Mexico, the United States, France, Ceylon and India before finally arriving in Cairo with his wife Rose on 9 February 1904. Crowley’s entire conception of the magical universe was about to be dramatically transformed.

**Crowley’s Thelemic revelation**
The Thelemic practice of sex magick, referred to earlier in this chapter, derives specifically from a transformative spiritual event that occurred during Crowley’s visit to Cairo in 1904. Crowley would come to believe that the revelatory communication itself emanated from the ancient Egyptian gods, via an entity named Aiwass (or Aiwaz) whom Crowley believed to be a messenger from Horus. Paradoxically Crowley’s personal revelation would also come to acquire a quasi-biblical orientation for it led him to regard himself henceforth as the Beast 666 referred to in the Book of Revelation. Crowley’s life and career as a ceremonial magician would subsequently focus on the ongoing personal quest to find the ideal Whore of Babalon [Crowley’s variant spelling] or Scarlet Woman, with whom to enact the philosophy of Thelema, or magical will. According to the doctrine of Thelema, Crowley’s sex-magick encounters with his Scarlet Women (there would be many more than one!) were sacramental acts confirming Crowley’s role as Lord of the New Aeon.

On 17 March 1904, Crowley performed a magical ceremony in his apartment in Cairo, invoking the Egyptian deity Thoth, god of wisdom. Crowley's wife Rose appeared to be in a dazed, mediumistic state of mind and, the following day, while in a similar state of drowsiness, she announced that Horus was waiting for her husband. Crowley was not expecting such a statement from his wife but according to his diary she subsequently led him to the nearby Boulak Museum which he had not previously visited. Rose pointed to a statue of Horus, or Ra-Hoor-Khuit, and Crowley was intrigued to discover that the exhibit was numbered 666, the number of the Great Beast in the Book of Revelation. Crowley regarded this as an omen. He returned to his hotel and invoked Horus:
Strike, strike the master chord!
Draw, draw the Flaming Sword!
Crowning Child and Conquering Lord, Horus, avenger!  

On 20 March 1904 Crowley received a mediumistic communication through Rose stating that ‘the Equinox of the Gods had come’, and he arranged for an assistant curator at the Boulak Museum to make notes on the inscriptions from Stele 666. Rose continued to fall into a passive, introspective state of mind and advised her husband that precisely at noon on April 8, 9 and 10 he should enter the room where the transcriptions had been made and for exactly an hour on each of these three days he should write down any impressions received. The resulting communications, allegedly dictated by a semi-invisible Egyptian entity named Aiwass – said to be a messenger of Horus – resulted in a document that Crowley later titled Liber Al vel Legis (The Book of the Law).  

The pronouncements contained in Liber Al vel Legis became a turning point in Crowley’s magical career. Crowley was specifically commanded by Aiwass to put aside the Kabbalistic ceremonial magic he had learnt in the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn and was instructed to pursue the magic of sexual partnership instead:

Now ye shall know that the chosen priest and apostle of infinite space is the prince-priest The Beast, and in his woman called The Scarlet Woman is all power given. They shall gather my children into their fold: they shall bring the glory of the stars into the hearts of men. For he is ever a sun and she a moon...  

Plate 30: Aleister Crowley as Magus, with his ceremonial equipment
Crowley would soon come to believe that his magical destiny was inextricably connected to the Horus figure Ra-Hoor-Khuit whose statue he had seen in the Boulak Museum. In Egyptian mythology the deities Nuit (female—the circle-passive) and Hadit (male—the point-active) were said to have produced a divine child, Ra-Hoor-Khuit, through their sacred union. According to Crowley this combination of the principles of love and will brought into incarnation the ‘magical equation known as the Law of Thelema’. Thelema is the Greek word for ‘will’ and the principal magical dictum contained in Liber Al vel Legis is ‘Do what thou wilt shall be the whole of the Law.’ The concluding instruction in Liber Al vel Legis reads as follows: ‘There is no law beyond Do what thou wilt. Love is the law, love under will.’

Crowley’s notion of the will, or Will – he usually capitalized it to denote its special significance – is central to his magical philosophy. Crowley understood that one should live according to the dictates of one’s true Will because ‘A man who is doing his True Will has ...the Universe to assist him.’ An individual’s True Will is that person’s authentic spiritual purpose and it also confers a sense of identity. ‘The first principle of success in evolution,’ wrote Crowley in Magick in Theory and Practice, ‘is that the individual should be true to his own nature...’

Crowley believed that in terms of his own individual spiritual purpose, his unique personal destiny had been made manifestly clear by the communications received from Aiwass in Liber Al vel Legis. As Crowley’s magical disciple Kenneth Grant has written, from a Thelemic perspective the revelations in Cairo in 1904 represented nothing less than the birth of a new Aeon in the history of humanity’s spiritual evolution:

According to Crowley the true magical revival occurred in 1904, when an occult current of cosmic magnitude was initiated on the inner planes. Its focus was Aiwaz and it was transmitted through Crowley to the human plane... The initiation of this occult current created a vortex, the birth-pangs of a New Aeon, technically called an Equinox of the Gods. Such an event recurs at intervals of approximately 2000 years. Each such revival of magical power establishes a further link in the chain of humanity's evolution, which is but one phase only of the evolution of Consciousness.

In cosmological terms, Crowley believed he had now been recognised by the transcendent powers of the ancient Egyptian pantheon as the ‘divine child’ brought into being through the sacred union of Nuit and Hadit. There could be no doubting the importance of this event and its dramatic outcome. In Liber Al vel Legis we read ‘Ra-Hoor-Khuit hath taken his seat
in the East at the Equinox of the Gods.\textsuperscript{49} Previously, according to Crowley, there had been two other Aeons: one associated with the Moon and the other with the Sun. The first of these, the Aeon of Isis, was a matriarchal age characterised by the worship of lunar deities, the second epoch, the Aeon of Osiris, a patriarchal age associated with incarnating demi-gods or divine kings. John Symonds, Crowley’s biographer and literary executor, describes this historical process in his introduction to Crowley’s \textit{Confessions}:

\begin{quote}
The cosmology of \textit{The Book of the Law} is explained by Crowley thus: there have been, as far as we know, two aeons in the history of the world. The first, that of Isis, is the aeon of the woman; hence matriarchy, the worship of the Great Mother and so on. About 500 B.C. this aeon was succeeded by the aeon of Osiris, that is the aeon of the man, the father, hence the paternal religions of suffering and death – Judaism, Buddhism, Christianity and Mohammedanism. This aeon came to an end in 1904 when Aleister Crowley received \textit{The Book of the Law}, and the new aeon, that of Horus, the child, was born. In this aeon the emphasis is on the true self or will, not on anything external such as gods or priests...\textsuperscript{50}
\end{quote}

There can be no doubting the position of \textit{Liber Al vel Legis} with regard to the religious traditions that preceded the 1904 revelation. ‘With my Hawk's head,’ proclaims Ra-Hoor-Khuit (ie. Horus) in stanzas III: 51-54:

\begin{quote}
I peck at the eyes of Jesus as he hangs upon the Cross. I flap my wings in the face of Mohammed and blind him. With my claws I tear out the flesh of the Indian and the Buddhist, Mongol and Din. Bahlasti! Ompedha! I spit on your crapulous creeds.\textsuperscript{51}
\end{quote}

Quite apart from the iconoclastic tone adopted by \textit{Liber Al vel Legis} in dismissing earlier religious traditions like Christianity, Buddhism and Islam, the sexual implications of the revelation were also made clear. The received doctrine of the Aeon of Horus would now supersede Christianity and all the other outmoded religions that had constructed barriers to spiritual freedom, and the way this would be achieved was through the power of sexuality. \textit{Liber Al vel Legis} summons the Scarlet Woman to ‘raise herself in pride!’ and calls for uninhibited sexual freedom:

\begin{quote}
Let her work the work of wickedness! Let her kill her heart! Let her be loud and adulterous; let her be covered with jewels, and rich garments, and let her be shameless before all men. Then will I lift her to the pinnacles of power: then will I breed from her a child mightier than all the kings of the earth. I will fill her with joy...\textsuperscript{52}
\end{quote}

As Kenneth Grant has explained, with reference to \textit{Liber Al vel Legis} and its call for sexual freedom, Crowley came to believe that the so-called
Great Work – sacred union, or the attainment of Absolute Consciousness – would be achieved through the sexual union of the Great Beast with the Whore of Babalon: ‘The Beast, as the embodiment of the Logos (which is Thelema, Will) symbolically and actually incarnates his Word each time a sacramental act of sexual congress occurs, i.e. each time love is made under Will.’ A review of Crowley’s subsequent career shows that he would spend much of his life from this time onwards seeking lovers and concubines who could act as his Divine Whore. While he would be frustrated in his numerous attempts to find a suitable and enduring partner, there were many who filled the role temporarily.

In relation to the practice of sex magic, quite apart from defining Crowley’s spiritual destiny as the High Priest of Thelema, Liber Al vel Legis also contained instructions relating to ceremonial offerings associated with sacramental sex magic, specifically the preparation of what later came to be known as ‘cakes of light’. Preparation of this ritual offering as specified by Ra-Hoor-Khuit, is outlined in III: 23-25 of Liber Al vel Legis:

For perfume mix meal and honey and thick leavings of red wine: then oil of Abramelin and olive oil, and afterward soften and smooth down with rich fresh blood. The best blood is of the moon, monthly: then the fresh blood of a child, or dropping from the host of heaven: then of enemies; then of the priest or of the worshippers; last of some beast, no matter what. This burn: of this make cakes and eat unto me.

As one of Crowley’s most recent biographers, Lawrence Sutin, has noted:

There is no evidence that Crowley ever used the fresh blood of a child or an enemy in preparing the cakes. Indeed, in his comment on this verse, written during the period, Crowley was careful to specify that the ‘child’ was ‘Babalon and the Beast conjoined’— that is, the elixir of sexual magic.

The magical elixir itself consisted of the ‘ingredients’ of sexual congress itself: semen from the male, gluten from the woman’s vagina, and preferably fresh menstrual blood, as specified in stanza 24 of Book III of Liber Al vel Legis. These ingredients were included in the preparation of the ‘cakes of light’ which were then consumed by participants as a ritual offering to Ra-Hoor-Khuit.

It is clear that Crowley placed great emphasis on the magical elixir because it is later referred to as ‘the germ of life’ in The Book of the Unveiling of Sangraal which was part of the ‘Secret Instruction of the Ninth Degree’ in the Ordo Templi Orientis – a European sex magic organisation which
Crowley was able to gradually transform into a Thelemite order after joining it in 1910 (see below). In the Ninth degree of the Ordo Templi Orientis, which employs veiled sexual references, the candidate is instructed as follows:

Now then, entering the privy chapel [the vagina], do thou bestow at least one hour in adoration at the altar, exalting thyself in love toward God, and extolling Him in strophe and antistrophe [sexual lovemaking]. Then do thou perform the Sacrifice of the Mass [ejaculation of semen]. The Elixir [a mixture of semen and female sexual secretions] being then prepared solemnly and in silence, do thou consume it utterly.

The ritual consumption of a sexual magical elixir was not part of the magical teachings of the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn, which tended to downplay any references to sexual symbolism in its rituals, and since Crowley had established his own unique connection with Aiwass and Ra-Hoor Khuit in 1904 he had little need for an ongoing relationship with the Golden Dawn after his revelation in Cairo. In deciding to enact the magical procedures dictated by Liber Al vel Legis Crowley had, in any case, already laid the foundation for a quite different sort of magical practice based not on advancing through the sephiroth of the Kabbalistic Tree of Life (see Chapter Two) but instead on utilising the magical energies of sexuality.

The Argenteum Astrum and Victor Neuburg
In 1907 Crowley established his own magical order, the Argenteum Astrum, or Silver Star. Two years later he commenced production of a semi-annual periodical titled The Equinox, as its official publishing arm. Some of the early issues of The Equinox contained Crowley’s first writings on sex magic rituals. In these writings Crowley identified three types of sexual activity – autoerotic, heterosexual and homosexual – as a way of raising magical energy and he also formulated the notion that sex magic rituals could be dedicated to achieving specific results like financial gain, attaining personal creative success etc. His central idea was that sex magic could enable the practitioner to focus on a specific goal or outcome. The magician would dedicate the sexual activity to the goal of the magical ritual and would hold the image of that goal in his mind at the moment of sexual climax: at that very moment the energy raised during the ritual would be directed to the goal by the magical will. In this way the sex magic practitioner would be able to ‘wed the image and the magical power’.

Initially the Argenteum Astrum drew primarily on borrowed sources from the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn. Crowley had began rewriting
MacGregor Mathers' Kabbalistic rituals, employing an amended form of the Golden Dawn grades as well as including some yogic and oriental material of his own. He also published the secret rituals of Mathers' Second Order, the Red Rose and Cross of Gold, in The Equinox. Interestingly, although Crowley had made a commitment to the sex magic proclaimed in Liber Al vel Legis, he did not initially include it within the grades of his new magical order. Nevertheless the Argenteum Astrum would gradually develop as a vehicle for Crowley's increasingly explicit bisexuality, thereby complicating the apparently clear sex-role distinction between the Beast and the Scarlet Woman delineated in Liber Al vel Legis.

One of the early members of the Argenteum Astrum was Victor Neuburg (1883-1940), a young poet who, like Crowley, had studied at Trinity College, Cambridge. Crowley heard about Neuburg from another A.A. member, Captain J.F.C. Fuller, and invited him to his magical retreat in Boleskine, Scotland. Crowley quickly recognised in Neuburg a kindred spirit, and they would soon enter into a homosexual magic liaison tinged with sado-masochistic tendencies, which would last until 1914.

Following a painful divorce from his wife Rose in 1909, Crowley went with Neuburg to Algeria where they intended exploring the Enochian magic of the sixteenth century Elizabethan occultists Dr John Dee and Edward Kelley. This process involved the magical evocation of thirty so-called ‘Aethyrs’ or ‘Aires’ – a group of metaphysical spirit-entities that included Choronzon, the demon of Chaos. Deep in the Algerian desert – at such locations as Aumale, Ain El Hajel, Bou-Saada, Benshrur, Tolga and Biskra – Crowley summoned the different Aethyrs in turn. Crowley was carrying with him a large golden topaz set in a wooden rose-cross decorated with ritual symbols. Choosing a place of solitude, Crowley would recite the required Enochian conjuration and then use his topaz as a focusing glass to concentrate his attention on the visionary landscape as it unfolded before his gaze. As a result of his Enochian ‘calls’ Crowley had a number of visionary experiences which were then transcribed by Neuburg as they took place.

While in the Algerian desert, Crowley and Neuburg also engaged in an act of ritual sex magic. Crowley writes in his Confessions that on one occasion they climbed a mountain named Da’leh Addin and felt an intuitive command to perform a magical ceremony on the summit:

We accordingly took loose rocks and built a great circle, inscribed with the words of power; and in the midst we erected an altar and there I sacrificed myself [submitted to anal sex]. The fire of the all-seeing sun [Neuburg’s penis] smote down upon the
altar, consuming every particle of my personality. I am obliged to write in hieroglyph of this matter, because it concerns things of which it is unlawful to speak openly under penalty of the most dreadful punishment.  

After Crowley returned to England the Argenteum Astrum began to grow modestly, building on its core membership which included Captain J.F.C. Fuller and Crowley's Golden Dawn teacher George Cecil Jones. The Argenteum Astrum would in due course initiate around a hundred of Crowley's followers, among them Neuburg's friend and fellow poet Pamela Hansford Johnson, Australian violinist Leila Waddell, mathematics lecturer Norman Mudd from Bloemfontein, and the visionary English artist Austin Osman Spare.

Events took a strange turn in London in May 1912 when Crowley was contacted one evening at his Fulham flat by a man named Theodor Reuss. Reuss identified himself as Brother Merlin, head of the German branch of the Ordo Templi Orientis. Crowley would already have been familiar with the O.T.O. because according to occult historian Francis King he had been admitted to its lower grades a year earlier. What surprised the British occultist was Reuss's claim that Crowley had published a statement which revealed the most prized secret of the Order's ninth degree – the sacrament of sex magic. Crowley was initially perplexed by Reuss's accusation and wondered which publication he was referring to. Reuss then reached across to Crowley's bookshelf and pulled down a copy of his recently published work *The Book of Lies*, a collection of magical commentaries and reflections. The offending lines were contained in Chapter XXXVI titled ‘The Star Sapphire’ which begins with the words: ‘Let the Adept be armed with his Magick Rood and provided with his Mystic Rose.’ Further on Crowley’s text reads as follows: ‘Let him drink of the Sacrament and let him communicate the same.’

Crowley pointed out to Reuss that he had not yet been admitted to the ninth degree of the O.T.O, so he was not in a position to reveal its secrets. In ‘The Star Sapphire’ Crowley had used the Old English word *rood* to mean a cross, and Reuss had assumed that he was referring to the phallus. Reuss had also assumed that the Mystic Rose was a reference to the vagina. Then there was the issue of what ‘drinking the Sacrament’ could actually be referring to. As they were speaking Crowley realised intuitively that sexual intercourse between priest and priestess must be a culminating event in the ritual of the O.T.O's ninth degree, and he now engaged Reuss in a discussion about sex magic which lasted for several hours. The outcome was that Crowley would in due course become the head of a new magical
order to be called the Mysteria Mystica Maxima, effectively an English subsidiary of the German Ordo Templi Orientis. Much later, in 1922 – following Reuss’s retirement – Crowley would replace Reuss as the head of the O.T.O. itself, a position he held until his death in 1947 (see below).

Plate 31: Crowley as ‘Baphomet’ in 1912 – after being appointed head of the O.T.O. in Britain

The rise of the Ordo Templi Orientis

Although the practice of sex magic was central to Aleister Crowley’s doctrine of Thelema it did not originate with him. In recent times the rise of the O.T.O and the history of sex magic as a branch of Western esotericism have been documented by a small group of specialist academic scholars, among them Peter R. Koenig in Switzerland, Hugh B. Urban, Joscelyn Godwin, John Deveney and J. Gordon Melton in the United States, and Henrik Bogdan in Sweden.

From a historical perspective it is clear that the two key figures in the early development of the O.T.O in Europe were Carl Kellner and Crowley’s German O.T.O. contact, Theodor Reuss. Kellner (1851-1905) was a wealthy Austrian chemist and industrialist and also a Freemason –
he was a member of the Humanitas Lodge, established in Neuhäusl, Austria, in 1871 under the constitution of the Grand Lodge of Hungary. Reuss (1855-1923) was an Anglo-German Freemason who specialized in buying and selling Masonic charters, even though he was not recognised by any authentic Lodges in Craft Masonry. According to Koenig, Reuss invented an organization known as the ‘Order of the Illuminati’ as well as several Rosicrucian societies. While it is evident that Kellner was a businessman and inventor of considerable integrity, Reuss’s reputation was more dubious and some historians consider him a swindler. Nevertheless it was through their joint efforts that the organization known as the Ordo Templi Orientis (O.T.O.) would eventually emerge.

Around 1895 Kellner had the idea of forming a private group which could explore various ‘Tantric’ exercises within a Hatha Yoga circle. Kellner had a long-standing interest in both the Western esoteric tradition and also Eastern mysticism. According to Urban, Kellner is said to have studied with three Eastern masters – a Sufi and two Hindu Tantrikers – and was
also in touch with an American esoteric order known as the Hermetic Brotherhood of Light (an offshoot of the Hermetic Brotherhood of Luxor), which in turn drew on the sex magic ideas of the influential American occultist Paschal Beverly Randolph (see below). Kellner and Reuss had in mind that they would form a new esoteric order that would fuse Craft Masonry, Rosicrucianism and Hindu Tantra. Urban maintains that at the time Kellner was one of the few Western figures with a detailed knowledge of Yoga and that he regarded ‘white sexual magic’ as a source of godlike power. Kellner performed Tantric rites with his wife and a small group of disciples in order to produce the so-called ‘divine Elixir’—an amalgam of male and female sexual fluids.

Like Kellner, Reuss was also interested in phallic cults and Tantra and would later produce a treatise on sexual worship titled Lingam-Yoni. He believed that sexual congress mirrored the cosmic act of creation and that the lingam, or phallus, was a key symbol of the creator of the universe. Urban argues that it was Reuss who incorporated sexual magic into the upper grades of the O.T.O. Unfortunately Kellner did not live to see the actual establishment of the new esoteric organisation. He became terminally ill in 1904 and died the following year. Reuss was forced to act on his own, recruiting a range of ‘Oriental Freemasons’ for the new Order and eventually naming it the ‘Order of Oriental Templars’ [Ordo Templi Orientis]. With the assistance of Franz Hartmann and Heinrich Klein, Reuss prepared a constitution for the O.T.O. in 1906.

Koenig maintains that Reuss never intended that the O.T.O should become a vehicle for Crowley’s doctrine of Thelema. However, Reuss was sufficiently impressed by Crowley’s ideas that he translated the latter’s sex-magick ritual, the Gnostic Mass (composed 1913), into German and had it recited at a special O.T.O congress at Monte Verità. Reuss also announced at the same congress that he was translating Crowley’s Book of the Law into German. Crowley reciprocated the gesture by publishing several major O.T.O. documents in The Equinox, among them Liber LII: the Manifesto of the O.T.O.

In his Confessions, Crowley states that Reuss ‘resigned the office [of the Outer Head of the Order] in 1922 in my favour’ although even in the official O.T.O History it is conceded that that no evidence or letter from Reuss has ever been found confirming this claim. Nevertheless, Crowley succeeded Reuss as O.H.O.(Outer Head of the Order) in 1922 and would hold this position until his death in 1947.
Under Crowley, the O.T.O.’s original nine degrees were expanded to eleven. The eighth, ninth and eleventh degrees focused on non-reproductive sexual acts including masturbation, the consumption of sexual fluids (referred to above as the ‘magical elixir’), and homosexual intercourse. Koenig notes that other elements of Crowleyian sex magic, in addition to the ritual consumption of semen and vaginal fluids, were incorporated into the rites of the O.T.O. at this time. They included various forms of sexual visualisation and the act of masturbating on magical sigils:

Crowley’s VIIIth degree unveiled...that masturbating on a sigil of a demon or meditating upon the image of a phallus would bring power or communication with a [or one’s own] divine being... The IXth degree was labelled heterosexual intercourse where the sexual secrets were sucked out of the vagina and when not consumed...put on a sigil to attract this or that demon to fulfil the pertinent wish... In the XIth degree, the mostly homosexual degree, one identifies oneself with an ejaculating penis. The blood (or excrements) from anal intercourse attract the spirits/demons while the sperm keeps them alive.

**Crowley’s writings on sex magic**
Crowley produced several short texts on sex magic, some of which are written in veiled symbolic language. These texts include *De Arte Magica* (written in 1914 and also translated and published in Reuss’s German-language O.T.O. magazine, *Oriflamme*, in the same year); *Liber Agape*; *Energized Enthusiasm: a Note on Theurgy*, and the notorious, but blandly titled *Emblems and Modes of Use*. Crowley’s *Gnostic Mass* and the *Mass of the Phoenix* also contain sex magic references. Despite their often discursive language and veiled symbolism these texts provide intriguing insights into Crowley’s philosophy and practice of sex magic.

*De Arte Magica* was intended as a document for IX° O.T.O candidates. After reminding the reader that ‘the Phallus is the physiological basis of the Oversoul’ – a statement with which Reuss would surely have agreed – Crowley goes on to describe sex magic methods drawn from both the Jewish Kabbalah and the Hindu spiritual tradition. With regard to the former, Crowley states that ‘in the semen itself…lies a creative life which cannot be baulked’. According to Jewish teachings, says Crowley, conjugal love should be a holy act, preceded by ablutions and prayer: ‘All lustful thoughts must be rigidly excluded, the purpose must be solely that of procreation [and] the blessing of God must be most earnestly invoked.’ However Crowley was also interested in the magical consequences of other types of sexual act:
All other sexual acts involving emission of semen...attract other spirits, incomplete and therefore evil...nocturnal pollutions bring succubi, which are capable of separate existence and of vampirising their creator. But voluntary sterile acts create demons, and (if done with concentration and magical intention) such demons...may subserve that intention.  

Crowley also makes reference to the Hindu concept that *prana* or life-force 'resides in the *Bindu*, or semen'. Certain yogic practitioners, writes Crowley, are able to

stimulate to the maximum its [ie. sperm’s] generation, and at the same time vigorously withhold by will. After some little exercise they claim that they can deflower as many as eighty virgins in a night without losing a single drop of the *Bindu*. Nor is this ever to be lost, but reabsorbed through the tissues of the body. The organs thus act as a siphon to draw constantly fresh supplies of life from the cosmic reservoir, and flood the body with their fructifying virtue ... in the semen itself exists a physical force which can be turned to [the] magical or mystical ends of the Adept.

Here we have a clear expression of the concept that the individual human will can harness the life-force in semen and direct it to a specific magical purpose. Writings like *Liber Agape* and *Energized Enthusiasm: a Note on Theurgy*, on the other hand, are much more obscure: they contain veiled symbolism and require more detailed scrutiny. *Liber Agape* is also known as *The Book of the Unveiling of the Sangraal* and was intended as ‘a secret instruction of the Ninth degree’ in the O.T.O.

*Liber Agape* begins with a prayer, a salutation to Baphomet and a statement inferring that the Ninth degree of the O.T.O. will reveal occult secrets hitherto associated with the Knights of the Temple (Knights Templar) and the ‘Brethren of the Rose Crosse’. The rite itself is described as a ‘High Mass to be celebrated in the Temple of the Holy Ghost’. Crowley also employs alchemical imagery in his text, making reference to the ‘Medicine of Metals’, ‘the Philosopher’s Stone’, ‘Tinctures White and Red’ and ‘the Elixir of Life’. The latter are clearly intended as sexual images. As mentioned earlier, the Elixir of Life refers to the sexual fluids produced and co-mingled in the vagina through sexual intercourse. The white tincture is also described elsewhere in Crowley’s sex magic writings as the ‘Gluten of the White Eagle’ and is a reference to the sexual fluids (and sometimes also the menstrual blood) of the female participant in sex magic. The red tincture is the ‘Blood of the Red Lion’, a reference to the semen generated by the male participant (Crowley often linked blood symbolically with semen).
Interestingly, *Liber Agape* incorporates within its structure the text of *The Star Sapphire* (previously published as Chapter 36 of *The Book of Lies*) – the short work which Theodor Reuss believed betrayed the innermost secret of the Ninth degree of the O.T.O. (see above). We are fortunate that a commentary on *The Star Sapphire* has recently been made available by American ceremonial magician Frater Osiris, a former member of the O.T.O., who was privy to the inner-Order Thelemic interpretation of the text.\(^{106}\)

While it is clear at the outset that *The Star Sapphire* is intended as a sex-magic tract, and it comes as no surprise that the *Magick Rood* is the phallus, and the *Mystic Rose* is the vagina, it is perhaps less obvious that the reference to ‘make the Holy Hexagram’ is an instruction that the man and woman should interlock their heads and bodies in a mutual oral sex position to form the shape of a hexagram.\(^{107}\) Crowley provides a clue in the aptly numbered Chapter 69 of *The Book of Lies* where he refers to the Holy Hexagram and the ‘Double Gift of Tongues’.\(^{108}\) Frater Osiris explains that ‘Making the Rosy Cross’ is also a reference to sexual intercourse and the participants should utter the magical exclamation ‘*Ararita*’ three times at the moment of orgasm. The instruction ‘Let him drink of the Sacrament and let him communicate the same’ is an instruction that the ‘sacrament’ – the ‘elixir’ or fluids arising from sexual intercourse – should be consumed by both participants, each providing this elixir to the other. As Frater Osiris notes, ‘It is suggested elsewhere in Crowley’s writings that the Sacrament be dissolved and absorbed in the mouth to obtain the fullest effect.’\(^{109}\)

*Energized Enthusiasm: a Note on Theurgy (Liber DCCCLX)* – a work dedicated to ‘IAO, the supreme One of the Gnostics, the true God’\(^{110}\) – is one of Crowley’s most interesting writings on sex magic, combining didactic content with a seemingly autobiographical, yet highly symbolic, narrative written in the first person. Crowley begins by introducing the reader to the idea that divine consciousness is ‘reflected and refracted’ in works of Genius [capitalised in Crowley’s text] and in turn feeds on ‘a certain secretion… analogous to semen, but not identical to it.’\(^{111}\) Later Crowley claims that he can always trace a connection between his sexual state and ‘the condition of [his] artistic creation’ and that what he calls ‘energized enthusiasm’ is ‘the lever that moves God’.\(^{112}\) In other words, there is a technique of ecstasy, heightened by sexuality, which is directly related to artistic creativity and Genius, and this is a technique that subjects God to the artistic intent and human will. We will encounter a similar concept in the artistic and magical trance-method of Austin Osman Spare, described in Chapter Six. Spare was briefly a member of Crowley’s O.T.O.
circa 1910 but seems to have formulated his ideas independently. Both men believed that they could use the transcendent power of the sexual orgasm to subject the visionary universe to their own individual will in order to bring about a desired result – artistic or otherwise. In *Energized Enthusiasm* Crowley writes quite specifically that through ‘the sacramental and ceremonial use of the sexual act, the divine consciousness may be attained’.\(^{113}\)

Later in the same work (which consists of sixteen short chapters) Crowley describes a sex-magick ceremony of the Rose Croix. The ceremony – which is presented in Crowley’s text as taking place in a mystical vision – is a High Mass and is conducted in a private chapel. The altar is covered by a cloth which displays the symbols of the Rose and Cross, and at the entrance of the chapel stand a young man and woman ‘dressed in simple robes of white silk embroidered with gold, red and blue’. The High Priest presiding over the ceremony is a man of about sixty, with a white beard, and he is accompanied by a High Priestess. Both wear richly ornamented robes, have a ‘stately’ presence, and embrace each other. Knights and Dames make up the congregation. The chapel is consecrated, the litany begins, and the High Priest takes from the altar a flask which resembles a phallus – an indication that the ceremony about to be performed has a sexual orientation. The High Priestess then kneels and presents a boat-shaped cup of gold (the cup, as a receptive vessel, being traditionally perceived in the Western esoteric tradition as a ‘female’ symbol, especially in the sexual sense). The High Priest’s flask contains wine that looks like fire but which is cool to drink. Crowley somehow receives this as a sacrament – he is an onlooker at the ceremony and feels he is experiencing this sacred rite while in a mystical out-of-the-body state.\(^{114}\) Crowley writes that he ‘trembles’ as he consumes this sacred drink, as do other members of the congregation – for the ritual is charged with sacred meaning. In due course the celebrants move down the chapel aisle and the Knights and Dames rise up and give the secret sign of the Rose Croix. The High Priestess discards her robe, stands naked before the congregation, and begins to sing: ‘Io Paian! Io Pan!’... A sacred mist now rises up around the participants, heightening the sense of mystery as organ music wafts through the chapel, and the High Priest joins his partner at the altar of the Rose Croix where they both lie down. The celebrants, meanwhile, stretch forth their arms in the shape of a cross...

Presumably the ‘Great Rite’ is about to be performed by the High Priest and High Priestess – Crowley does not provide us with the details of what happens next. However, given (as Frater Osiris has already explained
above) that in the O.T.O. ‘Making the Rosy Cross’ is a reference to ritual sexual intercourse, it would seem that Crowley’s High Mass of the Rose Croix is analogous to the mystic marriage of the alchemical King Sol and Queen Luna who consummate their sacred union and thereby create the ‘Elixir of Life’.  

Crowley’s Thelemic sex-magick ritual, the *Gnostic Mass* (*Liber XV, Ecclesiae Gnosticae Catholicae Canon Missae*), composed in 1913, is linked thematically to *Energized Enthusiasm* and was written around the same time.  

The *Gnostic Mass* – Crowley’s *Thelemic* (and perhaps also blasphemous) response to the Roman Catholic Eucharist – employs specific sexual motifs and draws on the theme of transubstantiation. Although other minor characters play a part, the Mass focuses on two central figures, the Priest, who bears the Sacred Lance (a symbol of the phallus) and the Priestess, who in this ritual context is deemed to be ‘Virgo Intacta’ and is identified symbolically with the Holy Graal (the sacred Cup). During the ‘Consecration of the Elements’, the Priest gives a blessing and oversees the transubstantiation of the ‘cakes of light’ (‘By the virtue of the Rod / Be this bread the Body of God!’) and wine (‘By the virtue of the Rod / Be this wine the Blood of God’), and during the ‘Mystic Marriage and Consummation’ the Priest and Priestess jointly lower the Sacred Lance into Cup in a symbolic expression of sexual union. All congregants then partake of the consecrated ‘cakes of light’ which contain the sexual elixir and which are said to embody ‘the essence of the life of the Sun’.  

*The Mass of the Phoenix* (*Liber XLIV*), by way of contrast, is a simplified form of the Eucharist intended for daily life by the practising Thelemic magician. Despite its simpler form Crowley nevertheless considered it to be just as significant as the *Gnostic Mass*. *The Mass of the Phoenix* derives its name from the mythical phoenix, an alchemical symbol of transmutation and resurrection. The phoenix was said to feed its young on blood drawn from its own breast. First published as Chapter 44 of *The Book of Lies* (1912), the Mass is performed only at sunset and is undertaken as a solitary ceremonial activity. At the climax of the ritual the magician makes the Mark of the Beast on his (or her) breast, either drawing blood directly with a burin (a small sharp knife) or by cutting a finger and inscribing the sign in blood. A cake of light is used to staunch the blood and is then ritually consumed.  

Crowley’s most controversial work on sex magic, however, is a short four-page article titled *Emblems and Modes of Use*, which was intended as a ‘secret’ text for the Ninth degree of the O.T.O. Once again, Crowley
utilises alchemical imagery, writing that the ‘Egg’ (Emblem 1) is borne by the ‘menstruum [that] the Alchemists call the Gluten [capitals in Crowley’s text]. The Egg will be fertilized by the ‘Serpent’ (Emblem 2). Crowley says that the Serpent is ‘the principle of immortality, the self renewal through incarnation, of persistent will, inherent in the “Red Lion” who is, of course, the operator’ [My italics – Crowley generally presents his magickal texts from the viewpoint of the male practitioner, even when a woman is involved]. Crowley writes that ‘both Lion and Eagle must be robust, in good health…overflowing with energy, magnetically attracted to one another, and in absolute understanding [and] harmony about the object of the operation’.125

According to Crowley the sex magick operation has to be sufficiently intense that it creates a state of ‘Black-Out’ where ‘the Ego-consciousness itself is abolished’.126 This is remarkably similar to Austin Spare’s notion of the ‘Void moment’ which is described in Chapter Six. At this stage, notes Crowley,

the Will should still continue to create, stopping only when ‘the blood of the Red Lion’ [ie. semen] is one with the ‘Gluten of the White Eagle’ and the ‘Serpent’ and the ‘Egg’ have fused completely. The result of this fusion is called the Elixir – and numerous other names, eg. The Stone of the Philosophers, the Medicine of the Metals etc., especially the Quintessence.127

It would seem from this statement that Crowley believes the symbolism of medieval Alchemy – a key branch of the Western esoteric tradition – should be interpreted primarily in sexual terms. For him the elixir itself has innate magical potency. From a purely pragmatic point of view, it can be used to achieve specific magical outcomes and therefore becomes useful in the practice of sorcery:

The Lion must collect it – the best method is by suction [ie., sucking it out of his partner’s vagina] so as to avoid waste, and share it with the Eagle. It should be absorbed by the mucous membrane [ie through the upper palate of the mouth, rather than swallowed]. A portion is reserved and placed in physical contact with the magickal link, or with a talisman specially prepared for the Operation, and consecrated accordingly. At the very least, some suitable symbol, eg. if you are making an opus for $$ smear the Elixir on a gold coin, or ring; if for health, touch the bare earth, or the patient with it. In any case, be careful to consume it by absorption for it restores with interest any virtue that may have been expended in the work itself.128

This is not the only occasion where Crowley refers to the idea of the elixir, or semen, being used to achieve specific magical outcomes. In another
short text, *Liber A’Aash vel Capricorni Pneumatici (Liber CCCLXX)* – which is recognised as a major (Class A) sex magic document by members of the O.T.O.\(^{129}\) Crowley makes a veiled reference to masturbating on demonic sigils by using the magical utterance as a metaphor for ejaculation:

> Let him sit and conjure; let him draw back the hood from his head and fix his basilisk eye upon the sigil of the demon. Then let him sway the force of him to and fro like a satyr in silence, until the Word burst from his throat… that which floodeth him is the infinite mercy of the Genitor-Genitrix of the Universe, whereof he is the Vessel.\(^{130}\)

Crowley’s idea that the elixir could be used to activate magical talismans and demonic sigils must have become known to a select number of magical practitioners within the O.T.O. because the same technique surfaces again many years later in the relationship between Eugene Goossens and Rosaleen Norton: this time it is Goossens who wishes to instruct Norton in the sex-magic practice of masturbating on demonic magical seals (or sigils) from the *Goetia* (see Chapter Five). Goossens presumably learned this technique of sorcery from his close friend Philip Heseltine, who was a member of the O.T.O.\(^{131}\) and first met Crowley around 1914, during the period when these sex-magick teachings were first being formulated.\(^{132}\) As far as we know, Goossens himself was not a member of this Thelemite organisation.

**Sex Magic and ‘Spermo-Gnosis’ prior to the O.T.O.**

As mentioned above, within the context of the Western esoteric tradition the practice of sex magic precedes both Carl Kellner and Theodor Reuss and the establishment of the O.T.O. Several scholars, among them Hugh B. Urban (2006), John Deveney (1997), Joselyn Godwin (1995) and J. Gordon Melton (1985), have drawn attention to the unique contribution made by the influential American occultist Paschal Beverly Randolph (1825-75). Randolph is significant because, as Melton puts it: ‘Like Crowley, Randolph discovered the essential aspect of sex magick by suddenly combining long-term interests in sexuality and the occult.’\(^{133}\) The bridging link between Randolph and the O.T.O. is provided by two American esoteric orders, the Hermetic Brotherhood of Luxor, and Randolph’s Brotherhood of Eulis.

Born in New York in 1825, Paschal Beverly Randolph was the son of a wealthy Virginian named William Randolph, and a slave woman named Flora Beverly who was of mixed East Indian, European and Madagascan
descent. Flora raised her son by herself in a ‘gloomy old stone house on Manhattan Island’. However when Randolph was five, his mother died during an epidemic and he was placed in an orphanage. Essentially.

Growing up on his own, Randolph taught himself to read and write by copying letters from printed posters and billboards. Classified as a ‘free man of colour’, he trained as a natural physician and also studied spiritualism and Franz Anton Mesmer’s theory of ‘animal magnetism’, a precursor of modern hypnosis. Randolph worked for the Abolitionist cause before the Civil War and helped raise money for the Black Militias of Louisiana. He also gained a reputation as a trance speaker and spiritualist medium. During the late 1840s he travelled widely in Europe, visiting England, Scotland, Ireland, France and Malta as well as also visiting Egypt, Turkey and Palestine. Intent on seeking out the sources of esoteric wisdom wherever he could find them, Randolph maintained that he received many high initiations while he was in Europe. During his travels he met the famous French Kabbalist and magician, Eliphas Lévi, whose writings and occult ideas would later greatly influence the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn (see Chapter Two). He also met the notable Rosicrucian occultists Kenneth R.H. Mackenzie and Edward Bulwer-Lytton and the eccentric cleric and Rosicrucian historian Hargrave Jennings (1817-1890), who was interested in ancient phallic worship. After returning to the United States, Randolph founded the Fraternitas Rosae Crucis in 1858, the oldest Rosicrucian organization in North America (currently headquartered in Beverly Hall, Quakertown, Pennsylvania). In 1861, after returning to Europe, Randolph was
initiated into the Order of the Rose, a group headed by Hargrave Jennings. He then travelled on to Syria where he was inducted as a Hierarch of the Ansaireh before returning to the United States in 1863.142

Randolph explored clairvoyant scrying143 with magic mirrors and also wrote a treatise on the use of hashish as an aid to trance possession (1860). However he became a controversial figure largely because of his ideas on occult sexuality, expressed publicly at a time when such issues were largely a taboo subject. Randolph’s Rosicrucian activities were interrupted during the Civil War period but in 1870 he re-established his Rosicrucian organisation in Boston, calling it the Brotherhood of Eulis and using it as a vehicle to explore sex magic.144 Three years later Randolph published one of his best-known and most controversial books, Eulis! The History of Love: Its Wondrous Magic, Chemistry, Rules, Laws, Modes, Moods and Rationale, Being the Third Revelation of Soul and Sex.145

In Eulis! – which derives its title ultimately from the Greek eos, meaning ‘the dawn, the gate of light’146 – Randolph provides an account of how he was first initiated into the mysteries of sex magic while travelling in the Middle East:

One night – it was in far-off Jerusalem or Bethlehem, I really forget which – I made love to… a dusky maiden of Arabic blood. I of her and that experience learned… the fundamental principle of the White Magic of Love; subsequently I became affiliated with some dervishes and fakirs by whom… I found the road to other knowledges… I am became practically… a mystic and in time chief of the lofty brethren… discovering the ELIXIR OF LIFE, the universal Solvent… and the philosopher’s stone.147

Basing his ideas substantially on the ritual sex practices of the Islamic Nusairi sect in Syria, Randolph came to believe that the sexual instinct was a fundamental force in the cosmos. Randolph maintained that ‘the pellucid aroma of divinity’ suffuses the sex act148 but he also believed that sexual union could become a metaphysical and sacred ritual only between married loving couples and only when it resulted in full and complete orgasms for both partners.149 Many years before Crowley and Austin Spare (see Chapter Seven), Randolph proposed that the sexual orgasm could be used to gain practical and tangible outcomes, that is to say, subject to willed intent, the power of sexuality could be harnessed to produce specific magical results:150

It follows that as are the people at that moment [orgasm] so will be that which enters into them from the regions above, beneath, and round about; wherefore, whatsoever
male or female shall truly will for, hopefully pray for, and earnestly yearn for, when
love, pure and holy, is in the nuptive ascendent, in form, passional, affectional,
divine and volitional, that prayer will be granted, and the boon given. But the prayer
must precede [the moment of orgasm]. 151

In another text, The Ansairetic Mystery: A New Revelation Concerning Sex!
(circa 1873-74), which was circulated privately to his Rosicrucian
followers, Randolph lists over a hundred outcomes that he believed could
be achieved or resolved through this type of sex magic. They include topics
and issues relating to money matters, marital discord, prolonging life,
eliminating disease and charging amulets with life-force. 152 Randolph was
unstinting in proclaiming the potency of sexuality but warned that it could
lead to both highs and lows in the quest for spiritual awakening:

The ejective moment…is the most divine and tremendously important one in the
human career as an independent entity, for not only may we launch Genius, Power,
Beauty, Deformity, Crime, Idiocy, Shame or Glory on the world’s great sea of Life,
in the person of the children we may then produce, but we may plunge our own
souls neck-deep in Hell’s horrid slime, or else mount the Azure as coequal associate
Gods; for then the mystic Soul swings wide its Golden gates, opens its portals to the
whole vast Universe and through them come trooping either Angels of Light or the
Grizzly Presence from the dark corners of the Spaces. Therefore, human copulation
is either ascenitive and ennobling, or descensive and degrading…” 153

Superficially, Randolph’s theories of sex magic and tangible outcomes
seem to mirror those of Aleister Crowley, described earlier. However,
Randolph’s interpretation of sex magic was actually very different from
Crowley’s. Randolph deplored masturbation and homosexuality and other
forms of non-reproductive sexuality154 and believed that sacred sex could
only occur between a loving heterosexual husband and wife. Randolph’s
approach essentially involved love among equals, whereas Crowley
sometimes employed prostitutes or other available women who were not
personally committed to his magical purpose and who were used purely for
sex. 155 Crowley’s magical episode with Victor Neuburg in Algeria
involving homosexual anal sex (referred to above) was also an act of ritual
sexual submission by Crowley and would therefore have failed Randolph’s
criteria on at least two counts.

Randolph seems to have been far more averse than Crowley to the negative
[or Qliphothic] realms of primal consciousness that could be unleashed
through what Randolph regarded as misplaced acts of sex magic.
Nevertheless, Randolph and Crowley would certainly have agreed that the
orgasm itself was among the most powerful and profound of all human
experiences, 156 and Randolph would also have agreed with Crowley’s
statement in *Energized Enthusiasm* (1913) that through ‘the sacramental…use of the sexual act, the divine consciousness may be attained’. For both men, sexuality was a vital key to potency and transcendence.

Robert North, who contributed an introduction to the 1988 edition of Randolph’s *Sexual Magic*, maintains that Carl Kellner derived many of the O.T.O. teachings directly from Randolph’s instructions for the Brotherhood of Eulis. However, other writers, including T. Allen Greenfield (2003), Samuel Scarborough (2001) and Joscelyn Godwin (1994), believe it was the Hermetic Brotherhood of Luxor – which in turn drew on Randolph’s sex magic teachings – that was probably the specific connecting link between Randolph, Kellner and Reuss.

The Hermetic Brotherhood of Luxor was founded in 1870 by the Polish mystic Max Théon (1848-1927). Théon was interested in Hermeticism and looked to ancient Egypt as the source of the Western esoteric tradition. However he was also highly eclectic, embracing the Kabbalah, the Rig-Veda, Tantrism, and elements of Freemasonry. For a time he lived in Algeria, where he formulated what he referred to as the Cosmic Tradition and took the mystical name Aia Aziz (‘the beloved’). In 1873 Théon recruited the Scottish occultist and Freemason Peter Davidson (1837-1915), a close friend and colleague of Dr Gerard Encausse (also known as Papus – see Chapter Two), to join him in administering the Brotherhood. As an initiatory organisation the Hermetic Brotherhood of Luxor first became public in London in 1884, even though it had been in existence since 1870 and its initiations – based on Rosicrucian and Masonic principles – resembled those of the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn, established
several years later. Théon took the role of Grand Master of the Exterior Circle of the Order while Davidson was appointed Provincial Grand Master of the North (Scotland) and later also the Eastern Section (America). Together, Théon and Davidson made extensive use of ancient Egyptian symbolism in their magical ceremonies. This symbolic emphasis was further developed by Thomas H. Burgoyne (1855-1895), who joined the Hermetic Brotherhood of Luxor in 1883 and helped Théon and Davidson run the organisation from this time on. The early curriculum of the Hermetic Brotherhood also included selections from the writings of the Rosicrucian author Hargrave Jennings as well as Paschal Beverly Randolph. During the 1880s and 1890s Davidson and Burgoyne adapted Randolph’s *The Mysteries of Eros* and *Eulis!,* thereby placing more emphasis on practical sex magic in the Brotherhood’s curriculum. It seems likely that it is through the reworking of Randolph’s sex magic concepts in the Hermetic Brotherhood of Luxor, and in particular through Davidson’s close association with Papus in Europe, that Randolph’s sex magic teachings eventually attracted the attention of Reuss and Kellner. According to P-R. Koenig, Reuss first made contact with Papus in 1901.

Nevertheless, as indicated earlier, there is something of a gulf between Randolph’s version of sex magic as the ‘White Magic of Love’ and the homo-erotic approach to sex magic advocated by Reuss and Crowley in the O.T.O. Clearly, Randolph cannot be considered the only major precursor of Crowley’s Thelemic sex magick since there are major aspects of Crowley’s occult doctrine that are entirely absent in Randolph’s writings and philosophy. It is necessary to explore other sources entirely – sources much closer to the origins of the Western esoteric tradition itself – and it comes as no surprise that some of Crowley’s libertine mystical and sex-magick ideas are mirrored quite specifically in the ritual practices of certain heretical Gnostic sects whose origins date back to the early centuries of the Christian era. These include the Gnostic sects that Mircea Eliade refers to as...
to as *Pneumatikoi* and O.T.O. historian P-R. Koenig calls ‘Spermo-Gnostics’.

One of the most intriguing elements in the rise of Gnosticism during the early Christian era was the concept that spiritual redemption could be attained by collecting, salvaging, and carrying to heaven the sparks of divine light that were buried in living matter – primarily within the human body. Eliade notes that

the equation divine light = *pneuma* [Greek: ‘spirit’] = semen plays a central role only among the Phibionites (and sects related to them) and among the Manicheans. But while the latter, on the ground of this very equation, scorned the sexual act and exalted a severe asceticism, the Phibionites extolled the most abject sexual orgies and practised the sacramental absorption of *semen virile* and menstrual fluids, careful only to avoid pregnancy.

Despite the overt sensuality of their sexual rituals, the Syrian Phibionites regarded themselves as Christian Gnostics: they believed that the divine power of the crucified Son had been trapped within the physical confines of the material world. The Phibionites also believed they were giving true expression to their Christian beliefs by releasing this spiritual power during their sacred rituals without creating more children in the process – from their perspective, pregnancy and the act of giving birth would trap more souls within the painful constrictions of physical existence. For them, consuming semen and menstrual blood during the Eucharist was a purer form of ritual communion than the more conventional symbolism of blood and wine.

The practices of the Phibionites are described in the *Panarion*, written by the 4th century Christian writer, Epiphanius:

The power, which is in menstruation and in the sperm they called *psyche*, which would be gathered and eaten. And whatever we eat, flesh or vegetables or bread or anything else, we do a favour to the creatures because we gather the psyche from everything…And they say that it is the same psyche which is dispersed in animals and beasts, fishes, snakes, men, vegetables, trees and anything that is produced.

Epiphanius was clearly horrified by what he describes as the ‘shameless’ sexual practices of the Phibionites:

…they serve rich food, meat and wine even if they are poor. When they thus ate together and so to speak filled up their veins, from the surplus of their strength they turn to excitements. The man, leaving his wife, says to his own wife: ‘Stand up and make love with the brother (‘Perform the *agapē* with the brother’). Then the
unfortunates unite with each other, and as I am truly ashamed to say the shameful things that are being done by them... nevertheless I will not be ashamed to say those things which they are not ashamed to do, in order that I may cause in every way a horror in those who hear about their shameful practices. After they have intercourse in the passion of fornication they raise their own blasphemy toward heaven. The woman and the man take the fluid of emission of the man into their hands, they stand, turn toward heaven, their hands besmeared with the uncleanness, and pray as the people called Stratiotikoi and Gnostikoi, bringing to the Father of the Nature of All, that which they have on their hands, and they say: ‘We offer to thee this gift, the body of Christ.’ And then they eat it, their own ignominy, and say: ‘This is the body of Christ and this is the Passover for the sake of which our bodies suffer and are forced to confess the suffering of Christ.’ Similarly also with the woman: when she happens to be in the flowing of the blood they gather the blood of menstruation of her uncleanness and eat it together and say: ‘This is the blood of Christ.’

The Phibionite ritual of consuming menstrual blood and semen is mirrored in Crowley’s sex magick practice of consuming ‘cakes of light’, which contained precisely the same key ingredients (based on the instructions conveyed to Crowley by Aiwass in 1904, as recorded in The Book of the Law). As with the Phibionites, Crowley included the consumption of sacramental ‘cakes of light’ in both his Gnostic Mass and also in the Mass of the Phoenix (see above), and it is clear that Crowley intended that in these magickal ceremonies the ‘cakes of light’ should serve as an alternative to the Body of Christ consumed by congregants during Christian communion. Although Crowley does not mention the Phibionites specifically in his writings, he nevertheless believed he was perpetuating the Gnostic tradition through such ceremonies, and for him the ritual consumption of blood and semen was a sacred act. According to the text of the Gnostic Mass, consecrated ‘cakes of light’ contain the sexual elixir and therefore embody ‘the essence of the life of the Sun’.

The surviving papers of Theodor Reuss show that the sex magic practices incorporated within the O.T.O. by its founder also had an essentially ‘Spermo-Gnostic’ orientation, and that this was linked to the mystical legend of the Holy Grail. According to P-R.Koenig,

The whole body was considered divine (the Temple of the Holy Ghost) and the sexual organs were meant to fulfil a peculiar function: a Holy Mass was the symbolic act of re-creating the universe. The root belief is that only by co-operation between man and woman can either advance spiritually. Sexually joining is a shadow of the cosmic act of creation. Performed by adepts, the union of male and female approaches more closely the primal act and partakes of its divine nature… The central secret of his Ordo Templi Orientis was built around Richard Wagner’s Parsifal. The spear became the phallus while the Graal, of course, was the vagina which contained the ‘Grals-speise’ (sperm and vaginal fluids).
The O.T.O. after Crowley

When Crowley died in 1947 he was succeeded as Head of the O.T.O. by his former representative in Germany, Karl Germer (1885-1962). At this time the focus of the O.T.O. had already begun to shift to the United States, the organization of its European affiliates having become fragmented and dispersed as a result of the impact of World War Two. At the end of the war in 1945 only the Agapé Lodge of the O.T.O. in Pasadena was still actively functioning: this was a lodge established in the 1930s by Wilfred Talbot Smith (1885-1957), a loyal Thelemite who had first met Crowley in Vancouver in 1915, and Jane Wolfe (1875-1958), who had stayed at Crowley’s sex-magick Abbey at Cefalu, Sicily, in the early 1920s. After Crowley’s will was probated, Germer received most of the materials from Crowley’s estate and took them to his home in Westpoint, California – various court proceedings have since determined that Crowley’s copyrights are held legally by the U.S. Grand Lodge of the O.T.O. which now seeks to control publication of Crowley’s works around the world.

In Britain the thrust of Crowley’s Thelemic teachings continued under the enthusiastic leadership of Kenneth Grant (1924 - ). Following Crowley’s
Death, Germer charted a British branch of the O.T.O. under Grant but then expelled him in July 1955 for associating with a rival O.T.O. offshoot, the Fraternitas Saturni, and circulating a new, unauthorised O.T.O. manifesto. Grant now heads the so-called Typhonian O.T.O., which is not legally connected to the American O.T.O. and has since become very much a rival occult organisation.

Grant first met Crowley at Netherwood, Hastings (UK), in December 1944 and worked with him for a brief period as his secretary. Grant has since emerged as one of Crowley’s most notable Thelemic disciples. A prolific author in his own right, Grant has released a number of important volumes on the Western esoteric tradition, several of them highly significant in relation to the occult source areas explored by Rosaleen Norton. These works provide important insights into the magic of the Left-Hand Path and cover such subject areas as the Qliphothic realms of the Kabbalistic Tree of Life, Tantric sex magic, and the practical applications of Kundalini yoga, all of which are central to any understanding of Norton’s magical orientation and artistic oeuvre. Grant has also produced important publications on the visionary artist Austin Osman Spare (1886-1956), whom he knew personally, from 1949 onwards. The parallels between the trance magic and visionary art of Spare and Rosaleen Norton are described in detail in Chapter Six.

Grant’s occult perspective is especially significant because it affirms the esoteric connection between Indian Tantra, Gnosticism and what he calls the Draconian, Ophidian and Typhonian currents in modern sex magick. In 1948 Grant published a Manifesto of the British Branch of the Ordo Templi Orientis in which he claimed that the Order promulgated a range of esoteric practices spanning both the Western and Eastern esoteric traditions:

In the O.T.O. are promulgated the essential teachings of the Draconian Tradition of Ancient Egypt; the teachings of the Indian Shakta Tantra Shastra; the teachings of the pre-Christian Gnosis; the Initiated Western Tradition as enshrined in the mysteries of the Holy Qabalah, and the Alchemical Mystical and Magical Formulae of the Arcane Schools of the age long past, as well as the mode of applying practically the essential principles underlying the Spagyric or Hermetic Sciences, the Orphic Mysteries and the use of the Ophidian Current.

Crowley was sufficiently impressed by Grant’s research into the subject of sex magick that he admitted him to the Ninth degree of the O.T.O. and this initiation was complemented by secret Tantric instructions from another occultist, David Curwen, who had become a Ninth degree member.
of the Order in 1945. According to Grant, Curwen’s instructions convinced him that Crowley did not fully appreciate the significance of the female sexual fluids (kalas) which, together with the male fluids, form the basis of the ‘elixir’ in Thelemic sex magick. The contemporary Thelemic practitioner Frater Zephyros elaborates on this theme in a recent article titled ‘The Ophidian Current’, which fuses the sex-magick doctrines of Grant and Crowley with references to the chakras, or spiritual energy centres in the body, that are awakened by the Kundalini serpent in Tantric yoga:

The formula and function of the Scarlet Woman starts with zones of occult energy intimately related to the network of nerves and plexuses associated with the endocrine glands. Kundalini energy affects the chakras in her body … and its vibrations influence the chemical composition of her glandular secretions. Such fragrances are devoured by the Priest and transmuted into magickal energy. …

Kalas [genital secretions] may only be evoked into a chakra that has been properly prepared… Consuming the kalas charged with the upwardly directed currents (nectar) transforms consciousness and makes it possible to contact and communicate with transcendental entities…

For the female to arouse the Kundalini, she visualizes the Serpent in phallic form in the Mulhadara chakra and inflames herself to the point of orgasm. Yet before orgasm, she must move to the Ajna chakra. Then she must maintain the image until consummation occurs. The male must proceed by identifying Kundalini with Hadit and the Cerebral Centre with Nuit [the Egyptian deities involved in Crowley’s Thelemic revelation]. The Hadit force is awakened and forces its way up the spinal column past all the sealed chakras into the cerebral centre [ie. Ajna].

The significance of Grant’s Typhonian O.T.O. is that through its occult doctrines and practices it seeks to reaffirm the importance of the Tantric tradition both within Western sex magick specifically, and also within the Western esoteric tradition as a whole. Interestingly, this relationship between magick and Tantra is something that Rosaleen Norton also understood, acting independently and drawing on her practical knowledge of Kundalini Yoga while exploring various states of magical consciousness.

**Kundalini Yoga and Tantra**

The word ‘yoga’ derives from the Sanskrit *yuj*, meaning ‘to bind’ or ‘to
yoke’ and the essential aim of yoga is union with the Godhead, Brahman. The Sanskrit word *kundalini* translates literally as ‘of spiral nature’, while the Sanskrit word *tantra* (‘weft, context, continuum’) refers to the nature of energy and power in the universe. In *Tantra: The Yoga of Sex*, Omar Garrison provides a concise overview of the philosophy associated with Tantra:

The broad, underlying foundation of Tantra philosophy may be summarised briefly as follows: The universe and everything in it is permeated by a secret energy or power, emanating from the single Source of all being. This power, although singular in essence, manifests in three ways, namely, as static inertia, dynamic inertia or mental energy, and as harmonious union of these reacting opposites. The universe or macrocosm through which these modalities of cosmic force function is exactly duplicated by the human form as microcosm. The Tantrik [sic] seeks, therefore, by mystic formulae, rites and symbols, to identify the corresponding centres of his own body with those of the macrocosm. Ultimately, he seeks union with God Himself.

Agehananda Bharati, an authority on the different branches of Tantra, distinguishes between guru-oriented, meditative yoga and Tantra *per se*, by drawing attention to the focus on a sexual partner in the Tantric tradition:

Orthodox yoga, that is the system of Patanjali and his protagonists, teaches the ascent of the dormant, coiled-up force as a process induced in the individual adept after due instruction by his own guru, and as a procedure in which the adept practises in solitude. The tantric’s practice, however, is undertaken in conjunction with a partner of the other sex. She is considered as the embodiment of Sakti [Shakti], the active principle conceived as female, by the Hindus...

In the Tantric tradition of Kundalini Yoga this sexual partnership is expressed as the merging of two opposites – Shiva and Shakti – who represent the male and female polarities of existence respectively. While the Higher Self (Atman) is represented in Kundalini Yoga as male, all created forms, all manifestations of life energy, intelligence, will, thoughts and feelings, are considered to be female, and as such are aspects of Shakti. As the Great Goddess, Shakti encompasses three *gunas*, or characteristics of creation, known as *sattva* (purity), *rajas* (activity) and *tamas* (inertia) as well as the five elements from which the universe is formed. Swami Sivananda Sarasvati provides an eloquent summation:

She [Shakti] is the primal force of life that underlies all existence. She vitalises the body through her energy. She is the energy in the Sun, the fragrance in the flowers, the beauty in the landscape… the whole world is her body. Mountains are her bones. Rivers are her veins. Ocean is her bladder. Sun and Moon are her eyes. Wind is her breath. Agni is her mouth.
Kundalini Yoga encompasses many different techniques, including the use of mantras, visualisation and breath control, in order to activate specific chakras [chakra: Sanskrit, ‘wheel’] or spiritual centres, in the body. These chakras can be listed as follows:

Plate 39: Kundalini Yoga chakras

First chakra: Muladhara, located at the base of the spine, near the coccyx
Second chakra: Svadisthana, located below the navel in the sacral region
Third chakra: Manipura, located above the navel in the lumbar region
Fourth chakra: Anahata, located near the heart
Fifth chakra: Visuddha, located in the throat
Sixth chakra: Ajna, located between the eyebrows
Seventh chakra: Sahasrara, located above the crown of the head

Different goddess-manifestations of Shakti are ascribed to the first six chakras. In addition, Kundalini Yoga assigns the so-called Tattva motifs associated with each of the elements, Earth, Water, Fire, Air and Spirit, to the first five chakras.

Kundalini Yoga identifies a potentially cosmic process within every yogic practitioner: manifestations of the Hindu gods and goddesses are said to lie within the energy matrices of the human organism and the purpose of Kundalini Yoga is to bring them to life, unleashing their energy through the nadiş [nadi: Sanskrit: ‘tube’, ‘vessel’], or spiritual channels in the body. The principal channel through which the Shakti energy can be awakened is via a nadi which passes through each of the seven chakras referred to above,
extending from Muladhara at the base of the spine to Sahasrara located just above the crown of the head. This energy-channel is known in Kundalini Yoga as *Sushumna* and corresponds to the central nervous system in the human body. Around the Sushumna are coiled two other major channels: Pingala – which is symbolically masculine and associated with the heat of the Sun – and Ida, which is symbolically feminine and is represented by the cool, reflected light of the Moon. As Ida and Pingala coil themselves around the Sushumna, they meet in the lowest chakra energy centre in the body, Muladhara, and again in the sixth centre, Ajna. The essential meditative task in Kundalini Yoga is to ‘raise’ the energy of the Goddess Shakti so she may once again be united with her consort Lord Shiva in the supreme bliss of *Samadhi*. This occurs in the supreme chakra, Sahasrara, which is considered Shiva’s domain. This chakra is associated with the experience of Brahman or ‘One-ness’.

The Tantric practice of Kundalini Yoga focuses on the mystical properties of energy and this in turn is reflected in the ritual use of mantras (energy as sound) and in meditations employing specific colours in relation to each chakra (energy as light). It is also demonstrated by the symbolic dance of Shiva and Shakti as they unite one with the other, dissolving old forms and creating the universe anew (energy as movement). The chakras themselves are conceived as sources of subtle energy depicted as ‘wheels’ (the literal meaning of the Sanskrit word *chakra*) or as lotuses (*padma*). As yogic practitioner Madhav Pandit has noted, the meditative process in Kundalini Yoga involves ‘flowing’ from one chakra to the next by visualising each Tattva (or element) in turn, dissolving it in the associated mantra vibration, and then merging it with the next Tattva in sequence. The five Tattva elements – Earth, Water, Fire, Air and Spirit – are associated with the first five chakras. No element is ascribed to the transcendent sixth chakra, Ajna, which is considered the seat of all spiritual knowledge. Shakti is united with her consort, Lord Shiva, in the seventh chakra, Sahasrara, which is located above the crown of the head, just outside the physical body and beyond the realm of human awareness. This is a sacred union represented by the symbolism of mystical androgyny for, as Swami Sivananda Radha notes: ‘In the Kundalini symbolism, the union of Siva [Shiva] and Sakti [Shakti] is presented in one body, not as two bodies united. Lord Siva ultimately becomes half-man and half-woman indicating that power and its manifestations are inseparable.'

The sacred union of Shiva and Shakti within the One-ness of Brahman can also be considered a mystery for, according to the Tantric tradition, at this point all aspects of form and creative manifestation are transcended. As the
psychologist C.G. Jung has written, Sahasrara represents a ‘philosophical concept with no substance whatever for us – it is beyond any possible experience’.  

**Magic and the Left-Hand Path in Tantra**  
In *The Art of Rosaleen Norton*, Norton defines the Kundalini as the ‘undifferentiated elemental and potential creative power of the Self, generally symbolised as a Serpent, and traditionally associated with the spinal cord’. She goes on to state:

> When latent it manifests only sporadically and partially in the sex force and sometimes as artistic or inventive creativity. Active, it confers supernormal powers in various directions.

Given Norton’s reference to ‘supernormal powers’ it is reasonable to assume that her interest in Kundalini yoga would have been primarily to explore the practical applications of Tantra in awakening heightened occult, sexual and creative sources of energy and inspiration. Indeed, in the text which accompanies Plate XXX in *The Art of Rosaleen Norton*, titled *At Home*, Norton makes reference to the Kundalini in a specifically
magical context. Here she writes that Kundalini ‘sometimes assumes the shape of a serpent’ and is ‘my most powerful Familiar’ [capitals in Norton’s text], a ‘familiar’ being a spirit-helper who, in the medieval witchcraft tradition, accompanies the witch or warlock and provides its mistress or master with magical powers and occult knowledge.

**Tantra and Thelemic sex magick**

It is clear from data provided earlier that Norton was extremely interested in the magical writings of Aleister Crowley and that she had access to rare and relatively obscure works that Crowley published in England. One of Sir Eugene Goossens’ letters to Norton makes coded reference to a second-hand copy of ‘G.B.’ that Goossens had acquired for her; it is very likely that this was John Symonds’ biography of Crowley, *The Great Beast*, first published in London in 1951. The same letter also makes reference to ‘cakes of light’, a specific reference to Aleister Crowley’s practice of sex magick described earlier. We know that while he was on one of his many overseas trips to Europe Goossens purchased masks for use in ritual magic activities at Brougham Street, and that he also acquired a special magical ‘unguent’ in Paris for Norton to apply to her body, so it is highly likely that Goossens also acquired some of the rarer works by Crowley for Norton while he was on various overseas trips to London. In this context it is useful to consider Crowley’s perspective on the magical applications of Tantra, especially in relation to sex magic, which was of considerable interest both to Norton and Goossens.

Lawrence Sutin, author of a recent biography of Aleister Crowley, believes that Crowley’s first reference to sex magic is recorded in a diary titled *The Writings of Truth* which was later published in a modified form in his *Temple of Solomon the King*. It was while visiting his friend and former Golden Dawn colleague Allan Bennett (*Frater Iehi Aour*) in Ceylon in 1901 that Crowley was tutored for the first time in yoga. Bennett had left the world of ceremonial magic behind in England and had come to Ceylon to become a Buddhist monk. Bennett was willing to share his practical knowledge of yoga with his friend and together they rented a furnished bungalow in the hills near Kandy for a period of several months so Crowley could be shown the yogic techniques.

Crowley’s diary entries in *The Writings of Truth* record that during his stay in Kandy he practised yogic *pranayama* (control of prana, or life-energy, utilising breathing techniques) and that he had also been exploring
vamacharya, a form of ‘Left-Hand Path’ Tantra devoted to licentious rites and sexual debauchery. Sutin writes:

This reference to vamacharya is most important, as it documents his [ie.Crowley’s] first known foray into ritual sexual magic. This Sanskrit term refers to a Hindu tantric practice of sexual intercourse that could – if the spiritual aspirations were untainted by lust – re-enact the cosmic coupling of Shiva and Shakti... In tantric tradition vamacharya is the ‘left-hand path’ that involves physical intercourse with a woman (vama) as partner, while the ‘right-hand path’ of dakshinachara enacts a symbolic intercourse.’

In Tantra: The Way of Action, occult historian and ceremonial magician Francis King describes the ritual procedure adopted in left-handed Tantra:

The rite proper begins with the worshippers gathered in a circle, seated on the ground, man alternating with woman, the woman on the left of each man being his intended sexual partner – hence, of course, the term left-handed Tantra. At the centre of the circle stands the male adept who will conduct the ceremony, the ‘priest’, and near him sits or lies a naked woman, or ‘priestess’. For tantrics all women are holy – as one text has it ‘every woman is your image, O Shakti, you reside in the forms of all women in this world’ – but for the duration of the rite the priestess, the woman at the centre of the circle who is to be the sexual partner of the officiating adept, is considered especially holy, a particular manifestation of Shakti. As such her vulva is peculiarly sacred, a symbol of her creative power which sustains the universe, and it is displayed as fully as possible to the assembled congregation, the priestess lying or sitting with her legs held wide apart.

Before the Tantric rite itself can commence, however, certain purificatory procedures have to take place:

...the body of the priestess is ritually cleansed by being sprinkled with wine and consecrated ‘holy water’, and then Shakti is invoked into that body by the priest. This latter is done by the priest gently caressing her head, trunk and limbs while muttering or chanting invocations. Almost every part of the body receives these caresses but particular attention is paid to the vulva, which has an aromatic sandalwood paste applied to it, is lightly kissed, and is then, as the supreme expression of the nature of the Goddess, the recipient of symbolic sacrifice – that is to say libations of water, wine, or coconut milk are poured over it or on the ground beneath it.... The priestess is now looked upon as being deified, for the time being an avatar of Shakti.

Within this ritual context the Shakti priestess is venerated by the entire assembled group but the priest himself has a specific sexual role:

The ritual worship of the priestess is often immediately followed by her copulation with the priest, the assembled worshippers devoutly observing what is regarded as a sacred action, a physical expression of the eternal embrace of Shiva and Shakti.
sexual coupling is regarded as holy and so are the participants, but only as manifestations of Shiva and Shakti [King’s emphasis in italics] 222.

King also comments further on the distinction between left-handed and right-handed Tantra, noting that in the first instance the ritual sexual coupling actually takes place, whereas in the latter case it is symbolic. Left-handed Tantra is also more exuberant and spontaneous:

In right-handed Tantra the woman sits to the right side of the man; if the rite is left-handed, one which culminates in physical sexuality, the opposite is the case....In either case the practitioners now endeavour to think of each other as the God and Goddess, Shiva and Shakti. In right-handed worship this ‘divine identification’ remains on a fairly abstract level, but in left-handed rites it is very specific, the woman regarding her partner as ‘the phallus of Shiva’, while she is thought of as being not only Shakti but the living altar on which sacrifice is offered to herself – in the words of one text, held in high regard by many schools of Tantra, ‘Her belly is the sacrificial altar, her pubic hairs the sacred grass-mat... the lips of her vagina are the sacrificial fire.’ ...

In left-handed working... fervour and spontaneity are the essence of the rite. The participants not only identify themselves with the God and Goddess, but they give the divine forces full play, letting themselves improvise, as the divine polarities inspire them, the feasting, the love play and the copulation of Shiva and Shakti. Within the boundaries of the Temple there are no hard and fast rules – ‘Exceed, exceed’ are the key words, and the Road to Excess leads to the Palace of Wisdom and Understanding and to that Greater Palace which subsumes them.223

King maintains that Hindu tantrics allow the ritual ejaculation of semen, whereas Buddhist tantrics try to avoid it.224 However, on this point he is contradicted by Agehananda Bharati who writes:

The central rule behind the left-handed rites, both Hindu and Buddhist, is the retention of semen during the sexual act [ie. during maithuna, ritualistic copulation]. The man who discharges semen is a pasu, an ‘animal’ in the Mahanirvana and the Yogini Tantra, whereas he who retains it during maithuna is divya, ‘divine’. 225

Because of Crowley’s fascination with the magical potency of semen and his emphasis in Thelemic magical practice on the ritual consumption of sexual secretions as part of the ‘magical elixir’, it is possible that even if he was following a practice of retaining semen during his exploration of vamacharya in 1901 he was prepared to abandon this aspect of Tantra after his transformative revelations in Cairo, just three years later.

In his article, ‘The Origins of Modern Sex Magick’ (1985) J.Gordon Melton points out that there were certain aspects of Hindu Tantra that
would definitely not have been to Crowley’s liking post-1904. Commenting on the traditional concept of Shakti as ‘Goddess’ or ‘power’, Melton notes that

while variously understood by different tantrics, an understanding of the role of the female and her energy is central to all Hindu tantrism, but is absent from Crowley’s treatment of sex magick. As John Woodroffe would write just a few years after Crowley finished the new O.T.O. rituals, Hindu tantrism teaches that ‘S’akti [Shakti] in the highest causal sense is God as Mother, and in another sense it is the universe which issues from Her Womb. ...Such concepts are quite foreign to and stand in stark contrast to the O.T.O. teaching of God as Sun and phallus.

Melton also rightly observes that Crowley’s notion of the Scarlet Woman as a sexual consort is based on the biblical Book of Revelation and has nothing whatever to do with the Tantric tradition. ‘Crowley’s Scarlet Woman,’ he writes, bears ‘no substantive resemblance to Shakti in any of her forms, including Kali.’

Kenneth Grant meanwhile provides an important insight into the connection between the practice of Left-Hand Path sex magic and the image of the Kundalini serpent – or ‘fire-snake’. This is significant because it was the connection between the serpent (as spirit-familiar) and Kundalini (as a source of potent energy within the human organism) which fascinated Rosaleen Norton, especially with regard to exploring the so-called ‘astral planes’ while in a state of magical trance:

The ability to function on the inner, or astral planes, and to travel freely in the realms of light or inner space, derived from a special purification and storage of vital force. This force in its densest form is identical with sexual energy. In order to transform sexual energy into magical energy (ojas), the dominant Fire Snake at the base of the spine is awakened. It then purges the vitality of all dross by the purifying virtue of its intense heat. Thus the function of the semen – in the tantras is to build up the body of light [the astral body], the inner body of man. As the vital fluid accumulates in the testicles it is consumed by the heat of the Fire Snake, and the subtle fumes or ‘perfumes’ of this molten semen go to strengthen the inner body. The worship of shakti means in effect the exercise of the Fire Snake, which not only fortifies the body of light but gradually burns away all impurities in the physical body and rejuvenates it.

Grant also supports Norton’s contention that arousing the Kundalini can stimulate ‘artistic or inventive creativity’. In The Magical Revival (1972) he refers to the Kundalini as ‘the serpentine or spiral power of creative consciousness’ and he goes on to emphasize that this type of occult exploration has the potential to bestow profound spiritual insights:
Men will become as gods, because the power of creation (the prerogative of gods) will be wielded by them through the direction of forces at present termed ‘occult’ or hidden.  

**Contemporary Satanism**

The desire of certain human beings to ‘become as gods’ has long been considered by Christian devotees to be a classic Satanic vanity, and a significant question overshadowed the magical career and persona of Rosaleen Norton during the 1950s: *was she, in fact, a Satanist?* While it is clear that Norton pursued a range of highly unconventional ‘pagan’ practices in Sydney during this period – activities which included her own version of witchcraft as well as various sex magick rituals based on Kundalini yoga and the writings of Aleister Crowley – it would seem to be quite another matter to label her a Satanist. Nevertheless, Norton was openly branded as a ‘Devil-worshipper’ in the popular Australian media of the time. In October 1955 the tabloid magazine *Australasian Post* published an article titled ‘A Warning to Australia: Devil Worship Here!’ The article showed a half-naked Norton, wearing a ritual mask and sitting in front of her mural of Pan, and opened with the following paragraph:

> How much evidence do you want? Lucifer’s worshippers meet secretly in Sydney today. Read the facts and you won’t laugh for long!  

This article had been preceded by two other sensationalistic articles, published in the same magazine earlier that year, both carrying the alarmist banner heading: *‘The Devil is on our doorstep!’* The first of these articles featured a photograph of a naked acolyte worshipping over a human skull, and a picture showing masked occultists parading around a magical circle inscribed with a ritual pentagram. The second was titled *‘Witchmaster!’* and opened with a dramatic photograph of British coven leader Gerald Gardner accompanied by a provocative introductory paragraph:

> Openly, without hindrance, avowed witches practise their evil craft today. In England, in Australia, covens meet for blasphemous ritual. They no longer fear the injunction ‘Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live.’ They appear as harmless eccentrics – but they corrupt all they touch.’

In the popular media-driven imaginings of 1950s Australia, witchcraft and Satanism evidently meant much the same thing. However, as will become clear from data presented below, this form of rigid categorisation is one which both witches and Satanists themselves reject. Contemporary Satanists oppose any form of worship involving ‘protective transcendental
deities – whether this worship is addressed to a God or to a Goddess – and several contemporary witches, among them the well known American goddess-worshipper Z. Budapest referred to in Chapter Two, have similarly been outspoken on the issue of confused identity. As Budapest has expressed it:

Witchcraft is a universal, joy-oriented, artistic kind of religious practice that celebrates the earth and its journey around the sun. Now, we got a bad rap from the Christians about this. We have been told that we worship Satan, the Devil. Well, the Devil is a Christian god. We have never heard of the Devil. Many of us got burned [in the Middle Ages] because we didn't know who they were talking about...so many died. Many were going to their death still wondering who the Devil was...

Norton undoubtedly compounded the problem of her pagan identity in an autobiographical article published in Australian Post in 1957 when she wrote: 'If Pan is the “Devil” (and the joyous Goat-God probably is, from the orthodox viewpoint), then I am indeed a “Devil” worshipper.' However, Norton’s statement is intentionally ironic: she was a Pan-worshipper and not a Devil-worshipper. The ‘orthodox viewpoint’ she refers to – that is to say, the viewpoint that Norton believed would have prevailed in Australia at a time when the population was over 80 per cent Christian – was that most people were inclined to confuse pagan worship with Satanism and would have no hesitation in branding them collectively as ‘demonic’.

During its formative years Christianity synthesized Greek and Jewish concepts of the Devil. The word ‘devil’ itself derives from the Greek: diabolos – an ‘accuser’ or ‘obstructor’ – and most practising Christians regard the battle against Satan (or the Devil) as an ongoing saga that will not be resolved until the Final Judgement. Historian Jeffrey Russell (1977) summarizes the main characteristics of the Devil in the New Testament as follows: he is the personification of evil; he physically attacks and possesses humans; he tempts people to sin in order to destroy them or recruit them in his struggle against God; he accuses and punishes sinners; he leads a host of evil spirits, fallen angels or demons; he has assimilated many evil qualities of ancient destructive Nature spirits or ghosts; he will rule the world until the coming of the Kingdom of God and in the meantime is engaged in constant warfare against Christ; he will be defeated by Christ at the end of the world and, above all, he is identified with temptation and death.

Norton’s fascination with demons and devils – which was evident even in her early Danse Macabre drawings – possibly developed further as an
individual response to the conventional Christian beliefs of her parents: they had hoped that she would be ‘confirmed’ as a member of the Anglican Church when she was twelve. Norton first began reading histories of demonology, occultism and the Western esoteric tradition in her late teenage years – she pursued these subjects while she was an art-student at East Sydney Technical College – and she lists several such titles in the bibliography of her 1952 publication, The Art of Rosaleen Norton, which reflects her long-standing occult influences. These occult histories include Kurt Seligmann: The Mirror of Magic; Montague Summers: A History of Witchcraft and Demonology and Daniel Moncure: History of Demonology. However, as I will show in Chapter Five, Norton had little or no working knowledge of the Goetia as a practical system of ‘black magic’, and when she began to explore this area of demonic evocation with Eugene Goossens it was he who offered to instruct her in the use of magical seals (or sigils), and not the other way around. As I will seek to demonstrate below, in the concluding section on chthonic magic in this chapter, it was Norton’s fascination with the Kabbalah, and in particular with the Qliphoth emanating from the ‘reverse’ side of the Kabbalistic Tree of Life (see Chapter Two), that drew her into what some Left-Hand Path magicians have referred to as the ‘nightside tradition’.

During Norton’s own lifetime there were only two major organisations associated with the practice of Satanism – the Church of Satan founded in San Francisco in 1966 and its rebellious offshoot, the Temple of Set, established in the same city in 1975, four years before Norton’s death – and there is no evidence suggesting that Norton was familiar with either. Nevertheless, because both organisations were influenced in varying degrees by Aleister Crowley (who in turn exerted a strong influence on Norton) and because both are aligned with the Left-Hand Path in magic, it is pertinent to describe them briefly here.

The Church of Satan
As Jean La Fontaine has observed in a recent academic overview of 20th century magic and witchcraft:

There are only two long-standing, well-established groups of Satanists and each is largely the creation of one man... The founder of the Church of Satan died only in October 1997 and the founder of the Temple of Set is still its leader... Both organizations have an international membership but it is not clear whether all the groups outside the USA are affiliated to the original organizations, have been founded with their agreement as independent off-shoots, or are simply imitations.

The Church of Satan was founded in San Francisco in 1966 by Anton
LaVey (1930-1997), who remains a controversial figure not only because of his role in the rise of contemporary Satanism but also because of the substantially fictitious persona that he helped create with the help of two sympathetic co-authors. As religious scholar James R. Lewis points out, LaVey has two categories of biography, ‘one historical and one legendary…[and] his real life was far more prosaic than the story he fabricated for the benefit of the media’.  

LaVey’s main ‘authorized’ biography, written by his former partner and current Church of Satan High Priestess, Blanche Barton, and published in 1990, claims that LaVey was born in Chicago and was of French, Alsatian, German, Russian and Romanian descent. According to this ‘legendary’ account, LaVey learnt about vampires from his maternal grandmother Luba Kolton, and immersed himself in reading occult and fantasy literature like Bram Stoker's *Dracula* and the popular magazine *Weird Tales*. After a period spent working as a carnival entertainer in the Clyde Beatty Circus, LaVey studied criminology at San Francisco City College and then became a photographer with the San Francisco Police Department. It was in the latter capacity that LaVey observed the gruesome side of urban life – ‘people shot by nuts, knifed by friends, kids splattered in the gutter by hit-and-run drivers. It was disgusting and depressing.’ These grim events had a strong impact on LaVey’s spiritual perspectives: he concluded that violence was part of the divine plan and turned away from God as a source of inspiration and benevolence. The ‘legendary’ LaVey also played oboe in the San Francisco Ballet Orchestra, had a cameo
role as the Devil in the movie *Rosemary’s Baby*, and had an affair with Marilyn Monroe before she became famous. LaVey claimed to be a multi-millionaire and maintained that the Church of Satan had ‘hundreds of thousands’ of fully paid-up members.

LaVey’s ‘legendary’ biography was not challenged until 1991 when journalist Lawrence Wright, a contributor to *Rolling Stone*, published the results of an investigation into some of LaVey’s claims.253 Wright established that the San Francisco Ballet Orchestra didn’t actually exist, that LaVey hadn’t worked as a musician or trainer for the Beatty Circus, and that he had never been employed by the San Francisco Police Department. Wright concluded:

…as I began to take apart the literary creation he had made of his life, I would realize that ‘Anton LaVey’ was itself his supreme creation, his ultimate satanic object, a sort of android composed of all the elements his mysterious creator had chosen from the universe of dark possibilities.254

Nevertheless, as James Lewis points out, LaVey was born in Chicago, his family did move to San Francisco, he did work as a musician (though not in a ballet orchestra), and he did establish the Church of Satan in 1966.255 In 1998 LaVey’s estranged daughter, Zeena, and her husband, Nikolas Schreck, published a more detailed summary of the ‘legendary’ claims and the actual historical reality of events in LaVey’s life, thereby extending Wright’s earlier findings. They confirmed that LaVey’s grandmother was Ukrainian rather than Transylvanian, that he had never met Marilyn Monroe, that he had played no acting role in *Rosemary’s Baby*, that he lived in near-poverty for most of the 1970s, and that his Church of Satan had fewer than 300 members.256

The core facts associated with the birth of the Church of Satan are as follows: prior to establishing the Church itself, LaVey had begun holding weekly classes, known as Magic Circle meetings, in order to explore various esoteric topics. These meetings were attended by a diverse range of people, including avant-garde film producer Kenneth Anger,257 and were held in LaVey’s tightly shuttered house at 6114 California Street, San Francisco. They included lectures on vampires, werewolves, haunted houses, extra-sensory perception and zombies – and other related subjects. LaVey also lampooned the Roman Catholic Church with a ‘Black Mass’ which involved desecrating the Host, using an inverted cross and black candles, and reciting Christian prayers backwards.
Fascinated by the concept of Sir Francis Dashwood's 18th century Hellfire Club—where establishment figures would meet for evenings of revelry and debauchery—LaVey believed that the Magic Circle could provide the basis for a modern-day counterpart. With this idea in mind, LaVey shaved his head and announced the formation of the Church of Satan on Walpurgisnacht, 30 April 1966, traditionally associated with the ascendancy of the Powers of Darkness. LaVey declared 1966 to be Year One, Anno Satanas— the first year of the reign of Satan.

LaVey’s Church of Satan celebrated sensual indulgence and personal empowerment; its ceremonies were conceived as a means for channelling magical power into an expression of intense carnal desire. LaVey’s ritual altar room was completely black with an inverted pentagram mounted on the wall above the fireplace: LaVey believed that this particular pentagram represented the Sigil of Baphomet, a symbol allegedly adapted from the Knights Templars in the 14th century. Services began and ended with satanic hymns and a ritual invocation to Satan. A naked woman—a human symbol of lust and self-indulgence—was used as an

Plate 42: Anton LaVey with one of his followers in the Church of Satan
‘altar’. The following contemporary account describes a typical service in the Church of Satan:

A bell is run nine times to signal the beginning of the service, the priest turning in the circle counter clockwise, ringing the bell to the four cardinal points. The leopard-skin cover is removed from the mantelpiece, revealing the nude body of the female volunteer altar for the evening. The purification is performed by one of the assistant priests, who sprinkles the congregation with a mixture of semen and water, symbolic of creative force. LaVey then takes a sword from its sheath, held by Diane, his wife and high priestess, and invokes Satan in his cardinal manifestations. Satan, in the South, represents Fire; Lucifer in the East, is symbolic of Air; Belial, in the North, represents Earth; and Leviathan, in the West, is his watery aspect. The officiating priest then drinks from the chalice, which is filled with any liquid he may desire, from lemonade to 100-proof vodka, making a symbolic offering to Satan. The chalice is then placed on the pubic area of the girl-altar, where it stays for the remainder of the evening.

LaVey believed in celebrating Christian ‘sins’ as virtues and formulated the following satanic statements for his key work, *The Satanic Bible* (1969), as an expression of his occult approach:

- Satan represents indulgence instead of abstinence.
- Satan represents vital existence instead of spiritual pipe dreams.
- Satan represents undefiled wisdom instead of hypocritical self-deceit.
- Satan represents kindness to those who deserve it instead of love wasted on ingrates.
- Satan represents vengeance instead of turning the other cheek.
- Satan represents responsibility to the responsible instead of concern for psychic vampires.
- Satan represents man as just another animal...who, because of his ‘divine spiritual and intellectual development’ has become the most vicious animal of all.
- Satan represents all of the so-called sins as they all lead to physical, mental or emotional gratification.
- Satan has been the best friend the Church has ever had, as he has kept it in business all these years.

LaVey believed that the Church of Satan presented a clear and uncompromising challenge to the conventional Christian mores of Middle
America – there was no place in his magical credo for humility, weakness, or ‘turning the other cheek’. However LaVey did not regard his Church as anti-Christian, arguing instead that Christianity was irrelevant because it failed to address humanity’s basic emotional needs, denied man’s carnal nature, and placed its devotees in a position of dependence on ‘an unmerciful God who cares not whether we live or die’. LaVey similarly had no illusions about vows of poverty as a means of gaining spiritual redemption, maintaining instead that magic was essentially about power, and that wealth was a type of power. LaVey reserved the right to divert funds otherwise intended for the Church of Satan across for his own personal use, and it was this particular issue that would result in a split in the Church leadership in 1975. At this point, contemporary American Satanism would divide into two opposing camps: those remaining loyal to LaVey and those who would depart, establishing the Temple of Set.

The Temple of Set
By 1975 it had become evident that there were significant rifts within the Church of Satan. According to LaVey's colleague Michael Aquino – editor of the Church's newsletter, The Cloven Hoof – the Church was attracting far too many ‘fad-followers, egomaniacs and assorted oddballs whose primary interest in becoming Satanists was to flash their membership cards for cocktail-party notoriety’. At the same time LaVey was also complaining that the ten dollar annual fee levied for Church membership was not yielding him sufficient personal income.

In early 1975, LaVey sent out advice in the Church newsletter advising that, forthwith, all higher degrees of initiation would be available for contributions in cash, real estate or valuable objects of art. According to Aquino, the effect on many Church members was shattering:

If there had been a single unifying factor that had brought us to Satanism, it was the Church's stand against hypocrisy. So when we learned of this policy, our reaction to it was that Anton LaVey was betraying his office, betraying everything that he had worked for, for so many years.

In June 1975 an act of desertion took place: key members of the priesthood resigned from the Church of Satan, at the same time making it clear that they were not leaving the priesthood itself. ‘In fact,’ Aquino has stated, ‘we had a sacred responsibility to take it with us.'
A doctoral graduate from the University of California at Santa Barbara, with a strong interest in comparative religion and philosophy, Aquino had joined the Church of Satan in 1969. At the time of the split within the Church of Satan he was a Priest of the fourth degree and the senior member of the splinter group. Nevertheless, in a manner somewhat comparable to Crowley’s revelatory communication from Aiwass in 1904, Aquino now sought new instructions from Satan. On the evening of 21 June 1975, in a ritual magic ceremony, Aquino summoned the Prince of Darkness, ‘to tell us what we may do to continue our Quest’. The result, according to Aquino, was an act of automatic writing: ‘a communication from a god to a human being’.

In a document titled *The Book of Coming Forth by Night*, Satan revealed himself as the ancient Egyptian god Set, and named Michael Aquino as LaVey’s replacement. Aquino was described in the script as the successor to Aleister Crowley, and Magus, fifth degree, of the new Aeon of Set. *The Book of Coming Forth by Night* also identified a new name for both Church and deity: ‘Reconsecrate my Temple and my Order in the true name of Set. No longer will I accept the bastard title of a Hebrew Fiend.’ There were also other instructions for the new magical epoch:
When I came first to this world, I gave to you my great pentagram, timeless measure of beauty through proportion. And it was shown inverse, that creation and change be exalted above rest and preservation.

With the years my pentagram was corrupted, yet time has not the power to destroy it. Its position was restored by the Church of Satan, but its essence was dimmed with a Moorish name, and the perverse letters of the Hebrews, and the goat of decadent Khar. During the Age of Satan I allowed this curious corruption, for it was meant to do me honour as I was then perceived.

But this is now my Aeon, and my pentagram is again to be pure in its splendour. Cast aside the corruptions, that the pentagram of Set may shine forth. Let all who seek me be never without it, openly and with pride, for by it shall I know them.

Let the one who aspires to my knowledge be called by the name Setian. 276

Set also announced a sacred magical word for the new era:

The Word of the Aeon of Set is *Xeper* – ‘become’.

**The implications of Xeper**

Aquino claims that the revelation from Set led the priesthood of the former Church of Satan into new areas of enquiry:

The founders of the Temple of Set knew very little about Egyptology and we had to go and find out who Set was, and why something like this should be happening. We found out some very interesting things. The usual understanding of Set is that he was an evil god in the old Egyptian system – the benevolent father-god being Osiris and his evil antagonist, Set, who murdered him.

In our research we discovered that this was in fact a much later corruption, and that the initial identity of Set had been that of the god of night, of the darkness, as opposed to the god of the day, the sun. Set symbolised the isolated psyche, the spark of life within the self, a creative force in the universe rather than an enemy figure, an inspiration for the individual consciousness. 277

The magical word *xeper* also became central to the philosophy of the Temple of Set. Pronounced *khefer* and translated as ‘I have come into being,’ its associated symbols were the scarab beetle and the dawning sun. In a recent statement exploring the significance of *xeper*, senior Temple of Set member Don Webb has written that this word generates the Aeon of Set, and is the current form of the Eternal Word of the Prince of Darkness. To know this word is to know that the ultimate responsibility for the evolution of your psyche is in your hands. It is the Word of freedom, ecstasy, fearful responsibility, and the root of all magic. 278
Webb describes *xeper* as ‘the experience of an individual psyche becoming aware of its own existence and deciding to expand and evolve that existence through its own actions’. Because the Temple of Set emphasises the magical potential of the individual, the focus of the entire organisation reflects this orientation: all Setians are on an individual, self-determined magical journey, and the consequences are entirely up to them. According to Webb:

Xeper is the experience of an individual psyche becoming aware of its own existence through its own actions. Xeper has been experienced by anyone who has decided to seek after his or her own development.

Although the Temple of Set recognises a system of initiatory degrees there are no prescribed rituals or dogmas and no specific vows. According to Lilith Sinclair, Aquino’s wife and fellow priestess in the Temple of Set, the rituals in the Church of Satan used to be presented ‘on a very self-indulgent, materialistic level’ and Satan himself was ‘more a symbol than an actual reality’. However Sinclair maintains that her relationship with Satan within the context of the Temple of Set has evolved to a new level. Her ongoing personal contact with the Prince of Darkness is now both tangible and powerful – ‘a very quiet, serene, beautiful touching of minds’. According to Sinclair there is no pact signed in blood but instead a type of private vow: ‘It’s done on an individual basis, and it’s something that I myself wanted to do.’

While most forms of mysticism advocate the surrender of the ego in a state of transcendent union with the infinite Godhead – an act described earlier by members of the Dragon Rouge as ‘melting into God’ – according to the Setian perspective an awareness of the personal self should be maintained at all times. According to Sinclair, when a Temple member is communicating with Set, ‘you retain your individuality...but at the same time you are linked with the essence of the Prince of Darkness. It’s a natural exchange and flow of energy, of mind awareness.’

**The Setian perspective**

As both the first and current High Priest of the Temple of Set, Michael Aquino remains its leading advocate: the Temple reflects both his intellectual background and his emphasis on rational thought. The activities of the Temple are also far removed from LaVey’s earlier focus on carnality and sensual indulgence. As Aquino observes in *The Crystal Tablet of Set*, ‘The Church [of Satan] had been arrogantly sensationalistic; the Temple [of Set] was cautiously philosophical.*
Aquino’s principal text on the nature of magical consciousness is a lengthy essay titled ‘The Black Magical Theory of the Universe’, which is included in a collection of writings assembled in *The Crystal Tablet of Set* (1983, revised 1986). Here Aquino distinguishes between what he calls ‘Lesser Black Magic’ and ‘Greater Black Magic’. In the first of these two approaches, the magician ‘applies his knowledge to entities and events in the objective universe…in accordance with his Will’. Greater Black Magic, however, involves what Aquino refers to as ‘the theory and practice of non-natural interaction with the subjective universe’ and is based on the concept of the Magical Link between the objective and subjective universes. Aquino defines Greater Black Magic as ‘the causing of change to occur in the subjective universe in accordance with the Will. This change in the subjective universe will cause a similar and proportionate change in the objective universe.’ Aquino also draws on the philosophical writings of Fichte, who postulated the existence of a ‘mental essence’ encompassing the objective world:

[Fichte] postulated the original existence of a mental essence divided into the ego (the sensation of the self) and the non-ego (sensations of things not perceived as the self). This mental essence is …a sort of ‘supermind’ which transcends all particular ego and non-ego manifestations.

Applying Fichte’s concept to a magical context, Aquino maintains that the ‘concentrated energies’ of the ego can be used to bring about changes in the ‘non-ego’ part of the ‘mental essence…which defines and binds together the laws of consistency in the objective universe’. According to Aquino every individual is essentially separate from the universe and it therefore follows that ‘any conscious act relative to that universe…is an exercise in that separateness. Hence to be aware of one’s disconnection from that universe is to remain disconnected from it.’

Aquino rejects Christianity on philosophical grounds because he believes its doctrines are essentially irrational and are not based on an authentic understanding of the nature of the soul:

Jesus Christ is reputed to have said that, to enter Heaven, one must be ‘as a little child’. To put it another way, such a person would have to radiate an innocent, selfless passion for the harmony of the Universe; he would be unable to conceive himself as apart from it [my italics]. The irony of Christ’s admonition, however, is that neither innocence nor selflessness are products of the rational intellect…One can conduct one’s life as though one were innocent and selfless [but] beneath all appearances, all affectations, the actual state of the soul remains as it is: either animal/natural or human/enlightened, either asleep and ignorant or awake and all too aware.
Aquino’s magical conception is clearly based on a form of gnosis – on the idea of ‘being awake and all too aware’ – but it is a type of gnosis grounded also in a notion of human existential separateness that sets it apart, for example, from the Gnostic transcendentalism of the Kabbalah where all aspects of creative manifestation merge eventually into Ain Soph Aur, the Limitless Light (see Chapter Two). Aquino rejects the mystical concept of ‘melting into God’, which he associates with the Right-Hand Path, defining this type of occult approach as a form of ‘white magic’. According to Aquino, white magic ‘embraces not only all conventional religions, but all pagan and nature-worship ideologies as well. To the Temple, the only distinction between them is one of style and imagery, not of underlying substance.’ Aquino maintains that Satanism provides a unique approach to the objective and subjective universes because it advocates personal behaviour that is entirely self-determined:

All conventional religions, including the pagan ones, are simply a variation on the theme of reunion and submergence of the self within the natural universe. So from our point of view, it really makes no difference whether you pray to a Father god or to a Mother goddess – or to an entire gaggle of gods and goddesses! You are still wishing for their acceptance. You are waiting for them to put their arms around you and say: ‘You belong. You are part of us. You can relax. We will take care of you. We approve of you. We endorse you...’ The Satanist, or Black Magician, does not seek that kind of submergence of the self. We do not seek to have our decisions and our morality approved or validated by any higher god or being. We take responsibility unto ourselves.

According to Aquino,

it is in the process of making the preliminary exploration of the subjective and objective universes that the Black Magician begins to discover and ultimately to know how things really work. He exists wholly in neither the subjective universe (like a mystic) nor the objective universe (like a materialist)...He moves back and forth between the two with increasing ease and expertise, influencing the Magical Links between them and thus causing changes in accordance with his Will [capitals in the text].

Aquino’s wife and Temple priestess Lilith Sinclair claims that the unique magical quest undertaken by members of the Temple of Set justifies the elitist attitude that sets them apart from other occult practitioners: ‘We regard ourselves very highly because we feel we are superior beings. We feel that we are gaining the knowledge of a deeper universe.’ Don Webb similarly supports Sinclair’s elitist perspective, maintaining that the Setian approach allows its initiated members to think and act like gods:
If we want to participate in the cultural revolution / evolution of the New Cycle, the best method is to transform ourselves. To actively seek, every day, those experiences and perform those deeds that lead to wisdom. If the magician transforms himself or herself, the actions of the magician lead to a transformation of the world around them. If one becomes as a god, one's words and deeds will have the effect of gods.  

Webb also argues that practitioners of the Left-Hand Path have a unique approach to sacred awareness that sets them apart from more conventional religious devotees:

Magic is the way that the follower of the Left Hand Path can have the lived experience of being a god, rather than praying to an image of a god created by his or her imagination.

**Xeper and immortality**

In addition to claiming that the Setian practitioner can journey ‘back and forth’ between the objective and subjective worlds and impose his or her magical Will in both domains, Aquino also endorses the classic Gnostic perspective that the psyche is neither dependent on, nor imprisoned by, the physical body. According to Aquino, the mind of the Setian magician is capable of reaching out ‘towards the limitlessness of its conscious existence’. This, for Aquino, is what *xeper* really implies. For the master Setian, the conscious universe literally has no boundaries. Aquino developed this idea from a statement contained in *The Book of Lucifer* in Anton LaVey's *Satanic Bible*:

If a person has been vital throughout his life and has fought to the end for his earthly existence, it is this ego which will refuse to die, even after the expiration of the flesh which housed it... It is this...vitality that will allow the Satanist to peek through the curtain of darkness and death, and remain earthbound.

What, then, of the darkness and death referred to in this extract from *The Book of Lucifer*? Paradoxically, the answer emerges in the Setian response to self-determination. Setians regard the image of Set – the Egyptian God of the Night – as a dynamic force for change. Set is the ‘separator’ or ‘isolator’ – the God who slew stasis (represented by Osiris) and overcame chaotic mindlessness (represented by Apep). In this context Set represents the elimination of obsolete thought patterns and social conditioning – a ‘dethroning of those internal gods that we have received from society’ – and as Don Webb explains in his essay on the sacred word *xeper*, the nature of the Setian quest, as he sees it, is ‘to become an immortal, potent and powerful Essence’. Webb has also stated quite specifically that the mission of the Temple of Set ‘is to recreate a tradition
of self-deification. According to Webb, the quest for self-deification and the attainment of immortality are intimately connected:

We choose as our role model the ancient Egyptian god Set, the archetype of Isolate Intelligence, rather than the somewhat limiting Hebrew Satan, archetype of the Rebel against cosmic injustice... We do not worship Set – only our own potential. Set was and is the patron of the magician who seeks to increase his existence through expansion... Black Magic is to take full responsibility for one's actions, evolution and effectiveness.

In ancient Egyptian mythology Set was the only God who overcame death, and this is of special significance to Setians because they believe it is possible to transcend physical death through the potency of the magical will. As Michael Aquino explains in his essay ‘Satanism and the Immortality of the Psyche’(1996):

The essence of the psyche...is such that its existence is neither dependent upon the material not imprisoned in it... Rather, the physical body provides a vehicle in which the psyche can become aware of itself and reach out towards the limitless of its consciousness existence... It is all too easy to perceive ‘life’ as only the active functioning of one’s material body. Such an attitude fosters a disease of the psyche far worse than any of the body. It numbs you to that immortality which is inherent in the Gift of Set.

Variations within the Left-Hand Path

I have argued in this chapter that Aleister Crowley’s doctrine of Thelema – which includes the practice of sex magick – was a radical departure from the Hermetic magic of the Golden Dawn and moved 20th century Western esotericism in the direction of what has since become widely known as the ‘Left-Hand Path’. I have also shown that many modern and contemporary occult practitioners regard themselves as belonging to the Left-Hand Path; these practitioners are members of organisations that have emerged in Crowley’s wake and have been strongly influenced by him – among them Kenneth Grant’s Typhonian O.T.O., Anton LaVey’s Church of Satan and the Temple of Set, headed by Michael Aquino. Further, one can isolate the principal philosophical elements associated with the Left-Hand Path as follows:

- a focus on the ‘solitary, individualistic and personal’ based on ‘self-development, self-analysis and self-empowerment’ (see Vexen Crabtree, fn.19 above). An emphasis also on the ‘unique, deviant and exclusive’ (fn.22)
• an emphasis on the ‘dark’ side of magic, and an exploration of ‘hidden desires and fears’ (see Dragon Rouge, fn.21)

• an acknowledgement of ‘antinomianism’ as an overriding defining principle (see Dragon Rouge fn.22 and also Dr Stephen Flowers fn.24) and a willingness by practitioners to have the ‘spiritual courage’ to embrace symbols ‘feared and loathed by conventional culture’ (Flowers, fn.24)

• an emphasis on the spiritual quest for ‘self-deification’ or the act of ‘becoming a god’ (see Dragon Rouge fn.22 and Flowers fn.24)

During his exotic magical career Crowley was himself an iconoclast, introducing most of these specific elements into the Western esoteric tradition following his Thelemic ‘revelation’ in 1904. Crowley’s cult of Thelema focused on the unique role played by the Beast 666 (Crowley himself) and the Whore of Babalon (Crowley’s sexual partner) in heralding the sex-magick of the New Aeon (‘love under Will’).

In Liber Al vel Legis – the key document announcing the New Aeon – Horus (regarded here as an incarnation of the Divine Child) declares his opposition to all the major religious traditions that have preceded the Thelemic revelation: ‘I peck at the eyes of Jesus… I flap my wings in the face of Mohammed… I tear at the flesh of the Indian and Buddhist… I spit on your crapulous creeds.’ Crowley also highlights his antinomian credentials through the ceremonial consumption of ‘cakes of light’ containing semen and vaginal fluids: from a Christian perspective his Gnostic Mass and Mass of the Phoenix could reasonably be regarded as a blasphemous parody of the Eucharist. Further, as I have indicated above, Crowley’s Gnostic Mass has a specific precursor in the consumption of menstrual blood and semen by the Gnostic Phibionites, whose ceremonial rituals were deplored by the 4th century Church Father, Epiphanius, and denounced as heresy in his Panarion.

In his doctrine of Thelema, Crowley emphasizes spiritual communication with the Holy Guardian Angel, a spiritual being whom he personally associated with the figure of Aiwass, the mysterious entity who had dictated the Book of the Law (Liber Al vel Legis). Although we do not find the same emphasis on ‘self-deification’ in Crowley’s teachings that we find, for example, in the Dragon Rouge and the Temple of Set, Crowley’s approach to magic was nevertheless highly individualistic and he believed he could employ the techniques of magick to attain god-like powers and
subjugate the universe to his Will, an approach later mirrored in the Temple of Set.\textsuperscript{312}

While there is clear agreement among many of the sub-groups associated with the Left-Hand Path, with regard to the principles and practices that unite them, it is also apparent that there are significant differences as well. As I have indicated above, Anton LaVey emphasized sensual indulgence and carnality as the path to self-empowerment in the Church of Satan, whereas the Temple of Set is clearly more philosophical and restrained in its approach and has moved away from hedonistic and libertine sexuality towards a more meditative and inner-directed association with the Prince of Darkness. According to Zeena Schreck, a one-time High Priestess of the Temple of Set, the practice of sex magic is not specified within the curriculum of the Temple and no emphasis is placed upon it,\textsuperscript{313} thus differentiating the approach of Aquino and his associates from the sex-magick of Thelema and the Typhonian O.T.O. Meanwhile, the Dragon Rouge and Kenneth Grant’s Thelemic practitioners emphasize the significance of the so-called ‘Draconian current’ in which sexual energies are awakened through Tantra and Kundalini Yoga – thereby introducing a notably Eastern influence to the Western esoteric tradition. This is in stark contrast to the Temple of Set which directs its spiritual focus specifically towards the ancient Egyptian figure of Set, who is perceived as the ‘Principle of Isolate Intelligence’ and ‘the patron of the magician who seeks to increase his existence through expansion’.\textsuperscript{314}

In subsequent chapters of this thesis I will argue that as a practising occultist and trance artist Rosaleen Norton drew on many of the elements associated with the Left-Hand Path in magic, and that this particular focus aligns her as much with the Thelemic sex-magick practices of Aleister Crowley as with the more specifically pantheistic and Nature-based orientation of modern witchcraft. I will also explore Norton’s artistic and magical fascination with what members of the Dragon Rouge refer to as the ‘nightside tradition’, since a preoccupation with ‘images of darkness’ is certainly characteristic of her work. Finally, I will examine the chthonic nature of her magical philosophy and practice since this particular dimension has also, more recently, emerged as a characteristic of the Left-Hand Path in magic. Recognition of the chthonic elements in Norton’s art and magic enables us to position her more specifically across the spectrum of modern occult practices referred to in Chapter Seven, and allows for a more accurate appreciation of the many variables that have operated within the Western esoteric tradition in recent times.
Chthonic elements in modern Western magic

The term ‘chthonic’ (Greek khthōn: ‘earth’) refers to deities and ritual artefacts symbolically associated with the Earth. In ancient Greece the term khthōn referred to the interior of the soil, rather than its surface, and for this reason the word ‘chthonic’ is generally used with reference to the gods, goddesses and spirits of the Underworld, especially in the context of ancient Graeco-Roman religion. Typically, chthonic deities are associated with agriculture and the fertility of the land (eg. the Greek goddesses Demeter and Persephone) or are directly associated with the Underworld itself (eg. Hekate, Aidoneus/Hades). Chthonic deities are frequently represented by snakes and some, like Attis and Adonis, are associated with ancient Mystery cults of death and rebirth.

Contemporary Thelemic writer Vadge Moore has recently suggested that the term ‘chthonic’ may be used to refer generally to deities both ‘of the earth or under the earth’—including Pan, Dionysus and Bacchus, as well as non-Hellenic deities such as Set and Abraxas. He also relates their symbolic attributes to the occult quest for spiritual transcendence. Moore associates chthonic deities primarily with sexuality and the cycles of Nature:

The chthonic gods represent the primal instincts that come to us directly through Nature. The Greek god Dionysus is certainly one of these...Representative of the creative and destructive aspects of Nature, Dionysus is the ultimate chthonic figure. He can inspire the most beautiful, delirious sexual activity and the most degrading, violent, murderous activity. Dionysus’ mother, Semele, has been described variously as a Moon-Goddess and as a mortal woman. His father was the leader of the Greek gods, Zeus. His mother as mortal then combines the earthly with the divine...bringing the balance that chthonic more deeply represents.

Moore maintains that chthonic deities, by their very nature, provide the basis for magical transformation and spiritual transcendence:

The chthonic process is an occult ‘awakening’ that includes the very lowest instinctual elements of the human psyche leading to the very highest elements. It is the base, primordial material that the psyche needs in order to evolve and grow. Chthonic is the soil, the fertilizer, and the dark, primitive unconscious material that can turn the beast into a god. [my emphasis in italics]

For Moore, potent chthonic images can be found ranging from the depths of the mythic unconscious through to the pure light of transcendence, and can be quite varied in form. For example, Moore claims that dragons are regarded as symbols of magical transformation because they combine the chthonic serpent with the wings of a bird and therefore range symbolically...
‘from earth to “divinity” ’. He also maintains that the Gnostic archon Abraxas, who was often depicted on ancient Middle Eastern amulets with serpentine legs and the head of a rooster, ‘is an ideal chthonic representation, embracing the depths symbolized by the serpents rising to the human, and achieving solar transcendence as depicted by the rooster head.’ Moore supports French decadent writer Georges Bataille, who similarly explores chthonic themes and emphasizes their potential for transcendence:

In opposition to the ancient sky and sun gods, Bataille proposes a worship of the gods of darkness and of the earth: Demeter, Hecate and Dionysus…We must not forget that it is just this sinking into the underworld of the id and the dark unconscious that helps to plant the roots for our ascent.

However, if Moore’s chthonic approach is to be regarded as a model for spiritual rebirth and transformation, it is clear that some form of ‘ascent’ has to actually occur – for without an ascent, according to Moore’s chthonic conception, there can be no experience of transcendence. This in turn begs the question of what is meant or implied, within a magical context, by the nature of the visionary ‘ascent’ itself.

A carefully considered understanding of magical ‘ascent’ requires an exploration of altered states of consciousness. As I will show in Chapters Four, Five and Six, an appreciation of the nature of magical trance is also essential in evaluating the art and magic of Rosaleen Norton since self-induced trance states were central to her magical approach. Not only does Norton’s visionary art derive substantially from her experience of trance states accessed through self-hypnosis but her oeuvre is pervaded by occult
imagery that is distinctively chthonic in nature. To this extent, Moore’s approach – and also Bataille’s – provides a valuable perspective that enables us to understand key aspects of Norton’s creative process. However, if we are to consider the implications of Moore’s Thelemic concept of ‘ascent’ we are in turn required to explore the role of altered states of consciousness within the Western esoteric tradition itself – which takes us into territory rarely accessed by academic enquiry. Significant questions then arise: how have modern magical practitioners described their experiences of these altered states of consciousness, and what techniques have they employed in order to bring them about?

Altered states of consciousness in modern magical practice

Within the context of the 20th century magical revival the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn provides extensive documentation of modern magical techniques involving altered states of consciousness (ie. trance states, mystical experiences and out-of-the-body experiences). These magical techniques are described in a series of semi-official documents known as ‘Flying Rolls’ which, according to occult historian Francis King, were privately circulated ‘among the Adepti of the pre-1900 Golden Dawn’. The Flying Rolls themselves were written by high-ranking members of the Golden Dawn but were not included in Israel Regardie’s monumental four-volume collection of Golden Dawn rituals (first published 1937-1940), and did not become widely known in magical circles until the early 1970s.

The Golden Dawn magicians employed a technique of willed imagination utilising what was known as the ‘body of light’. The body of light has been described within an occult context as a ‘magical personality’ that is ‘deliberately built for a purpose [and] acquired through practice and concentration’. In a magical context it is the vehicle of conscious awareness through which the magician interacts with ‘thought-forms’, spirit-entities and archetypal beings on the inner, or ‘astral’ planes. Michael Aquino has described the role of this ‘magical double’ in quasi-Egyptian terms as follows:

The magician constructs within his subjective universe a magical double or ka. (Goethe’s Doppelgänger). This is an idealized entity whose precise characteristics may vary from Working to Working. He then, by an act of Will, transfers his soul or ba to the vehicle of this ka and then executes his Will in the subjective universe. This may be completely dissociated from the physical body of the magician, or it may be closely aligned with it…At the conclusion of the Working, the ba is redirected to the physical body and the ka is disintegrated. The elements of the
subjective universe specifically summoned for the Working are released into their normal contexts, there to influence their objective counterparts.331

Transferring consciousness to a magical simulacrum or ‘body of light’ through willed concentration and visualisation is central to the practice of visionary magic in the Western esoteric tradition, and the experience of ‘consciousness-transfer’ is described in *Flying Roll XXV*, written by *Frater Sub Spe* – Dr John W. Brodie-Innes – who was a prominent figure in the Golden Dawn's Amen-Ra temple in Edinburgh (Brodie-Innes had a ritual rank of Zelator Adeptus Minor, or 5° = 6°: see Chapter Two for ritual grades based on the Kabbalistic Tree of Life). *Frater Sub Spe* describes the shift in consciousness that occurs when a practitioner focuses meditatively on a Major Arcana Tarot card or one of the *Tattva* symbols of the elements,332 thereby switching personal awareness to the inner world of magical perception:

Gradually the attention is withdrawn from all surrounding sights and sounds, a grey mist seems to swathe everything, on which, as though thrown from a magic lantern on steam, the form of the symbol is projected. The Consciousness then seems to pass through the symbol to realms beyond... the sensation is as if one looked at a series of moving pictures ... When this sensitiveness of brain and power of perception is once established there seems to grow out of it a power of actually going to the scenes so visionary and seeing them as solid, indeed of actually doing things and producing effects there...The sensation...is first to become, as it were, dimly conscious of a figure walking among the scenes of the new country – or the Astral Plane – gradually to become conscious that it is my own figure that I am looking at – gradually, as it were, to be able to look through the eyes – and feel with the sensations of this *doppelganger*. Further to be able consciously to direct its motions, to control it, to inhabit it...It is as though my Consciousness had extruded from my own body to take possession of a body which I had either created for the purpose, or invoked out of the Astral Sphere as a vehicle for myself.333

The key elements in this process include concentrating the mind on a specific magical symbol, such as a Major Arcana Tarot card image or a *Tattva* symbol, and then using it to bring about a transfer of consciousness to the inner, imaginal realm of perception. Sometimes the magician also uses various utterances (pronouncement of sacred god-names or one’s personal magical name) to reinforce the sense of a transfer of awareness. According to Dion Fortune, who was a member of the Alpha and Omega Temple of the Golden Dawn,334 the act of projecting her ‘body of light’ was greatly assisted by uttering her magical name. As she notes in *Applied Magic*:

In my own experience of the operation, the utterance to myself of my Magical name led to the picturing of myself in an idealised form, not differing in type, but upon an
altogether grander scale, superhuman in fact, but recognisable as myself, as a statue more than life-size may yet be a good likeness. Once perceived, I could re-picture this idealised version of my body and personality at will, but I could not identify myself with it unless I uttered my Magical name. Upon my affirming it as my own, identification was immediate. 335

Following the transfer of consciousness, the magician then experiences the contents of the visionary realm as perceptually ‘real’ – including mythic landscapes populated by gods, spirit-beings and various other entities. According to Frater Sub Spe:

At first it seems as though everything thus perceived were just the product of one’s own imagination… But a little further experience generally convinces one that the new country one has become conscious of has its inviolable natural laws just as the physical world has: that one cannot make or unmake at will, that the same causes produce the same results, that one is in fact merely a spectator and in no sense a creator. The conviction then dawns on one that one is actually perceiving a new and much extended range of phenomena; that in fact, which is known as the Astral World or Astral Plane. 336 [my emphasis in italics]

According to the cosmology established in the Golden Dawn, the Tarot cards of the Major Arcana and the Hindu Tattvas could be used as ‘symbolic doorways’ granting access to various realms of visionary consciousness on the astral plane. As mentioned in Chapter Two the Tattvas were among the few specifically Eastern motifs incorporated within the ritual practices of the Golden Dawn. In their basic form the Tattvas are associated with the five Elements as follows:

Plate 45: The Tattvas in various combinations

- *Tejas*, a red equilateral triangle: Fire
- *Apas*, a silver crescent: Water
- *Vayu*, a blue circle: Air
- *Prithivi*, a yellow square: Earth
- *Akasha*, an indigo or violet egg: Spirit 337
*Flying Roll XI* describes a Tattva vision by Mrs Moina Mathers (*Soror Vestigia*) which arose as she sat in her ceremonial robes, meditating on a Tattva card combining *Tejas* and *Akasha* – a violet egg contained within a red triangle (Spirit within Fire). Following her projection of the body of light, the Tattva symbol seemed to grow before her gaze, enabling her to pass into a ‘vast triangle of flame’. She felt herself to be in a harsh desert of sand. Intoning the god-name *Elohim*, she then perceived a small pyramid in the distance and, drawing closer, noticed a small door on each face. She then vibrated the magical formula *Sephariel* and a warrior appeared, leading a procession of guards. After a series of tests involving ritual grade signs, the guards knelt before her and she passed inside:

> ...dazzling light, as in a Temple. An altar in the midst – kneeling figures surround it, there is a dais beyond, and many figures upon it – they seem to be Elementals of a fiery nature... She sees a pentagram, puts a Leo in it [ie, a Fire sign], thanks the figure who conducts her – wills to pass through the pyramid, finds herself out amid the sand. Wills her return – returns – perceiving her body in robes.

In this account and others like it, it is clear that the visionary landscape is experientially ‘real’ to the meditator undertaking the projection of the body of light. However the contents of the visionary journey itself are also closely related to the meditative symbol that the magician has used in the transfer of consciousness: the magical entities Moina Mathers perceived in her ‘spirit vision’ were fire elementals – anthropomorphic figures embodying the *essential* properties of Fire.

On another occasion, Moina Mathers employed the Tattva symbols for Water and Spirit. Once again her account demonstrated the connection between the meditative symbol and the visionary beings present in the ensuing vision:

> A wide expanse of water with many reflections of bright light, and occasionally glimpses of rainbow colours appearing. When divine and other names were pronounced, elementals of the mermaid and merman type [would] appear, but few of the other elemental forms. These water forms were extremely changeable, one moment appearing as solid mermaids and mermen, the next melting into foam.

> Raising myself by means of the highest symbols I had been taught, and vibrating the names of Water, I rose until the Water vanished, and instead I beheld a mighty world or globe, with its dimensions and divisions of Gods, Angels, elementals and demons – the whole Universe of Water. I called on HCOMA and there appeared standing before me a mighty Archangel, with four wings, robed in glistening white and crowned. In one hand, the right, he held a species of trident, and in the left a Cup filled to the brim with an essence which he poured down below on either side.
However, in this example, in addition to using the Tattvas for Water and Spirit as her meditative symbols, Mrs Mathers also uttered the sacred magical name HCOMA, thereby causing an archangel to appear in her visions. She was also utilising a Golden Dawn technique known as ‘rising in the planes’, which is directly related to Vadge Moore’s concept of magical ‘ascent’, referred to earlier. In *Flying Roll XI*, Moina Mathers’ husband, MacGregor Mathers, provides specific instructions for this particular technique:

Rising in the Planes is a spiritual process after spiritual conceptions and higher aims; by concentration and contemplation of the Divine, you formulate a Tree of Life passing from you to the spiritual realms above and beyond you. Picture to yourself that you stand in Malkuth – then by use of the Divine Names and aspirations you strive upward by the Path of Tau towards Yesod, neglecting the crossing rays which attract you as you pass up. Look upwards to the Divine Light shining down from Kether upon you. From Yesod leads up the Path of Temperance, Samekh, the arrow cleaving upwards leads the way to Tiphareth, the Great Central Sun of Sacred Power.

MacGregor Mathers’ account makes it clear that within the Golden Dawn, magical ‘ascent’ was achieved by visualising oneself coursing like an arrow towards the higher realms of the Kabbalistic Tree of Life. In *Flying Roll XI*, Mathers is referring specifically to the symbolic pathways connecting Malkuth, Yesod and Tiphareth: collectively they represent the path of mystical ascent via the Middle Pillar of the Tree of Life (see Chapter Two). When one considers that the symbols of the Major Arcana of the Tarot were also employed in the Golden Dawn as meditative pathways connecting all ten sephiroth on the Tree of Life – resulting in a total of 22 interconnecting pathways on the Tree – it becomes clear that the Kabbalistic Tree of Life, itself a symbol of the Body of God, was regarded by the members of the Golden Dawn as nothing less than a map of the ‘terrain’ accessed through visionary magical consciousness. For them, the Body of God represented the operative magical territory: what Vadge Moore has referred to as ‘ascent’ and what the Golden Dawn magicians referred to as ‘rising in the planes’ could be achieved by ‘rising’ or ‘ascending’ meditatively from one sephirah to the next, on a path culminating eventually in the spiritual experience of Kether and mystical union with the Godhead. Rosaleen Norton’s encounters with various deities and spirit-beings accessed through trance on the astral planes are described in Chapter Four.

There can be little doubt that the spiritual purpose associated in the Golden Dawn with ‘rising in the planes’ was ultimately a quest for spiritual
transcendence and union with the Godhead, which in turn aligns the Golden Dawn with the Right-Hand Path rather than the Left-Hand Path in the Western esoteric tradition. A Golden Dawn document on the Qliphoth or negative energies of the Kabbalistic Tree of Life titled The Book of the Black Serpent (c. 1900) encourages its initiates to ‘banish thou therefore the Evil and seek the Good…let thy countenance be raised up towards the Light of the Holy One to invoke the Divine Brightness.’

Dan Merkur, a scholar well known for his study of Hermeticism and Gnosticism, argues that ‘ascension’ is a key element in the Hermetic tradition (which in turn was an important precursor of modern Western esotericism as practised in the Golden Dawn). Merkur also describes Hermetic ‘ascension’ in terms that resemble the Golden Dawn conception of ‘rising in the planes’:

In the Hermetic literature…different varieties of mystical experience were each associated with a specific celestial region on the trajectory of ascension…A single region of the sky might be termed the seven planetary heavens or the twelve zodiacal mansions… The ascension was literal, but mental rather than bodily. The ascent beyond the seven planetary zones of the sensible world was a motion of the mind [and involved] an experiential sense of the mind’s detachment from the body.

In Corpus Hermeticum XIII, Hermes explains to his son Tat that in the course of Seeing ‘I went out of myself into an immortal body, and now I am not what I was before. I have been born in mind.’ Elsewhere in the Corpus Hermeticum the sense of mystical ascent achieved during an out-of-the-body state is specifically associated with the spiritual will:

Command your soul to travel to India, and it will be there faster than your command. Command it to cross over to the ocean, and again it will quickly be there, not as having passed from place to place but simply as being there. Command it even to fly up to heaven, and it will not lack wings. Nothing will hinder it, not the fire of the sun, nor the aether, nor the swirl nor the bodies of the other stars… You must think of god in this way, as having everything – the cosmos, himself [the] universe – like thoughts within himself. Thus, unless you make yourself equal to god, you cannot understand god.

According to Merkur, for the Hermetic initiate the visionary or ‘imaginal’ realm was located in the Eighth celestial region, in a ‘dimension’ beyond the seven planetary heavens; however, in due course the initiate had to ascend still further, rising eventually to the Ninth cosmic region and achieving union with the pure Mind of the Creator. ‘The Hermetic God’,

[‘god’ is spelt lower case in Merkur’s quotation]
writes Merkur, ‘was the Mind that contains the cosmos as its thoughts’, and the Hermetic initiate had to proceed ‘from vision to union’, thereby experiencing the sacred realisation that ‘both the universe and self were located in the mind of God’.

In the Kabbalistic Tree of Life the first three sephiroth (ie. emanations from the Godhead) similarly transcend the imaginal realm of forms, because they are located above the Abyss that separates the seven lower sephiroth associated with Creation (see Chapter Two). MacGregor Mathers makes it clear that the initiate’s task in ‘rising in the planes’ is to ‘Look upwards to the Divine Light shining down from Kether.’ The spiritual aspiration of the Hermetic magician is ultimately towards the highest point on the Kabbalistic Tree of Life and transcendent union with the Godhead.

If Hermetic ‘ascent’ is characteristic of Right-Hand Path magic as practised in the Golden Dawn, where does this leave the ‘ascent’ advocated by Thelemic occultist Vadge Moore, who clearly aligns his magical philosophy with Aleister Crowley and the chthonic realms of the Left-Hand Path? The answer is by no means obvious. Both Vadge Moore and Bataille maintain that it is ‘the dark unconscious that helps to plant the roots for our ascent’. However other contemporary occultists associated with the Left-Hand Path appear to have an entirely different focus. As mentioned earlier, the Temple of Set emphasises the role of the dark god Set as the ‘Principle of Isolate Intelligence’, a magical concept vastly different from the Hermetic assertion that both the universe and self are located within the mind of God. The antinomianism and self-deification associated with the Left-Hand Path are similarly far removed from the Hermetic perspective.

The Qliphothic orientation of the Typhonian O.T.O. and Scandinavian Dragon Rouge is also quite specific. In Cults of the Shadow (1975) Kenneth Grant makes specific reference to the Qliphoth in distinguishing the path of the mystic (Right-Hand Path) from that of the Typhonian magician (Left-Hand Path):

The ascent of the Tree of Life is achieved by ‘rising on the planes’ until consciousness is merged with the Highest (ie. Kether). In order to reify this state in Malkuth (ie. to ‘earth’ magical consciousness) the process has to be reversed and the Tree descended via the back of the Middle Pillar… The Mystic retains consciousness in the Brahmavandhra (the topmost chakra, at the region of the cranial suture) but the Magician brings it down again to earth. It is the formula of Prometheus, who brought down fire from heaven… Thus also the Tantric Adept brings down the Light to manifest in Maya – the shadow-world of illusory images….The Secret Pathway through the realms of the Qliphoth at the back of the
Tree follows the downward path and comports the assumption of animal forms which correspond to the ‘gods’ of the Qabalistic [Kabbalistic] system. This is a valid explanation of the were-animal and its relation to pre-human atavisms. While Grant perceives the grounding of mystical consciousness via the Qliphthoth essentially as a re-directed flow of Tantric energy, the Dragon Rouge is somewhat more assertive in proclaiming the strengths and virtues of the Qliphoth. According to the Dragon Rouge, ‘the Qliphothic Qabalah [Kabbalah] uses the forces of destruction to free the adept from the limitations of creation’ and its Draconian initiations have the potential to lead the adept ‘down into the darkness where he or she can become a god’. In contradistinction to the principle of Hermetic transcendence and union with the Divine Mind mentioned earlier, the Dragon Rouge maintains that the ‘dark forces [of the Qliphoth]…make a free will and an individual existence outside God possible’ [my emphasis in italics]. As a magical organisation that openly aligns itself with what it calls the ‘nightside tradition’, the Dragon Rouge also supports the practice of Goetic magic through which ‘the magician conjures and evokes personified dark forces in the shape of different demons’. The demonic aspects of the Qliphoth are similarly addressed in the Golden Dawn document *The Book of the Black Serpent*, mentioned earlier, although the purpose and intent of this particular magical text is quite different. Here the Qliphoth are described as ‘unclean and evil’ and the Qliphothic planetary rulers and their ‘archdaemon servitors’ are identified as evil spirits similar to those associated with the Goetia and medieval grimoires. However the message to members of the Isis Urania Temple of the Golden Dawn in *The Book of the Black Serpent* is both clear and emphatic: ‘Banish thou therefore the Evil and seek the Good.’ At this point it is perhaps appropriate to emphasise the relevance of this material to the art and magic of Rosaleen Norton, since it is her art and visionary magic that are the key focus of this thesis. Intriguingly, the connection between Rosaleen Norton and the Qliphoth is quite specific and lends support to my suggestion that Norton’s art and magic align her substantially with the Left-Hand Path in modern Western magic. As already noted, even while Norton was still an art student during her teenage years she had become interested in the Kabbalah and the symbolism of the Tree of Life. She also had an ongoing fascination with aspects of demonology and would later study practical *Goetia* with Eugene Goossens (see Chapter Five). Norton used the title *Qlipha* for one of her artistic
works,\textsuperscript{361} and \textit{Qliphothic} entities like the Werplon are referred to in Chapter Six, which examines Norton’s magical art in detail.

It is also of particular interest that in \textit{Cults of the Shadow} Grant employs the term ‘astral lycanthropy’\textsuperscript{362} to refer to were-animal transformations associated with the astral plane. Although Grant and Norton appear not to have been in direct contact with each other,\textsuperscript{363} Norton undoubtedly had a creative facility that enabled her to evoke artistic images of \textit{were-animals} very similar to the entities Grant is referring to, and the term ‘astral lycanthropy’ aptly describes some of the terrifying experiences Norton underwent while exploring the nether regions of the ‘astral plane’ in a state of deep magical trance. Norton’s trance-based magical encounters are described in detail in Chapter Four.

\textbf{Summary of main points}

This chapter has argued that Aleister Crowley’s doctrine of \textit{Thelemic} sex magic had a substantial influence on the 20\textsuperscript{th} century Western esoteric tradition. (It also strongly influenced the occult practices of Rosaleen Norton – see comments below and Chapter Five.) Crowley’s \textit{Thelemic} approach is also characteristic of the so-called ‘Left-Hand Path’ in modern Western magic, sharing a number of key characteristics with other occult groups and organisations.

\textit{Crowley’s approach to sex magic can summarised as follows:}

a) Following the revelations contained in \textit{Liber Al vel Legis} Crowley advocated a form of libertine occult sexuality in which he was the Beast 666 and his magical partner the Whore of Babalon, or Scarlet Woman.

b) Crowley focused on the concept of sacramental sex, or ‘love under will’. In this form of sexuality every act of sexual congress with a partner had the potential for magical and sacred relevance.

c) After establishing the Argenteum Astrum and divorcing his wife Rose in 1909, Crowley’s bisexuality came increasingly to the fore. As his magical relationship with Victor Neuburg flourished, Crowley adapted his magical approach to include homosexual ritual sex. In the case of his sex-magic relationship with Neuburg, as evidenced by the ritual on the mountain at Da’leb Addin in Algeria, Crowley adopted the passive-lunar-receptive role, allowing anal penetration, whereas Neuburg took the active-solar-assertive role.
d) Crowley maintained that the fluids and secretions that flowed from sexual union constituted a ‘magical elixir’, and that this elixir should form part of an offering to a deity (eg. Ra-Hoor Khuit). It was appropriate that this elixir should be ‘consumed utterly’ by the ritual participants. In addition to sexual secretions, fresh menstrual blood was also a constituent in baked ritual offerings known as ‘cakes of light’. (Ritual references to ‘cakes of light’ would later emerge in the magical relationship between Eugene Goossens and Rosaleen Norton – see Chapter Five.)

e) The moment of sexual orgasm could be combined with magical visualisation to ‘will’ certain goals or outcomes to occur. These outcomes were given the potential to exist in physical reality because of the magical energy associated with sexual orgasm. Sexual energy could therefore bring magically willed goals or outcomes into existence. This idea was not unique to Crowley, and had earlier been advocated by the 19th century American occultist, Paschal Beverly Randolph. However Randolph believed that sex magic should only be practised by a married heterosexual couple, whereas Crowley maintained that employing sexual energy to produce tangible results was simply part of the magical process and was not confined to wives and/or husbands. Crowley’s Emblems and Modes of Use indicates that sex magic could be used to achieve financial gain.

f) Because sperm represented magical life-force, semen ejaculated through acts of masturbation could be used to ‘activate’ the magical sigils traditionally used to evoke demons. These sigils, or graphic magical symbols, were a feature of several medieval magical grimoires, like the Goetia, which were well known to Crowley. (This technique would also re-surface in the magical relationship between Eugene Goossens and Rosaleen Norton – see Chapter Five.)

g) Because of the controversial nature of sex magic Crowley believed it was both appropriate (and with regard to homosexuality, legally necessary) to cloak the activities associated with sex magic in symbolic language. For example, the expression ‘magical elixir’ referred to sexual secretions, ‘the Sacrifice of the Mass’ was a reference to ritualised ejaculation, and the ‘privy chapel’ a reference to a woman’s vagina.
The key characteristics of the Left-Hand Path in modern Western magic can be summarised as follows:

a) There is an emphasis in all forms of Left-Hand Path magic on individual mastery and self-empowerment. (The focus in Crowley’s magick is on individual communication with the Holy Guardian Angel – one’s higher self.) In Left-Hand Path occult practice it is the self that is finally triumphant, as in the Dragon Rouge where the ‘created’ becomes the ‘creator’, or in the Temple of Set where the ‘isolated psyche’ achieves immortality. This magical self does not ‘merge’ or ‘experience union’ with the Godhead, as in the Hermetic and mystical traditions, but remains distinct and separate from God, and may even become a god in its own right (see also self-deification below).

b) There is a distinct orientation towards the ‘dark’ side of magic. Goetic (demonic) evocation may be employed to conquer fears and limitations (as in the Dragon Rouge), and ‘Greater Black Magic’ may be practised in order to subjugate the universe to the will of the individual in his or her quest for ‘infinite potential’ (as in the Temple of Set). The Kabbalistic Qliphoth can also be considered potentially demonic.

c) ‘Antinomianism’, or the act of ‘going against the grain’, is an overriding defining principle of the Left-Hand Path in magic. In the modern magical context this includes ‘heretical’ or ‘blasphemous’ ritual acts (eg. Crowley’s Gnostic Mass or LaVey’s naked female ‘altar’), or the use of ritual elements ‘feared and loathed by conventional culture’ (eg. the consumption of semen, vaginal secretions and menstrual blood as advocated by Crowley and practised in the O.T.O.). Most modern magical or ‘occult’ groups, by their very nature, would be regarded in Christian circles as ‘heretical’, ‘heathen’ or ‘demonic’ and therefore, by definition, antinomian.

d) There is an emphasis on the spiritual quest for ‘self-deification’ or the act of ‘becoming a god’. This magical aspiration is clearly expressed in the Temple of Set and the Dragon Rouge. (It is also less obvious but nevertheless present in Wicca – see Chapter Two, where the High Priestess incarnates the Goddess within a ceremonial context by ‘Drawing Down the Moon’.)

e) The Left-Hand Path is associated with chthonic elements in magic – with pagan gods and goddesses of the Underworld and deities associated with fertility, lust, ecstasy and the primal forces of the id. Vadge Moore and Georges Bataille propose a worship of the gods and goddesses of
darkness and the earth – including such deities as Demeter, Hecate and Dionysus – because it is ‘the underworld of the id and the dark unconscious that helps to plant the roots for our ascent’. The Ophidian nature of O.T.O. Tantric sex-magick, with its emphasis on the arousal of the Kundalini serpent energy from the base of the spine, similarly has chthonic overtones: traditionally chthonic deities are symbolised by, or associated with, serpents. (Norton’s personal cosmology, which focused particularly on Pan, Hecate and Lilith, was also strongly chthonic in nature – see Chapter Four.)

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1 MacGregor Mathers, the influential co-founder of the Golden Dawn, died in 1918.
3 These include the Ordo Templi Orientis in the United States, the Typhonian O.T.O. in Britain, and the Church of Satan and the Temple of Set in the United States. Chaos Magick has also been strongly influenced by Crowley.
6 John Bull used this headline on 24 March 1923, for an article deploiring what it described as ‘the blasphemous and bestial ceremonies – or orgies’ which had taken place in Crowley’s Abby of Thelema in Cefalu, Sicily. He was also described in the same article as a ‘degenerate poet and occultist, traitor, drug fiend and Master of Black Magic’.
8 Ibid.
10 Born in the Ukraine, Madame Helena Petrovna Blavatsky (1831-1891) co-founded the Theosophical Society with Colonel Henry Steel Olcott in New York in 1875. After an unsuccessful marriage at the age of seventeen, Blavatsky travelled widely through Europe and the Middle East and claimed that she had been initiated by ‘Mahatmas’, or spiritual Masters, into the secrets of esoteric mysticism. She believed that the Masters helped her write many of her major works, thereby providing the foundation for modern Theosophy. These works include Isis Unveiled, The Secret Doctrine, The Key to Theosophy, and The Voice of Silence. Madame Blavatsky presented herself to her followers as a powerful psychic medium but it is likely that many of the psychic powers she claimed she had received from the Masters were clever deceptions. Her main contribution to mystical thought was the manner in which she sought to synthesize Eastern and Western philosophy and religion, thereby providing a framework for understanding universal occult teachings.
11 Matthew 25:33.
16 Chaos Magick, which dates from the late 1970s, was inspired initially by both Austin Osman Spare (see Chapter Six) and Aleister Crowley. Its anarchistic and chthonic orientation, its pursuit of magical
individualism, and its tendency towards antinomianism, locate it on the ‘left-hand path’ in contemporary Western magic.

17 V. Crabtree, loc cit.
18 Ibid. (The LaVey quotation is from his key work, *The Satanic Bible*: ‘Book of Lucifer’, para.30.)
19 Ibid.
20 Ibid.
21 General information statement from the Dragon Rouge published on-line at www.dragonrouge.net.
22 Ibid.
25 While he was at Cambridge University, Crowley changed his name from Edward Alexander Crowley to Aleister Crowley, by adopting a variant Gaelic spelling of his middle name. See L. Sutin, loc cit: 48.
26 L. Sutin, loc cit: 65.
28 Ibid: xvi.
29 Ibid: xvii.
31 Ibid.
32 The ‘Secret Chiefs’ of the Golden Dawn were high-ranking spiritual beings who, it was claimed, provided guidance and inspiration to the leaders of the Inner Order. MacGregor Mathers, in particular, emphasized their importance. See Chapter Two.
33 Ibid: 69.
35 Crowley believed Aiwass was messenger from the Egyptian deity Horus, the falcon-headed god that had the sun and the moon for his eyes. Crowley came to believe that he was Lord of the Aeon of Horus, which began in 1904, replacing Christianity and the other major religious traditions of both West and East.
36 Although a psychoanalytic perspective on why there should have been an anti-Christian component to Crowley’s spiritual revelation is outside the scope of this thesis, Crowley’s new role as the Beast 666 is almost certainly related to his restrictive and oppressive Christian upbringing within a Plymouth Brethren family: Crowley’s entire magical philosophy is grounded in notions of personal freedom and a libertine philosophy.
37 Crowley’s unique spelling for the Scarlet Woman of the Apocalypse, as revealed in *The Book of the Law*. The spelling ‘Babalon’ has a Kabbalistic numerical value of 156 which, according to Crowley’s disciple Kenneth Grant, equates with the number of shrines in the City of Pyramids. Grant maintains that the name ‘Babalon’ means ‘Gateway of the Sun, or solar-phallic power’ (see *Nightside of Eden*, London 1977: 259) – thereby revealing its symbolic significance to practitioners of sex-magick.
39 The Boulak Museum no longer exists; the antiquities housed in this museum were transferred to the National Museum, Cairo. (Symonds, loc. cit: 1973: 81 fn)
41 Ibid.
45 See stanza I:40 of *Liber Al vel Legis*, in the appendix to *The Magical Record of the Beast 666*, loc. cit: 304. See also *The Comment* which comes at the conclusion of *Liber Al vel Legis*, loc cit: 315.
47 Ibid.
almadels, engraved with magical symbols, and also used a large number of 49-inch squares filled with magical conjurations. These magical visions are described in A. Crowley, The Magical Dilemma of Victor Neuburg, W.H. Allen, London 1965 where Neuburg’s diaries are also discussed in detail.


Neuburg's magical diary describes how Crowley on one occasion rebuked him by giving him thirty-two strokes of a gorse switch, drawing blood. 'He is apparently a homosexual sadist,' wrote Neuburg, 'for he has been a secret sexual dimension to the rituals of the Golden Dawn, but in my view their arguments are unconvincing. MacGregor Mathers, arguably the most influential figure in the formation of the Second Order, performed the ceremony with obvious satisfaction. Because of the sacramental nature of the act, each union must be magically directed... the ritual must be directed to the transfinite and non-individualised consciousness represented by Egyptian Nuit... The earthly Isis is Isis, the Scarlet Woman.' (loc cit.:145)


John Michael Greer and Carl Hood have suggested (Gnosis magazine: 43, Spring 1997) that there may have been a secret sexual dimension to the rituals of the Golden Dawn, but in my view their arguments are unconvincing. MacGregor Mathers, arguably the most influential figure in the formation of the Golden Dawn, valued celibacy and virginity and never consummated his marriage to Moina Bergson (see I. Colquhoun, Sword of Wisdom: MacGregor Mathers and the Golden Dawn, loc cit.:54).


These writings included such texts as Liber A’ash ( Equinox 1:6 , September 1911: 33-39), Liber Cheth (Equinox 1: 6 (September 1911: 23-27) and Liber Stellae Rubae (Equinox 1:7, March 1912: 29-38).


The Second Order rituals related to the Kabbalistic sephiroth Tiphareth, Geburah and Chesed on the Kabbalistic Tree of Life. See Chapter Two.


Neuburg's magical diary describes how Crowley on one occasion rebuked him by giving him thirty-two strokes of a gorse switch, drawing blood. 'He is apparently a homosexual sadist,' wrote Neuburg, ‘for he performed the ceremony with obvious satisfaction.’ Quoted in C.Wilson, Aleister Crowley: the Nature of the Beast, loc cit: 91. See also J.O. Fuller, The Magical Dilemma of Victor Neuburg, W.H. Allen, London 1965 where Neuburg’s diaries are also discussed in detail.

Enochian magic derives historically from the work of Elizabethan occultists Dr. John Dee (1527-1608) and Edward Kelley (1555-15950, who met in 1581. Dee and Kelley made use of wax tablets called almades, engraved with magical symbols, and also used a large number of 49-inch squares filled with letters of the alphabet. Nearby, on his table, Kelley had a large crystal stone upon which he focused his concentration and entered a state of trance reverie. Kelley maintained that while he was in a state of trance ‘angels’ would appear, and they in turn would point to various letters on the squares. These letters were written down by Dee as Kelley called them out. When these invocations were completely transcribed, Kelley then reversed their order, believing that the angels had communicated them backwards to avoid unleashing the magical power which they contained. Dee and Kelley considered that the communications formed the basis of a new language known as Enochian. These magical conjurations were subsequently incorporated into magical practice by the ritual magicians of the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn, who used them to induce trance visions on the ‘astral plane’. See Chapter Three.

These magical visions are described in A. Crowley, The Vision and the Voice [1929], Sangreal Foundation, Dallas, Texas 1972.

A. Crowley, The Confessions of Aleister Crowley, ed. J.Symonds and K.Grant, Hill and Wang, New York 1970: 621. According to Lawrence Sutin, Crowley was deeply ashamed of his homosexuality because it ‘conflicted with his status as a manly gentleman coming of age’ (Do What Thou Wilt, loc cit:
Crowley was also well aware of the famous libel action that led to the imprisonment of Oscar Wilde. This had occurred in 1895, during Crowley’s first year at Cambridge University.

Spare was briefly a member of the O.T.O. circa 1910 but soon quarrelled with Crowley and thereafter sought to avoid him. Even though Spare became friendly with Thelemite Kenneth Grant in the late 1940s, Spare and Crowley were never reconciled. See Chapter Six and also K. and S. Grant, Zos Speaks !: Encounters with Austin Osman Spare, Fulgur, London 1998.

Crowley writes in The Confessions: ‘I protested that I knew no such secret. He said, “But you have printed it in the plainest language.” I said that I could not have done so because I did not know it. He went to the bookshelves and, taking out a copy of The Book of Lies, pointed to a passage in the despised chapter.’ See A. Crowley, The Confessions of Aleister Crowley, ed. J. Symonds and K. Grant, Hill and Wang, New York 1970: 710.


Crowley later visited Berlin where he received instructional documents from the German O.T.O. He was also granted the grandiose title ‘King of Ireland, Iona and all the Britains within the Sanctuary of the Gnosis’ and took Baphomet as his new magical name. Later Crowley adapted the Ninth degree of the O.T.O so that it identified the priest and priestess as Osiris and Isis, ‘seeking Nuit and Hadit through the vagina and the penis’. He also developed a series of homosexual magical rituals with Victor Neuburg featuring invocations to Thoth-Hermes. At one point in these rituals, which became known collectively as the Paris Working, Crowley scourged Neuburg on the buttocks and cut a cross on his chest For details see J.O. Fuller, The Magical Dilemma of Victor Neuburg, W.H. Allen, London 1965:203-216.

See F. King (ed.), The Secret Rituals of the O.T.O., loc. cit: 29. King points out that Crowley was not accepted by a majority of German O.T.O. members until 1925. The Order was suppressed by the Nazis in 1937.


Ibid.

Ibid.

Ibid.

Ibid.

P-R. Koenig suggests that Kellner may have been one of the twelve co-founders of the Hermetic Brotherhood of Light in Boston/Chicago in 1895. See www.user.cyberlink.ch/~koenig/spermo.htm.


Ibid: 97.


Sabazius X’ and AMT IX’, History of Ordo Templi Orientis, loc cit.:17.

Published in The Equinox Vol.III:1, March 1919 – the so called ‘Blue Equinox’.

Sabazius X’ and AMT IX’, History of Ordo Templi Orientis, loc cit.:17.


A.Crowley, De Arte Magica, Ch.XII , published on-line at www.skepticfiles.org.

Ibid, Ch.XIII.

Ibid.

Ibid, Ch.XVI.

Baphomet was Crowley’s magical name after he assumed leadership of the British branch of the O.T.O. in 1912. It is also the name of a demonic deity represented graphically by Eliphas Lévi as a goat-headed god with wings, breasts and an illuminated torch between his horns. The Knights Templar were accused by King Philip IV of France of worshipping Baphomet although few members of the Order admitted to this ritual practice. It has been suggested that the name Baphomet may be a corruption of Mohammed.


Frater Osiris, ‘Analysis of Liber XXXVI, The Star Sapphire’, loc cit. Frater Osiris is probably referring to Crowley’s sex magic text Emblems and Modes of Use, where it is suggested that the ‘elixir’ should be consumed in this way.

This is Crowley’s expression. IAO was one of the sacred names ascribed to the archon Abraxas, a planetary deity associated with Basilides, a Gnostic philosopher who lived and taught in Alexandria c.125-140 CE. The name Abraxas in Greek letters has a numerical value of 365, thereby linking the deity to the number of days in a year. Abraxas was said to rule over 365 heavens and was depicted on numerous charms, amulets and talismans in order to attract good luck.

A. Crowley, Gnostic Mass (Liber XV, Ecclesiae Gnosticae Catholicae Canon Missae), composed in Moscow in 1913.

Ibid.

Ibid.

Ibid.

See section in the present chapter dealing with altered states of consciousness in modern magical practice.


A. Crowley, Gnostic Mass (Liber XV, Ecclesiae Gnosticae Catholicae Canon Missae), composed in Moscow in 1913.

Ibid.

Ibid.

Ibid.


The Mark of the Beast is ‘the sign of the Sun and Moon or Cross and Circle conjoined’. See www.thelemicgoldendawn.org/rituals/phoenix.htm.


A. Crowley, Emblems and Modes of Use, loc cit.

Ibid.

Ibid.

Ibid.

Ibid.

See listing of key Crowley texts on sex magic published on-line at www.hollyfeld.org. Liber A’ash vel Capricorni Pneumatici heads the list. A ‘Class A’ document in the Argenteum Astrum was one that could not be altered or modified in the slightest way and had to be adhered to by members strictly as presented by Crowley.


Ibid.

Franz Anton Mesmer (1734-1815) studied medicine at the University of Vienna and embraced the then-current scientific view that a magnetic fluid permeated all aspects of life. Mesmer then came to believe that when this natural source of energy was blocked in the body, disease and ill-health would result. After graduating from the University of Vienna, Mesmer worked as a healer, first in Vienna and later in Paris, using magnets to ‘correct’ imbalances in the human organism. He transmitted ‘healing energy’ to his patients by making passes over his patients with his hands, or by using iron rods or wands that he had magnetized. A Royal Commission established in Paris in 1784 to test Mesmer’s concept of ‘animal magnetism’ (Mesmer’s term for the magnetic life-energy), found that his healing method had no scientific basis but that some patients nevertheless responded positively because their own imagination provided the healing benefit. Mesmer is rightly regarded as one of the pioneers of psychosomatic medicine and hypnotherapy. During the late-Victorian era of the Golden Dawn, the term ‘Mesmerist’ was used to connote a hypnotist.


Ibid.

Randolph received this initiation from an Islamic sect usually referred to as the Nusairi, who live mainly in the mountains near the city of Latakia in Syria. These sect members were formerly known as the Namiriya, or Ansariyya – a reference to the mountainous region where they come from. Randolph’s reference to ‘Ansairetic Mysteries’ is based on an early variant spelling.

This is a form of divination using the trance state to achieve a magical outcome.


Randolph’s term *Ansairetic* is a reference to the Nusairi Islamic sect in Syria, formerly known as the Ansariyya. See also B.H. Springett, *Secret Sects of Syria and Lebanon*, Allen & Unwin, London 1922.


This is especially true of Crowley during his visit to the United States around the time of World War One. Crowley arrived in New York in October 1914 and during his first year in America experimented with a range of sexual partners – both male and female – in the IX° and XI° O.T.O. sex magick rituals. This included the use of prostitutes in his magical rituals. See L. Sutin, *Do What Thou Wilt: a Life of Aleister Crowley*, loc cit: 244.


These Gnostic sects include the Carpocratians, the Ophites and the Phibionites and they are of interest because of their libertine tendencies, chthonic snake-imagery, and ritual consumption of blood and semen respectively. The Phibionites provide arguably the most intriguing parallel to Thelema in relation to Crowley’s sacramental sex-magick practices. See also P-R. Koenig, ‘Spermo-Gnostics and the O.T.O’, loc cit. and P-R. Koenig, ‘Correct Gnosticism’, loc cit.


The American O.T.O. remains vigilant in policing pirated editions of Crowley’s voluminous writings on magick and the doctrine of Thelema. However it has been less successful preventing various websites on the Internet from publishing most of Crowley’s significant magickal texts on-line. These rival websites include www.thelemicgnosticism.org; www.luckymojo.com; www.hermetic.com; www.rahoorkhuit.net; www.bbs.bapho.net; www.skepticfiles.org; and www.sacred-texts.com.

The Fraternitas Saturni was established in Germany in 1926 by Eugen Grosche (1888-1964) and was the second magical order to be based on Crowley’s doctrine of *Thelema*. The first was Crowley’s Argenteum Astrum which in turn merged into the O.T.O. after 1922.

One can sense this rivalry in such articles as Michael Staley’s ‘Typhonian Ordo Templi Orientis: the O.T.O. after Crowley’ which seeks to reinterpret various historical events in the O.T.O. as documented by the American branch of the O.T.O. Staley, who is a senior member of the Typhonian O.T.O. in Britain and editor of its publication *Starfire*, is widely regarded as Grant’s deputy and heir apparent. See www.freespeech.org/magick/koenig/staley2.htm.

Grant defines the Draconian Cult as ‘the cult of the Fire Snake represented celestially by the stellar complex, Draco, the Dragon or Fire-breathing Beast of the Great Deep (of Space).’ Grant claims that
'Draco is identical with the Goddess Kali of the later Tantric Cults of the Left Hand Path. The Draconian Cult is also alluded to as the Ophidian Current when no specifically Egyptian reference is intended' and he notes further that 'It is also known as the Typhonian Tradition, for Typhon was the primal Goddess and the Mother of Set.' See K. Grant, Cults of the Shadow, Muller, London 1975: 214.  
186 The manifesto is undated but Grant has confirmed that it was circulated around 1948. See H. Bogdan ‘Kenneth Grant: Marriage between the West and the East’, loc cit.: 4, fn 2.  
187 Ibid: 3.  
188 Ibid.  
189 Ibid.  
190 Ibid.  
192 There are no references in Norton’s writings or media interviews that indicate she had any knowledge of the Typhonian O.T.O. in Britain. This is not surprising because Kenneth Grant’s first book, The Magical Revival, was not published until 1972 – only seven years prior to Norton’s death. See bibliography.  
194 According to Swami Sivananda Radha the concept of Kundalini also conveys ‘the implication is that of a double spiral moved up into three dimensions’. See S. Radha, Kundalini Yoga for the West, Shambhala, Boulder, Colorado 1981:xviii.  
200 These are Muladhara, Svadisthana, Manipura, Anahata and Vishuddha respectively. See S. Radha, Kundalini Yoga for the West, Shambhala, Boulder, Colorado 1981.  
201 Samadhi is the state of yogic consciousness which leads to self-realisation. It is referred to in the Bhagavad-Gita as ‘seeing the self in all things and all things in the self’.  
202 The Sahasrara chakra is regarded as the abode of god Shiva, and ‘corresponds to cosmic consciousness’. ‘If the kundalini is unified with the god Shiva in the Sahasrara chakra, the yogi experiences supreme bliss.’ I. Fischer-Schreiber et al. (ed.) The Encyclopedia of Eastern Philosophy and Religion, Shambhala, Boston 1994: 61.  
203 Some western interpreters of Kundalini Yoga have identified the chakras with specific nerve plexuses, ganglia and glands in the body. However yoga authority Haridas Chaudhuri notes in his article ‘Yoga Psychology’ (in C. Tart (ed.) Transpersonal Psychologies, Harper & Row, New York 1975 : 231-280) that this is misleading and contrary to Tantric teaching. Chaudhuri describes the chakras as ‘consciousness potentials’ (loc cit: 265) which only assume meaning as the Kundalini is aroused. The chakras themselves lie within the so-called Brahmanadi – the innermost channel within the Sushumna. While there is a correlation between the chakras and various regions and organs of the body, the chakras do not literally equate with them. Nevertheless because the chakras are visualised in certain locations it useful to summarise their positions in the body. The following listings also include the Tatta, or element, associated with each chakra (where applicable) and the associated Hindu deities:  

**First chakra:** Muladhara, located at the base of the spine, near the coccyx; Element: Earth; Meditation colour: red; Deities: Child Brahma and Dakini  
**Second chakra:** Svadisthana, located two inches below the navel in the sacral region; Element: Water; Meditation colour: orange or silver; Deities: Vishnu and Rakini  
**Third chakra:** Manipura, located three inches above the navel in the lumbar region; Element: Fire; Meditation colour: red-gold or yellow-gold; Deities: Rudra and Lakini  
**Fourth chakra:** Anahata, located near the heart; Element: Air; Meditation colour: green or smoky grey; Deities: Isa (or Isvara) and Kakini  
**Fifth chakra:** Visuddha, located in the throat; Element: Spirit; Meditation colour: indigo or smoky purple; Deities: Sadashiva and Sakini
Sixth chakra: Ajna, located between the eyebrows; Element: all elements in their pure essence; Meditation colour: white; Deities: Shambu/Paramashiva or Ardhanarishvara, and Hakini

Seventh chakra: Sahasrara, located above the crown of the head; no Element assigned for this is a transcendent realm of pure consciousness; Meditation colour: white; Deity: Brahman (Oneness)

206 The divine androgynous, which represents the fusion of male and female polarities within one being, is a symbol of mystical unity. It occurs not only in the Hindu tradition but also in western spiritual alchemy where King Sol and Queen Luna are joined together in ‘the conjunction of opposites’.
210 Ibid
211 Ibid: 74.
212 Identified by Dr Marguerite Johnson as Letter Four in her article ‘The Witching Hour: Sex Magic in 1950s Australia’: loc.cit: 20.
213 By the British firm Rider & Co. in London, who also published Crowley’s translation of Eliphas Levi’s The Key to the Mysteries in 1959.
214 This unguent would have contained psychotropic herbal ingredients intended to produce a dissociative effect when rubbed into the skin – see Chapter Five.
215 For example, the rare Crowley limited edition, Konx Om Pax [1907] referred to earlier. Norton would have had great difficulty purchasing this book in Sydney during the 1950s or 1960s. The only specialist esoteric bookshop in Sydney at this time was the Adyar Bookshop, owned and managed by members of the Theosophical Society and they expressly refused to display Crowley’s books on their shelves because of their explicit magical content.
219 Sutin adds the pertinent observation that ‘There is, in this tradition, no moral judgment attached to the use of “left” and “right”, although Western interpreters have frequently interposed a negative connotation to “left” that is native to their own, but not Hindu, cultures.’ See L. Sutin, Do What Thou Wilt : A Life of Aleister Crowley, loc cit: 92-93.
221 Ibid: 89-90.
222 Ibid: 90.
224 Ibid: 92.
228 Ibid.
231 Ibid.
233 Ibid.
234 Anon., ‘The Devil is on our Doorstep’, Australasian Post, Sydney, 30 June 1955: 3-5. The article ended with the words: ‘The ritual was a complete mockery of Christian worship.’
236 Personal communication from Michael Aquino and Lilith St Clair (leading members of the Temple of Set) to the author during filming of *The Occult Experience*, loc cit. San Francisco, California 1984.


244 Ibid.


247 These ‘co-authors’ were Burton Wolfe, in *The Devil’s Avenger* (1974) and Blanche Burton in *The Secret Life of a Satanist* (1990) – see Bibliography.


250 LaVey’s daughter, Zeena Schrek, confirmed to me that these elements of LaVey’s personal biography are largely fabricated: personal communication to the author, 1999. See also fn.252 below.


252 Ibid.


254 Ibid.


257 Journalist Gavin Baddeley interviewed Anger a few months after LaVey’s death in 1997 and confirmed that ‘the Black Pope’ and Anger had been friends for almost forty years: Anger had been active in the Church of Satan since its earliest days. See G. Baddeley, *Lucifer Rising*, Plexus, London 1999.78.

258 Sir Francis Dashwood (1708-1781) was a wealthy English aristocrat who combined a life of privilege with a taste for the bizarre. Dashwood worked for Frederick, Prince of Wales, and met many leading figures of the day. His contacts allowed him the opportunity of numerous liaisons with aristocratic mistresses and an outlet for his promiscuous and voracious tendencies. Despite his marriage to the somewhat pious widow of Sir Richard Ellis, Sarah, he continued to gather like-minded friends around him and decided to form a group of ‘initiates’ who would hold sexual orgies to worship the Great Goddess. Dashwood called his brotherhood The Knights of St. Francis – naming it after himself, not the saint – and attracted a membership of thirteen, including the Marquis of Queensberry, the Earl of Sandwich, and the Prince of Wales himself. Meetings were held at Medmenham Abbey near Marlow on the Thames, and employed the services of whores who were transported from London by coach. These sexual practices at the Abbey continued for around fifteen years, and it became known as the Hell-fire Club after acquiring a reputation as a place of devil-worship. Sir Francis Dashwood later moved the premises to a location at West Wycombe, where he had underground tunnels and a central chamber excavated, allowing his group to continue to meet in secret.


261 See fn.102 above.


266 Ibid.
267 Interview between the author and Dr Michael Aquino for the television documentary *The Occult Experience*, San Francisco 1984.
268 Ibid.
269 Ibid.
270 Ibid.
271 Ibid.
272 Ibid.
273 Ibid.
275 Henceforth all reference to Satan was replaced by reference to Set.
277 Interview between the author and Dr Michael Aquino for the television documentary *The Occult Experience*, loc cit.
279 Ibid.
280 Ibid.
281 The Temple of Set recognises six formal degrees of initiation: Setian I °; Adept II °; Priest of Priestess of Set III °; Master of the Temple IV °; Magus V °; and Ipsissimus VI °.
282 Interview between the author and Lilith Sinclair for the television documentary *The Occult Experience*, San Francisco 1984.
283 Ibid.
284 Ibid.
285 Aquino was the first High Priest of the Temple of Set, and this position was later held by other senior figures within the organisation, including Don Webb and (briefly) Zeena Schrek. Aquino returned to the post of High Priest in 2002.
288 Ibid: 17.
290 Ibid: 19.
292 Ibid: 15.
293 Ibid: 19.
294 Ibid: 16.
295 Ibid
298 Interview between the author and Dr Michael Aquino for the television documentary *The Occult Experience*, loc cit.
300 Interview between the author and Lilith Sinclair, loc cit.
304 A.S. LaVey, *The Satanic Bible*, loc cit: 94.
306 Ibid.
307 Ibid.

312 In *Magick in Theory and Practice* (1929) Crowley writes: ‘Man is capable of being and using anything which he perceives, for everything that he perceives is in a certain sense a part of his being. He may thus subjugate the whole Universe of which he is conscious to his individual will.’ (See fn.29 above). This approach is clearly mirrored in the practice of Greater Black Magic, as expounded by Michael Aquino in the Temple of Set.

313 In an interview published in 1998 Zeena Schreck confirmed to Kiki Scar that ‘the Temple of Set does not have an official curriculum concerning sexual magic and prefers to allow individual initiates to experiment with this method privately, if they wish to.’ See K. Scar, ‘Sado-Magic for Satan: an interview with Zeena Schreck’, *Cuir Underground*, 4: Summer 1998:4, also published on-line at www.black-rose.com. Schreck was briefly High Priestess of the Temple of Set in 2002 and was succeeded by Michael Aquino, the current High Priest and co-founder of the Temple of Set.


318 The Gnostic archon Abraxas was said to rule over 365 heavens and was depicted on numerous charms, amulets and talismans throughout the ancient Middle East in order to attract good fortune. See fn.109 above.

319 V. Moore, ‘Chthonic: from Beast to Godhead’, loc cit.

320 Ibid.

321 Ibid.

322 Ibid.

323 Ibid.


328 When Francis King first published a collection of the Flying Rolls under the title *Astral Projection, Magic and Alchemy*. See also fn.331 above.


330 Ibid.


332 See Chapter Two for references to the Tarot Major Arcana and the five Tattva symbols of the elements utilised within the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn for meditative purposes and ‘inner plane’ magical workings.


339 Ibid.
341 The sacred name HCOMA derives from the so-called Enochian system of angelic magic established by the Elizabethan occultists Dr John Dee and Edward Kelley. See fn. 68 above.
343 See www.dragonrouge.net/english/general.htm.
346 *Corpus Hermeticum XIII*:3, quoted in Merkur, ibid: 85.
347 *Corpus Hermeticum XI*: 19-20, quoted in Merkur, ibid: 85.
348 Merkur: 90.
349 Ibid: 89.
350 Ibid: 90.
352 V. Moore, ‘Chthonic: from Beast to Godhead’, loc cit.
355 That is to say, an inverted Kabbalistic Tree featuring ten ‘demonic’ sephiroth.
356 See www.dragonrouge.net/english/general.htm.
357 Ibid.
358 Ibid.
359 According to the *Book of the Black Serpent*, the Qliphothic planetary rulers associated with the ten spheres on the reverse side of the Tree of Life are Thamiel (Neptune/Kether); Chaigiedl (Pluto/Chokmah); Sateriel (Saturn/Binah); Gamehioth (Jupiter/Chesed); Galeb (Mars/Geburah); Tagaririm (Sol/Tiphereth); Harab-Serapel (Venus/Netzach); Samael (Mercury/Hod); Gamaliel (Luna/Yesod) and Nahemoth (Terra/Malkuth). Ten ‘evil chiefs’ are also assigned to these spheres. They are, respectively: Satan, Beelzebub, Lucifuge, Ashtarto, Asmodai, Belphegor, Baal, Adramalach, Lilitl and Nahemah. See *The Book of the Black Serpent*, loc cit.
363 Norton does not refer to Kenneth Grant in any of her writings and it is unlikely that she would have known of him. Grant’s first book, *The Magical Revival*, was not published in London until 1972, only seven years prior to Norton’s death in 1979, and twenty years after the publication of *The Art of Rosaleen Norton* (1952).
Norton’s persona as a witch
When Rosaleen Norton reflected on her youth and discussed her magical background in several interviews with journalist Dave Barnes,¹ she maintained that she had been born a witch ² and that she was self-taught: ‘If you are a witch nobody has to teach you. In my case, it came naturally, and nobody had to teach me.’³ Asked if she had the ‘Devil’s mark’⁴ on her body, Norton confirmed that she had some atypical physical attributes that she associated with her persona as a witch: ‘My bodily peculiarities include a pair of freak muscles (extending from armpit to pelvic bone on either side) not normally found in the human body’ [and] ‘a rare, atavistic formation of the upper ears known as “Darwin’s Peak”’. She also alluded to ‘two small blue dots on my left knee, which are one of the traditional witch marks’ and her ‘quasi-feline vision, ie. sharper and clearer in subdued light than in bright light’.⁵ Norton later made a specific point of demonstrating some of her distinctive physical characteristics when two interviewers from a university newspaper visited her in 1962.⁶ In her autobiographical article, ‘I was born a Witch’, Norton maintained that the blue marks had appeared on her body when she was a child:

At seven years old two small blue marks very close together appeared on my left knee, and they are there still. I have since learned that two (or sometimes three) blue or red dots together on the skin are among the traditional witch marks. Although, of course, I didn’t know this at the time, I remember noticing them the year we arrived in Australia and wondering what they were; they seemed important in some way that I couldn’t define.⁷

In Chapter One of this thesis it was noted that when Norton was a child, her creative artistic expression included the production of various macabre drawings and that these drawings were deemed unacceptable at the Church of England girls’ school she attended. At school Norton also developed a fondness for Dracula:

There was the time, for instance, when, having been taken to the play Dracula at the Theatre Royal, I became positively Dracula-happy for weeks afterwards. I had a crush on my sinister idol, rivalling anything felt by today’s bobby soxers [note: this article was published in 1957] for Elvis the Pelvis or Marlon Brando. I had enlisted an unwilling cast of fourth-form actresses by bribes, threats and persuasion, to enact daily in the lunch hour and even more bloodily eerie version of the play, adapted by
myself. Our theatre was the large hall, situated just outside the boarders’ dining-room. I played the title role, draped in blackboard cloths with two open umbrellas for wings, and very soon the rest of the cast were hurling themselves into their parts with equal abandon. The ensuing spirited performance was terminated on the third day by an irate headmistress declaring that the cries of ‘Give me blood to drink’, and the screaming, were putting the boarders off their food, and that furthermore this sort of thing was morbid and must cease.

For Norton, Bram Stoker’s fictional figure of Dracula, rooted in the folklore traditions of Transylvania, was dramatic and confronting and was an indicator, during her adolescence, of her increasing fascination with heathen or pagan imagery. A major transition in her religious orientation occurred, however, with her new found interest in the ancient Greek deity Pan, god of the wild, untamed forces of Nature.

**From Christianity to Pan**

In classical ancient Greek mythology Pan was variously considered to be the son of Hermes and the nymph Dryope, or the offspring of Zeus and Callisto. Pan was part man, part goat, and was represented with the horns, tail, hind legs and hoofs of a goat and also with a flat snub nose and beard. Sometimes he was also depicted with the ears of an ass, a symbol of acute perception. Fond of music and dancing, Pan was associated with shepherds and the woods and also possessed prophetic powers. Because the woods were considered a place of fear at night, and because Pan often frightened unwary travellers in the countryside, Pan’s name gave rise to the idea of ‘panic’ or alarm, and Pan himself was considered unpredictable, lascivious and lecherous. Pan’s distinctive shepherd pipes or pan-pipes, his own invention, were fashioned from seven reeds and were referred to as a syrinx. Pan’s name literally means ‘all’, and the philosophical and religious concept of pantheism (which derives from a combination of the Greek *pan* = all, and *theos* = God) conveys the idea that the universe as a whole is divine and that there is no divinity other than the universe and Nature.

The earliest published reference relating to Rosaleen Norton’s concept of Pan is contained in an article titled ‘Art Models Show Their Own Art’, published in *Pix* magazine, Sydney, in July 1943. The article focused specifically on artworks by Norton and her friend and fellow artist Selina Muller, and included a photograph of Norton posing naked for Muller next to an easel (see Chapter One). Also featured in the article were three graphic artworks by Norton: *Lunacy*, a work which depicted a chaotic and
sick mind, *Astral Scene*, an important work depicting Norton’s trance technique and her encounter with a partially manifested mythic being, and the painting *Pan*, which would later be included in the 1949 exhibition at the Rowden White Library Gallery in Melbourne. This latter work depicts Pan in a markedly different aspect from the much-photographed mural of Pan that adorned her altar in the Brougham Street flat in Kings Cross. In the earlier, c.1943 depiction, Pan is facing us directly, his hands resting on the rim of a cauldron in which swirling humanoid forms are visible. Pan is leering at the viewer and has fanged teeth and a devilish demeanour. He has a robust, muscular torso and pointed ears, and also brandishes cat’s whiskers – an unconventional flourish apparently related to Norton’s love of cats. In the painting Pan is entwined by a snake which, according to Norton’s accompanying description, represents wisdom. The figure of Pan, meanwhile, embodies ‘the universal part of the self rising from the cauldron of the subconscious’.

According to the article ‘Inside Rosaleen Norton’, based on an interview with Norton and published in *Squire* in April 1965, Norton’s attraction to the ancient Greek god Pan is said to have coincided with her rejection of her family’s Christian beliefs and specifically with her parents’ wish that she should be ‘confirmed’ into the Anglican faith at the age of twelve.
Norton’s interest in the mythic figure of Pan led in turn to improvised magical rituals:

She started to take more than a passing interest in Pan, the horned...half-man, half-goat Greek deity who spent most of his time rolling young nymphs in the Arcadian meadows. This interest, generated by the confusion which accompanies adolescence and fired by Ro’s [sic] inherent rebellion, became a fetish. She devised worship rituals, using robes, Chinese joss sticks and wine she pinched from a stock hidden by her parents. At this stage she hadn’t discovered the true meaning of the bright blue dots which had appeared mysteriously on her knee a few years before. She rejected Christianity entirely and embraced Pantheism...the identification of God with all that exists...Ro believes that everything is equally a manifestation of her God – rather Gods – because she has divided her divinity into several gods. These are Satanic spirits which manifest themselves to her in the classical satyric image. ‘I often see them,’ she told Squire. 21

Norton had also provided an account of her belief in Pan in an autobiographical article published in Australasian Post in January 1957:

Some occult theories hold the stars and planets to be the bodies of great beings and so do I. I think the God Pan is the spirit whose body – or such of it as can be seen in these four dimensions (the fourth being time) – is the planet Earth, and who, therefore, in a very real sense, is the ruler and god of this world. Perhaps that is why he was given the name ‘Pan’, which in Greek means ‘All’, for he is the totality of lives, elements and forms of being – organic, ‘inorganic’ and otherwise, comprising the planet as a whole: much as an animal body is a totality of myriads of cells, bacteria etc, in which ordered whole these live and function, having their own forms of “intelligence” and perception, according to type. Such a body would be the “world” to any of its micro-organisms [italics in Norton’s text], and the integrated consciousness of the body’s owner would exist in another “world”, and on a different plane from theirs.’ 22

In this particular article Norton also speculated about the nature of this metaphysical being who, in her view, ruled the world:

If a man could communicate with any of his body cells on its own plane, it would perceive its ‘god’ in terms fitted to its understanding. To see him as he is to himself, ie. as a man, the cell consciousness would have to unite with and ‘become’ that of the man, in a world outside anything conceivable in its entire experience. Of course, this is only a parallel, and shouldn’t be regarded as exact: a god, for one thing, is a very different form of life, involving other laws and dimensions, and could (as far as I know) manifest simultaneously in any number of places and shapes, to those who form part of him, or others, without disturbing any plane of his multiple consciousness and activities elsewhere.’ 23
Norton’s cosmology is based on an understanding that Nature and the Cosmos are innately sacred. Divinity is ‘divided’ into a number of gods and goddesses and these ruling deities – headed by Pan – are able to exist and function in more than one dimension of reality. Her concept of a hierarchy of spirits headed by Pan (‘whose body is the earth’) is reminiscent of the ancient Gnostic archons who were thought to rule different regions of the heavens while also maintaining governance of the earth. Archons were celestial rulers – ‘gate-keepers’ guarding entry to the higher spheres – and their powers transcended and encompassed all aspects of human activity. In Norton’s conception, Pan equated with the totality of human experience and existence – although she expanded his reach to embrace the totality, or ‘ground’, of all being. In a sense Pan, for her, embodied and represented the furthest reaches of the sacred universe – extending to infinity in all directions. It is all the more remarkable that Norton began to develop this concept of Pan while she was still an adolescent:

The onset of adolescence often awakens the religious as well as the sexual urge, and this was so for me. For some time previously I had been constantly aware of a world wherein moved vast and mysterious powers, the sense of gay daemonic [sic] presences and hauntingly familiar atmospheres, elusive yet powerful and
compelling, when everything round me seemed to change focus like patterns in a kaleidoscope. 25

For Norton this led to the development of an instinctual ritual desire, an emotive and worshipful response to the mysterious powers that seemed to surround her and which demanded that she should forsake her childish frivolities in favour of serious and respectful pagan worship:

If the Kingdom of Pan had always been with me, it had been mostly in the background, overlaid by what was called reality: Now it had begun to emerge and pervade the latter [Norton’s italics]. Awareness grew stronger and stronger that the tedious world of childhood didn’t really matter, because this held the essence of all that called to my inmost being: Night and wild things and mystery; storms; being by myself, free of other people. The sense of some deep hidden knowledge stirring at the back of consciousness; and all about me the feeling of secret sentient life, that was in alliance with me, but that others were unaware, or afraid of, because it was unhuman.

So my first act of ceremonial magic was in honour of the horned god, whose pipes are symbol of magic and mystery, and whose horns and hooves stand for natural energies and fleet-footed freedom: And this rite was also my oath of allegiance and my confirmation as a witch. I remember my feelings on that occasion well, and they are valid today: If Pan is the ‘Devil’ (and the joyous goat-god probably is from the orthodox viewpoint) then I am indeed a ‘Devil’ worshipper.’26

Here Norton reveals herself as an instinctual, unconventional adolescent who is willing to trust her intuitive sensibilities because this awareness opens her spirit to the wild forces of Nature. Again in true Gnostic fashion – and perhaps in anticipation of her emerging allegiance to the heretical powers of magic – she also feels that she is stepping forth on a path of ‘deep hidden knowledge’. Ahead she faces some sort of initiation into secrets and mysteries. And yet Norton knows – even as a teenager – that she is venturing well beyond the confines of conventional religion. She is ready to embrace Pan, who may very likely be seen by others – among them the more ‘orthodox’ Christian members of her family and community – as the Devil. We have here already a clear and early expression of the rebellious, antinomian spirit that would later align her with the Left-Hand Path in Western magic.

**Hecate, Lilith and Lucifer**

Pan was clearly the supreme deity in Norton’s magical pantheon – she acknowledged very early on her allegiance to the ‘Kingdom of Pan’ and would later refer to herself as the ‘High Priestess at the Altar of Pan’.27 However other ancient deities and supernatural entities also provided
Hecate  In classical Greek mythology, Hecate, or Hekate, was usually considered to be the daughter of the Titans Perses and Asteria, although in other accounts she is the daughter of Zeus and Asteria. Hecate was goddess of the night and darkness, and ruler of the hidden aspects of Nature. As a goddess of transitions, Hecate was associated with birth and death, and from the fifth century BCE onwards, she is also specifically associated with ghosts; Hecate could also cause nightmares. Accompanied by barking dogs and hordes of spirits of the ‘restless dead’ – those people unable to find their way to Hades – Hecate was sometimes called kleidophoros (‘key-bearer’) and as a gate-keeper of Hades she was able to let spirits in and out of the Underworld. A triple goddess, Hecate revealed three different personae and from the Roman period onwards she was linked to the moon: as a moon goddess she was associated with Selene (Roman counterpart: Luna) and Artemis (Roman counterpart: Diana), and as a goddess of the Underworld she was also linked to Persephone (Roman counterpart: Proserpine).

Hecate was only worshipped at night; dogs and black lambs were offered to her as sacrifices. Often shown entwined in coils of snakes, which in ancient Greece were associated with the dead, Hecate was a goddess also associated with the crossroads, especially three-way intersections – such crossroads being in turn considered supernatural places and associated with magic and spirits.

In an interview I conducted with Norton in Sydney in 1977, two years before her death, she told me that she regarded Hecate as a more imposing deity than Pan because Hecate was known to be a dealer in death and a purveyor of curses. Norton felt Hecate was often very frightening because...
she was a shadowy goddess flanked by cohorts of ghouls and nightforms. However Norton maintained that Hecate could also be a protector. If ever Norton was required to curse people with her ‘witch current’ in order to redress what she believed to be an unfair ‘balance of events’, Norton called on Hecate’s hexing powers and believed this was a legitimate use of the magical art.35

**Lilith** Although Norton linked Hecate and Lilith in her pantheon of ancient female magical deities, Lilith’s mythic origins are quite different to Hecate’s. Lilith is an exotic she-devil who first appears in Sumerian mythology in the middle of the 3rd millennium BCE before entering the Jewish tradition during the Talmudic period (2nd-5th centuries CE) and then finally emerging as a queenly consort at God’s side during the Kabbalistic era.36 In the Sumerian tradition Lilith was acknowledged as a ‘beautiful maiden’ but she was also regarded as a harlot and vampire who would never willingly let her lover depart.37 During the Talmudic period Lilith was known as Adam’s first wife but their relationship was deeply troubled and when Lilith came to believe that Adam intended to overpower her, she uttered the magical name of God, rose into the air, and flew off to the Red Sea, a place believed to be full of lascivious demons. There she indulged herself in unbridled promiscuity giving rise to more than a hundred demonic offspring each day.38

Norton discovered references to Lilith in Carl Jung’s *Psychology of the Unconscious* [1919] and quoted from Jung’s text in the unpublished notes which accompanied her illustrations in *The Art of Rosaleen Norton*:

...Adam, before Eve, already possessed a demon wife, by name Lilith, with whom he quarrelled for mastership. But Lilith raised herself into the air through the magic of the name of God and hid herself in the sea. Adam forced her back with the help of three angels. Lilith became a nightmare, a Lamia, who threatened those with child and who kidnapped the modern child...39

For Norton, Lilith was ‘Queen of Air and Darkness – symbol of Night’ 40 Gavin Greenlees, whose poem on Lilith accompanied Norton’s drawing in *The Art of Rosaleen Norton*, referred to Lilith as ‘the Queen of Night and Sympathy’ and writes that Lilith is an ‘image of the Unconscious with its power to align images and draw together those spirits who have the true affinity – holding man by the soul image.’41 Lilith was also traditionally depicted as a Lamia who threatened children, and it is interesting to note in passing that Norton herself was totally opposed to ever having children of her own. For Norton the very notion of ever being a mother was repugnant. In 1964 she told an interviewer from the television station Channel Nine,
Sydney, that she had no wish to be a mother⁴² and in her autobiographical article ‘Witches Want No Recruits’ (1957) she made a similar remark:

...nothing would ever induce me to have a baby; the very idea of it was always repugnant, chiefly because, I feel, it would detract from my own completeness...⁴³

However, for Norton the defining quality of Lilith is that she is a powerful symbol of the Night. Lilith is the ‘Queen of Air and Darkness’ and mirrors Hecate’s chthonic role as Goddess of the Underworld and the secret forces of Nature. Norton acknowledges her attraction to the

Plate 49: Lilith – ‘Queen of Air and Darkness’ (Plate IV in *The Art of Rosaleen Norton*)

potency of darkness, writing in the introductory essay in *The Art of Rosaleen Norton* that her ‘vision… is one of Night’.⁴⁴ Norton’s fascination with the powers of darkness is also evident in the powerful poem, written by Norton herself, which accompanies her controversial drawing *Black Magic* (Plate XVII) – a work that shows a naked woman (presumably Norton herself) in a passionate and intimate sexual embrace with a black panther. The poem reads like an invocation:

*Light’s Black Majesty: Midnight Sun: Lord of the wild and living stars;*
*Soul of Magic and master of Death;*
Panther of Night... enfold me.
Take me, dark Shining One; mingle my being with you,
Prowl in my spirit with deep purring joy,
Live in me, giver of terror and ecstasy,
Touch me with tongues of black fire...’ 45

Norton’s ecstatic vision of the night is powerful and deeply felt. She is
fully at home enfolded by the ‘luminous silence’ of the Night,46 and her
poem ends triumphantly: ‘You, Dark Spirit, are with me...’ 47 As a
visionary magician, Norton has her mythic home in the realm of the
Midnight Sun: this is the domain where her soul resonates with the primal
pulse of the Universe itself.

Lucifer/ The Adversary
The figure of Lucifer/The Adversary completes the lesser triad in Norton’s
magical cosmology. For Norton, Lucifer was closely associated with the
spirit of rebellion and the quest for secret knowledge. In her illuminating
essay, A Vision (c.1940s, published in The Supplement to The Art of
Rosaleen Norton, 1984) Norton reminds her readers that ‘...we seek
knowledge and truth and... “Lucifer” means “Light Bringer”...our greatest
reward is in the eternal adventure of the search itself.’48

At least two major artworks relating to Lucifer form part of Norton’s
oeuvre: the painting Lucifer, which was exhibited in the 1949 exhibition in
Melbourne, and the drawing The Adversary, reproduced in The Art of
Rosaleen Norton in 1952. 49 In the Judaeo-Christian tradition Lucifer
[Latin: ‘light-bearer’] is another name for Satan. In Isaiah 14.12 the
reference to Lucifer relates to the King of Babylon but was misunderstood
to refer to a fallen angel and subsequently passed into Judaeo-Christian
theology as a name for the Devil.50 Isaiah 14.12 opens with a dramatic
pronouncement: ‘How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of
morning! How are thou cut down to the ground which didst weaken the
nations! [from the Authorised Version].’ These words, said to predict the
impending doom of the King of Babylon, were taken by St Augustine and
other Christian theologians like Origen 51 to refer to the fall of a mighty
archangel who had rebelled against God in heaven and who had been cast
out in punishment. In heaven this archangel had been known as Lucifer but
on earth he would be known as Satan [Hebrew: ‘the adversary’]. In heaven
Lucifer had sought to be sufficient unto himself, refusing to admit that he
was dependent on God. His sin was therefore that of pride, his ensuing
punishment on being cast headlong from heaven absolute and eternal. As a
consequence of his fall from grace Lucifer was then filled with hatred
for God.
Since the time of Origen, when Lucifer and Satan were identified as one and the same, any distinction between fallen angels and demons had been removed in Christian theology. As historian Richard Cavendish observes:

In this tremendous vision most of the main threads of the later Christian conception of the Devil are drawn together – ‘the satan’ who accused men before God; the war in heaven, with the forces of God led by Michael; the expulsion of Lucifer from heaven; the fallen angels or stars who were his followers; the seven-headed dragon Leviathan; and the belief that the Devil’s vengeful fury has been let loose on earth...

Although they depict essentially the same supernatural being, Norton’s *Lucifer* and *The Adversary* are nevertheless quite distinctive as artworks. In *Lucifer*, we are shown the figure of the light-bearer, winged and resplendent, standing naked as he presides over his domain. Lucifer’s body shines with golden light but by way of contrast his wings are dark and in his left hand he holds a devilish mask that represents the other, demonic, side of his character. At Lucifer’s feet sit the horned figure of Pan, playing on a pipe, and a naked feline demon with clawed feet, based on the figure of Norton herself. Other humanoid forms are also depicted at the periphery and in the background of this complex composition, including a mysterious bare-breasted snake-creature and a number of supernatural beings who seem caught up in the vortex of a nightmare. *The Adversary* is a much
simpler, though nevertheless powerful, composition and depicts the fearsome encounter between a small and vulnerable, naked human being and a much larger and imposing winged entity – the Adversary, or Satan, also shown naked – whose head-cap is surmounted by a snake.\textsuperscript{54}

In both of these works the central figure is depicted as arrogant and aloof and clearly commands both authority and respect. In my 1977 interview with the artist, referred to earlier, Norton told me that although she considered Lucifer’s role to be that of an adversary, this did not necessarily make him ‘evil’ As Norton noted at the time:

\begin{quote}
He binds and limits man when it appears that he is growing too big for his boots. He tries to trick man, not with malicious intent, so much as exposing the limitations of the ego and man’s pride in his own existence.\textsuperscript{55}
\end{quote}

\begin{figure}
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{Plate_51.png}
\caption{Plate 51: \textit{The Adversary} (Plate XVI in \textit{The Art of Rosaleen Norton})}
\end{figure}

\textbf{Other magical entities in Norton’s cosmology}

In addition to Pan, Hecate, Lilith and Lucifer, who collectively represent the major figures in Norton’s pantheon, a range of other magical and mythic entities are referred to her in her writings and in her art. Because Norton claimed an existential reality for several of these entities they
should also be considered as significant, contributing to both her artistic oeuvre and also to her personal magical cosmology.

In her glossary in *The Art of Rosaleen Norton* the author makes reference to a number of magical beings from different cultural traditions, thus reflecting her own eclectic and idiosyncratic interests. They include Bucentauro, whom Norton describes as a ‘type of eidolon’ or phantasm; Eloi, the ‘phantasy spirit of Jupiter’; Makalath, the Laugher, described as ‘an archangel who expresses himself cosmically through the power that manifests itself in this world as humour’; Fohat, ‘the dynamic energy of cosmic ideation’—an entity referred to in Theosophical literature; Erzulie, a ‘voodoo Priestess of Mamaloi’ and The Dubouros, whom Norton identifies as ‘a being representing Mind ...similar to the Egyptian god Thoth as the detached, enigmatic Recorder’. Norton also lists Val, Kephena, Borzorygmus and Mwystingel as ‘imaginary beings of Twizzari’, the latter her name for the ‘Dreamworld...an aspect of the Astral Plane’, and she makes reference also to Trudgepig, whom she describes as ‘another imaginary creature ... [a] symbol of hypocritical gravity and gloom’.

In the glossary listings in *The Art of Rosaleen Norton* the artist reveals her acquaintance with the Jewish Kabbalah and the ten spheres of consciousness, or *sephiroth*, on the Tree of Life (see Chapter Two). Drawing on Dion Fortune’s classic text, *The Mystical Qabalah* (1935), a work which heads the list of esoteric publications in her bibliography, Norton refers to Binah, representing the sphere of the ‘Supernal Mother’, and Geburah, the sphere of ‘Rightful Destruction’ on the Kabbalistic Tree. It is significant that Norton gives the spelling as Qabalah, rather than Kabbalah, which is the variant used by Fortune in her text. Whether the mystical qualities associated with Binah or Geburah were theoretical points of reference or experiential realities for Norton is impossible to determine. Norton’s personal knowledge of the historical origins of the Jewish Kabbalah, for example, is called into question by her reference to the Qabalah as ‘originally the ancient Chaldean secret doctrine which was known in Egypt under the name of the Book of Thoth...’ a summation that probably owes more to Madame H.P. Blavatsky’s Theosophical theories in *Isis Unveiled*—a book also listed in Norton’s bibliography—than to sound Jewish scholarship.

In addition to citing familiar references from the Kabbalistic Tree of Life, Norton also makes frequent allusions—both in her captions and also in her journal entries and imagery—to the ‘dark’ or negative aspects of the Tree. As noted earlier, these realms are known as the *Qliphoth*: Norton seems to
have had several experiences involving these ‘dark’ energies and draws on excerpts from her personal diary to provide a commentary in *The Art of Rosaleen Norton*.64 The Thelemic magician Kenneth Grant describes the *Qliphoth* – the plural form of the Hebrew *Qlipha*, meaning ‘harlot’ or ‘strange woman’ – as ‘shells’ and ‘shades’ of the dead.65 According to Grant the *Qliphoth* signify ‘otherness’ and refer to ‘the shadowy world of shells or reflections... power zones [that] form the Tree of Death’.66 It is within the magical domain of the *Qliphoth* that Norton claims to have encountered the threatening magical entity she calls the Werplon, a hostile humanoid insect-creature illustrated in *The Art of Rosaleen Norton* (Plate XV).67 The Werplon68 is by far the most hostile and confronting creature in Norton’s magical cosmology.69 An entry from her magical journal describes her encounter with this terrifying entity:

...I realised that my consciousness was united with that of a totally different Order of Being. Temporarily I was experiencing the sensations of one of those great – and to this world terrible – entities called Werplons. ...Sensation was intense; swift vibrant power and precision, and awareness below the surface, of some constant danger... Deep purple predominated with overtones of black, lit by splashes of vari-coloured [sic] light at certain of the power points...Suddenly a shock of apprehension electrified the Werplon. That needle-keen precision of operation seemed to waver, to become slightly clumsy. A wave of fright and disgust swept me as one of the Werplon’s senses registered the loathsome human vibration... I knew terror... Waves of pain invaded my aetheric body. My mind screamed... 70
As several art-works in *The Art of Rosaleen Norton* clearly indicate,71 Norton was fascinated by these ‘dark’ polarities of magical Consciousness. What is especially significant about Norton’s magical encounter with the Werplon is that she says it occurred while she was utilising her ‘aetheric body’ [sic], a reference to her out-of-the-body exploration of the ‘astral planes’ accessed through trance and self-hypnosis. Fortunately, a detailed transcript survives from Norton’s interview with psychologist L.J. Murphy at the University of Melbourne in 1949 which relate to the artist’s use of self-hypnosis (See Appendix A). This document provides valuable insights into Norton’s inner-plane encounters with powerful magical entities and archetypal forces – encounters which subsequently provided the conceptual and metaphysical basis for many of her most dramatic artistic images.

**Norton’s exploration of self-hypnosis and trance**

Norton’s interest in ‘multiple consciousness’ and ‘other planes or dimensions of being’, led her to experiment with self-hypnosis in 1940, when she was twenty-three years old.72 Norton was already familiar with the psychoanalytic works of Jung and Freud and after taking up residence in the Ship and Mermaid Inn had begun reading widely in the field of witchcraft, occultism, demonology and mythology. According to an article published in *People* in March 1950 Norton believed that hypnotic trance states offered practical experiential access to a vast realm of heightened inner awareness that she wanted to explore first-hand.73

Norton began her experiments by meditating in a darkened room,74 restricting her normal consciousness in an effort to induce automatic drawing and allowing an ‘abnormal mode of consciousness’75 to take over. According to Norton this produced ‘a number of peculiar and unexpected results and some drawings which were later exhibited’.76 Norton’s experiments in states of consciousness culminated in what she referred to as ‘a period of extra-sensory perception, together with a prolonged series of symbolic visions’.77 In commenting on this process, Norton noted: ‘As for drawings done in a state of trance, I use the word “trance” roughly to cover any abnormal mode of consciousness.’78

As noted earlier, Norton provided psychologist L.J. Murphy with an extensive statement of her experiments with self-hypnosis in 1949. Several sections from this lengthy personal statement relate to Norton’s magical cosmology and her notions of the metaphysical structure of the universe with its various ‘Realms of Being’. Other aspects of Norton’s statement
which relate more specifically to her visionary art-making process will be discussed in Chapter Six.\textsuperscript{79} Because of the significance of this primary source document, lengthy quotations are included in the following section. The complete document is reproduced in Appendix A.

**Norton’s trance method**

Norton records her trance method in quite explicit terms, combining ritual elements and meditative techniques in order to facilitate an altered state of consciousness.

... I decided to experiment in self-induced trance; the idea being to induce an abnormal state of consciousness and manifest the results, if any, in drawing. My aim was to delve down into the subconscious and, if possible, through and beyond it.

I had a feeling (intuitional rather than intellectual) that somewhere in the depths of the unconscious, the individual would contain, in essence, the accumulated knowledge of mankind: just as his physical body manifests the aggregate of racial experience in the form of instinct or automatic reaction to stimulus.

In order to contact this hypothetical source, I decided to apply psychic stimulus to the subconscious: stimulus that the conscious reasoning mind might reject, yet which would appeal to the buried instincts as old as man, and would (I hoped) cause psychic ‘automatic reflexes’ (Religious cults use ritual, incense etc. for the same reason). Consequently, I collected together a variety of things such as aromatic leaves, wine, a lighted fire, a mummified hoof, etc... all potent stimuli to the part of the subconscious that I wished to invoke. I darkened the room, and focusing my eyes upon the hoof I crushed the pungent leaves, drank some wine, and tried to clear my mind of all conscious thought. This was the beginning (and I made many other experiments which were progressively successful).\textsuperscript{80}

Norton’s initial foray into self-induced trance reveals what I have referred to in Chapter Three as the chthonic nature of her spiritual and magical quest. Norton already senses that her first hypnotic journey will take her far into the depths of the subconscious psyche – almost as if she is about to explore the mysteries of the Underworld – and her ritual response is pagan to the core. Like a true follower of Pan or Dionysus she gathers aromatic leaves, lights a fire and drinks some wine – and focuses on a mummified hoof which provides an atavistic component to her ritual. Already she is establishing the innately pagan context for her trance journeys onto the inner planes.

Norton writes that over a period of around five months spent exploring self-hypnosis, her consciousness became ‘extremely exalted’ and her
dissociative states of mind gave rise to increased perceptual acuity and feelings of enhanced personal power:

I seemed, while experiencing a great intensification of intellectual, creative and intuitional faculties, to have become detached in a curiously timeless fashion from the world around me, and yet to be seeing things with a greater clarity and awareness than normally. I was working day and night, having very little sleep or rest, yet a supply of inexhaustible power seemed to flow through me.81

As we have seen in Chapter Three, in Dr J.W. Brodie-Innes’ (Frater Sub Spe’s) account of the transition from waking consciousness to inner-plane awareness, Norton experienced a sense of detachment accompanied by a feeling of clarity and potency. She now began to combine magical techniques of invocation 82 with her trance method of self-hypnosis, resulting in the spontaneous creation of a magical symbol, or sigil, which she associated with the ancient Egyptian figure of Thoth. Norton’s concept of magic as ‘the science and art of causing supernormal change to occur in conformity with will’ appears to derive from the published works of Aleister Crowley who described the techniques of magic in almost exactly those terms.83

It is also significant that in the following statement Norton uses the word ‘invocation’ rather than ‘evocation’ in defining her magical purpose. Invocation has been defined by the noted magical practitioner W.E. Butler – a colleague of Dion Fortune in the Fraternity of the Inner Light – as a means of ‘attract[ing] the attention of some Being of a superior nature to our own, or some cosmic force of a higher order’ and differs from magical evocation which is traditionally associated with medieval grimoires and the summoning of spirits.84 Norton’s use of the word ‘invocation’ suggests that she was seeking metaphysical inspiration or guidance from a ‘higher’ magical source:

One night I felt impelled, quite apart from conscious volition, to perform a kind of ritual of invocation; after which I executed a peculiar waking ‘automatic’ drawing, the composition of which assumed the form of the symbol 画.

The upper figure is the sign of Thoth – impersonality and balanced force – while the lunar crescent can represent several things, but chiefly (as applied to the individual) receptivity to occult powers; the personality; and, according to the Kabbalists, an emblem of the sphere of magic. I once read of magic defined as ‘The science and art of causing supernormal change to occur in conformity with will’, which seems a fairly comprehensive description.85
Norton’s magical method is consistent with magical procedures both within the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn and also within Crowleyian Thelema. As outlined in Chapters Two and Three, application of the will is crucial to the magical undertaking because will can effect changes both within the physical world and also in the imaginal or mythic realms of the astral plane. We will encounter the use of magical sigils – personalised symbols of the magical will – in the work of trance artist and magician Austin Osman Spare, whose occult method is compared with Norton’s in Chapter Six.

According to Norton’s account, two years after her initial experiments with hypnosis she decided to utilise the trance-based spiritualistic technique of automatic writing in an effort to determine whether life continued after death. This exploratory episode is significant because Norton came to believe that she could access other planes of existence through her soul-consciousness or ‘astral body’. This in turn had implications for the way in which she would subsequently conceptualise the actual nature and structure of the magical universe:

Two years later, I decided to attempt some more investigations, this time with the object of discovering whether life continues after bodily death and, if so, in what form. To this end, I began by attempting to communicate with a dead friend by means of automatic writing. After several unsuccessful attempts, the pencil began to move quite freely, although for some days I obtained only subconscious ramblings and symbolism.

Unexpectedly, however, a great change took place: there was a strong awareness of another presence, and the sensation of the writing altered completely, as though someone apart from myself were guiding my hand. The writing became clear, concise, and altered completely. It altered, in fact, into the handwriting of the friend with whom I was attempting to communicate. Moreover, the answers to my questions became definite and coherent. Soon, and during the following nine or ten months, I gained the rough outlines of a philosophical and metaphysical conception of the Universe and life beyond death which by no stretch of the imagination could I attribute to my normal self, since it embodied knowledge of a type which my studies had never encountered, such as those which dealt with highly abstract propositions entering the realms of higher mathematics.

For Norton, this new-found knowledge of the after-death realm appeared to offer opportunities for self-exploration that she had not anticipated:

I should make it clear that my previous reading in occult lore had dealt almost exclusively with medieval demonology and witchcraft, this being the side of such matters which chiefly interested me. Inspired by the previous occurrences, I had also studied a certain amount of symbolism, but I had never touched upon either physics, philosophy, or metaphysics, as such. Oddly enough, while actually receiving super-
normal information I quite easily comprehended theories which when reviewed later were often difficult to grasp (heightening of faculties).

In this way I also learned something of various other subjects, including the structure of the subconscious mind, comparative symbolism, etc. Meanwhile, without realising it, I was becoming highly sensitised psychically, and soon could communicate almost at will, without any effort of concentration. Much of the data was, of course, fragmentary and incomplete owing to the crude method of communication. Other information, particularly that dealing with life on other planes of Being, was misinterpreted owing to lack of standards of comparison on my part: since one can only visualise any image in relation to something in one’s own experience, my understanding was necessarily limited. Now, however, I am able to correlate and apply the missing factors to things that were merely hinted at during this period.88

Norton became interested in the possibility of transferring her ‘soul-consciousness’ or ‘astral body’ into the post-mortem domain because here she could explore metaphysical realms not normally accessible in everyday experience. Again Norton’s quest reflects a desire to gain hidden or secret knowledge, a quest for gnosis in relation to the world beyond death:

...one subject had become paramount in my mind. I had heard that it was possible to achieve transition to a different Realm of existence and live consciously the type of life that is generally experienced after physical death. This became my supreme desire, for a number of reasons. The idea, above all, appealed to me as a type of adventure and exploration more fascinating than any other. There were, too, things that I wished to know which I realised would be impossible without first-hand experience; for I felt that entities who had had the experience of death would have passed into a different and perhaps more advanced state of being, entailing conditions of life which would be almost incomprehensible according to our concepts. As soon as communication was firmly established, therefore, I asked if such a thing were actually possible. The reply was in the affirmative. It seemed that co-operation of will from two planes of Being was necessary for safe accomplishment of the process. I was told, also, that I would have to wait for a few months, presumably to gain the necessary psychic training.89

Norton’s experiments finally resulted in the attainment of an altered state of awareness involving mental dissociation or ‘out-of-the-body’ consciousness, a method popularly referred to by occultists as ‘astral travel’ or ‘travel on the astral planes’. Many occultists associated with the Western esoteric tradition believe (like Golden Dawn magician Dr J.W. Brodie-Innes, mentioned earlier) that when they engage in astral travel they transfer their conscious faculties from the physical body to a soul-body or ‘etheric’ vehicle that allows them to venture consciously on the inner or ‘astral’ planes.90
My excitement can be imagined; and during the following months becoming impatient and often sceptical of ever accomplishing any such thing, I made several attempts at separating myself from my body. My conception of the process was a hazy one and very different from actuality, since I imagined that my physical body would temporarily have to die, later to be re-animated on my return.

Once during one of these attempts I succeeded in inducing a type of cataleptic trance. Gradually over the space of about an hour my heart beat became slower and slower – I was very aware of this in a detached fashion – and I could feel my breathing lessening until both heart-beat and breath had practically ceased; and then an extraordinary sensation ran over my entire body, which I can describe only as ‘cessation’. There was an inward hush as though my body’s mechanism had come to a pause – and then a light frothing bubbling sensation spread through my veins as though my body were dissolving into foam. I do not know what the result would have been had I not been disturbed. However, at this moment my husband entered the room. Thinking I was ill, he felt my pulse and exclaimed in alarm. The dissolving stopped, there was a sense of shock, and with a slight jerk my breathing started again very slowly. I tried to reassure him, but could not speak at first, as my lips and vocal organs seemed extraneous and difficult to control. It took me another hour to resume normal functioning, after which he told me that my skin had felt icy and slightly damp (I had not been aware of this).

Reference was made in Chapter Three to the classic Hermetic notion of the separation of soul and body and also to the Golden Dawn concept of ‘rising in the planes’. In both contexts the key element is dissociation – the separation of conscious awareness from the confines or restrictions of the physical body. Norton’s exploration of trance describes the same essential processes: during a state of gradual dissociation her sense of mental acuity is heightened while her body ‘dissolves into foam’. Having experienced partial dissociation Norton notes that she is now able to expand the range of her paranormal faculties:

The next step of importance was clairaudience – a clear and coherent form of thought transference which eliminated the cruder medium of automatic writing. The first indication of this occurred under the very prosaic circumstances of washing clothes one afternoon. Possibly for the very reason of lack of conscious concentration my brain was in a receptive condition. I suddenly became strongly aware of another presence. I realised that it was C. (the person with whom I had been communicating) and then unexpectedly, as though my brain were a tuned-in wireless set, I could hear her speaking; which so thrilled me that mentally I positively shouted at her.

‘Yes, it really is me,’ came the reply. ‘I am able to communicate with you directly now.’ I was told later that there are numerous cells in the brain which do not normally function. During this conversation I was told, amongst other things, that inter-Plane transition would occur for me in about a month: and so it did, almost to the day.
I doubt if any impression of the actual initial experience could be conveyed in words, so I shall not attempt to describe it, beyond saying that there was a sensation of ecstasy, during which my entire being seemed to dissolve and disintegrate, then gradually re-form into a new whole. The experience was so overwhelming that at first it was difficult to realise what had happened; for simultaneously with this an entire change of consciousness and focus had been effected. My body felt as though it were formed of warm golden light; the physical body had become merely an appendage, and all my sensations were centred in the plasmic body. I had gained new and different senses – and here I must comment upon something concerning which the popular conception of ‘discarnate life’ is the absolute reverse of reality. Far from being devoid of sense enjoyment, a plasmic body of this type contains the very essence of sensuousness to a degree that renders the physical sensory organs utterly negligible by comparison. As a rough and very inadequate parallel, compare the difference between touching something of delicate texture with naked hands, and with hands encased in heavy leather gloves. ‘There’ the body is completely a reflection of the mind, so that any type of pleasure, whether emotional or intellectual, engenders as a part of itself a corresponding sensuous enjoyment. (This also applies in the opposite direction so that misery of any description is accompanied by excruciating pain.).

Norton’s reference to a ‘plasmic body’ – a body which ‘felt as though it were formed of warm golden light’ – is reminiscent of numerous accounts found in the parapsychological and transpersonal literature relating to ‘out-of-the-body’ experiences (OOBEs) and ‘near-death experiences’ (NDEs) in research that continues to the present day. This branch of parapsychology is sometimes referred to as thanatology and, although subject to widespread dismissal from many sceptics, has also attracted serious attention from a number of respected transpersonal psychologists and neuroscientists intent on fully comprehending the relationship between human consciousness and the brain (Grof 1976; Goleman & Davidson 1979; Pribram 1986; Van Lommel 2004; Kelly et al. 2006 – see Bibliography). For some of these scientists the issue of whether human consciousness can exist beyond, or outside, the brain is a key concern because it would determine whether the living brain is the actual source of human consciousness or more specifically the vehicle through which consciousness operates. In the latter instance, in a metaphorical sense, the relationship between brain and consciousness could be likened to the electrical impulses received through a television set from an external source of transmission; here the hardware (= brain) is not the actual source of the programme. This scientific dilemma has still not been resolved but the issue itself nevertheless has profound implications for religious concepts of life after death. If the existence of disembodied human consciousness could be scientifically proven it would lend considerable credence to the theoretical possibility of an afterlife, although the actual
nature of that afterlife would probably remain a matter of far-ranging religious and metaphysical speculation. The noted cardiologist Dr Pim van Lommel, a leading researcher specialising in the medical study of near-death experiences (NDEs), draws on quantum theory to distinguish between what he calls ‘phase-space’ – ‘invisible, non-local, higher-dimensional space…where every past and future event is available as a possibility’ – and ‘real-space’ which is associated with ‘body-linked waking consciousness’ and the material, manifest world. Van Lommel believes that in the same way that waves and particles mirror each other in quantum dynamics,

…life creates the transition from phase-space into our manifest real-space…life creates the possibility to receive the fields of consciousness (waves) into the waking consciousness which belongs to our physical body (particles)…there is a permanent interaction between these two aspects of consciousness… When we die, our consciousness will no longer have an aspect of particles, but only the eternal aspect of waves.

According to Van Lommel the evidence from scientific NDE research suggests that human consciousness is independent of brain function: conscious awareness is received like a wave-transmission by the living brain but does not actually originate within the physical organism itself. Van Lommel believes that consciousness is best understood as being based on fields of information, consisting of waves and… orginates in the phase space…[At] the time of physical death consciousness will continue to be experienced in another dimension, in an invisible and immaterial world, the phase-space, in which all past, present and future is enclosed.

Van Lommel’s medical model of life, death and consciousness is pertinent to Norton’s experiences of altered states of consciousness because, according to her account, Norton discovered she was able to contact a *discarnate* human being while in a state of self-induced trance. Norton’s cosmology and magical practice similarly depend on her ability to access inner planes of conscious awareness which extend beyond familiar waking consciousness. Like the traditional shaman, who similarly accesses mythic realms of awareness while in a state of consciously willed dissociation, Norton seeks to transcend the apparent barrier of physical death through her inner-plane explorations and in turn describes her trance experiences by using such terms as ‘ecstasy’, ‘golden light’ and ‘inner-plane transition’. Norton also notes that in the realm of awareness accessed through trance-dissociation, ‘the body is completely a reflection of the mind’. Further, her consciousness appears to be no longer constrained by physical limitations:
Plate 53: According to Van Lommel, ‘phase-space’ consciousness transcends form and is experienced as waves

‘My body felt as though it were formed of warm golden light; the physical body had become merely an appendage…’ ¹⁰³

Referring back to the Hermetically-based Golden Dawn concept of mystical ascent known as ‘rising in the planes’ (see Chapter Three) the visionary branch of modern Western magic can be seen as being specifically associated with the quest to transcend the limitations of physical form and awareness (exemplified by the Gnostic concept of the human body as a prison that ‘traps’ and encloses the divine spark of consciousness). Having induced an altered state of consciousness the visionary magician ‘journeys’ upwards through the planes – through an act of consciously willed spiritual ascent – towards the sacred source of Life itself (perceived variously as the Godhead, Infinite Formlessness etc.). Essentially this process parallels what Van Lommel has described as the return to ‘phase-space’, where consciousness is experienced as waves (plasmic energy) and the world of particles (physical form) no longer applies. Seen in this context, visionary magicians operating within the Western esoteric tradition appear to be employing archetypal images and symbolic metaphors like the Kabbalistic Tree of Life as mapping devices that help them delineate higher planes of reality: they do this in order to structure the transition from conscious awareness at the level of physical reality (‘particles’) through to divine transcendence (‘waves’) – expressed in Kabbalistic terms as the mystical ascent from Malkuth, via Tiphareth to Kether on the Tree of Life.
Norton’s account clearly indicates that it was through attaining a state of out-of-the-body consciousness that she was able to explore these metaphysical realms of existence. As noted in Chapter Three, this claim is not without precedent in the esoteric literature but in Norton’s case it led to the formulation of an operative model of the universe in which different mythic entities and sentient beings could reveal their presence on different planes of existence.

*Norton’s concept of the magical universe*

One of Norton’s earliest findings in relation to what she referred to as ‘the other Realm of Being’ was that the contents of this domain seemed to be directed by thought itself, almost as if one were consciously entering a dream-world. According to Norton, in the magical realm thoughts become tangible and visible and often assume an anthropomorphic form. Visual images and metaphysical ‘entities’ also morph from one form into another, subject to conscious or ‘willed’ intent:

…‘thought’ in those realms is very different from that which is normally understood by the word. There, ‘thought’ — or rather the energy generated by such — is felt as a tangible thing, a current of living force which assumes palpable and visual form. I had been told, earlier, that ‘entities in the Plane assumed form at will’. This is literally true; one actually changes shape very frequently, since the new ‘sense’ referred to is that which could be described as ‘being’. Just as one can see, feel, hear a thing, state or person; and when this occurs one realises and is the very essence of its nature. This sense, if one can call it that, covers a vastly wider field than anything comparable to human life; for in addition to becoming the essence of male, female, or neither, and beings of other orders of Existence, one can ‘become’ a living embodiment of abstract Ideas of all descriptions. 104

During a state of trance Norton sometimes experienced sensations of metaphysical abstraction. On these occasions her perceptions were related more to ‘essence’ than to form:

One of the strangest experiences I had was ‘becoming’ an embodiment of an Idea of the Universe. This Idea was not anthropomorphised into Entity, as is usually the case with such embodiments. Consequently, although my consciousness existed, there was no consciousness of entity at all. I am not referring to the personal ‘I’ consciousness, for naturally that alters completely with each form assumed; I have used a capital letter to differentiate between personal ideas and Ideas, which are representations to the consciousness of Group interpretations of Universal facts, according to order of Existence and sub-divisions therein. (By ‘other orders of Existence’ I mean different classes of Being from Man; highly evolved unhuman intelligences)....

Orthodox occultists occasionally describe the Plane of ‘dense’ matter as the ‘Realm of Form’, which to my mind is a complete misnomer. The name should be applied
to the realm of which I speak, since things There are seen in their archetypal essence. There, all forms whether abstract or actual appear in their real perfection as part of the very essence of Form itself, which is omnipresent. In speaking of abstract form I refer to System and the pattern of things in general, which interblend in all directions into infinity. As I have remarked elsewhere, the fact of chaos anywhere appears to be only a part of form and system, and as such purely relative.

The realisation of the essential Form of things occurs in various ways... one sees things such as the pattern of a life, for instance, as a complete and perfect thing in itself, yet forming against relationship to other lives part of another wider pattern; which again forms part of another yet larger... and so, ad infinitum. Similarly, with things such as Dimension — Time, Plane and Space — one literally sees the perfect interblending of their relationship to one another and to the Universe as a whole. Here again, the vehicle of realisation of this type of knowledge is greater and more comprehensive than intellectual understanding, although it includes the latter. Many of these Abstract forms appeared as vast animated patterns blending in a kind of geometrical harmony which we felt as well as observed, and into which the consciousness merged. The shapes and manifestations were not those of Euclidean geometry; cosmic mathematics manifesting as an immense art-form is the best analogy I can find.105

Here, once again, Norton reveals her Gnostic tendencies. Norton perceives herself ‘becoming an embodiment of an Idea of the Universe’. In Gnostic cosmological systems the transcendent Godhead emanates ideas (or archetypes) which in turn manifest gradually into more specific material forms. Norton similarly comes to believe that her trance experiences provide experiential proof that thoughts and emotions can have a tangible impact on the ‘plasmic body’:

Many of these things, of course, happened much later; however, these examples indicate the complete unity of mind and fluids in the plasmic body, also the sensory tangibility of the thought-force. The manipulation of the latter (to return to my previous statement) in any kind of abstract thinking, is also a sensory skill and actually feeling the keen precision of directed force. In the emotional sphere, there is a different type of awareness. When one feels wonder, serenity, etc., one does not exactly become a representation of these states; rather, there is a sensation of complete unity with that which is causing their manifestation, and yet another sense which is a blending of the familiar five senses into a super-intensified one, plus an indefinable essence.106

According to Norton, many of the familiar ‘god-forms’ and mythic images from the world’s various mythological and religious traditions could be regarded as projections of human consciousness. However, this did not make them any less ‘real’ when experienced in an altered state of consciousness; these powerful mythic images would still have a tangible presence on the magical plane when an individual encountered them in trance via the plasmic body. Norton maintained that the actual gods or
‘intelligences’ themselves could not be constrained by the cultural forms imposed by mythological or religious traditions because these were only human constructs; that is to say, the gods were ‘greater’ than the ‘god-forms’ through which they manifested. In this regard Norton emphasized that many metaphysical entities perceived in the trance realm were projections from intelligences whose origins lay far beyond the sphere of human awareness: the terrifying Werplon that Norton encountered in the Qliphotic regions of the Kabbalistic Tree, mentioned earlier, is a classic example:

In the other Realm, the structure of phenomena is based on other lines. Intelligences are not confined to one form as here; also the consciousness pertaining to each type of form bears a far closer relationship to its material vehicle. The latter, as I have said, being fluid plasmic matter, can and does alter its form to any image appropriate to circumstances. Since, however, the form assumed is a direct reflection of the content or state of consciousness, it is an automatic result of the latter. So, in this Realm also ‘form follows function’, but in an utterly different way; as function in this sense is synonymous with ‘being’ or content....

The myth-making (and image) faculty of the unconscious mind forms a concept of life (relative to the self) which is often embodied as an idealisation — a Being, such as Nature, Phantasy, Power etc. — and which the unconscious mind conceives of as a ‘God’, or in other words, the motivating powers of Existence relative to himself, as they appear to him. The Symbolic Being is also Self, since it represents the sum of his own experiences and reactions to such; and being therefore a creation of his own Mind, reflects its creator. Yet it is also an embodiment of the forces which have spiritually created or moulded him, and is therefore a personification of God in relation to himself. Generally, the more primitive the mind, the more it anthropomorphizes the attributes of its God, since it is less capable of a detached survey.

So with the group: in fact the individual subconscious God-conception generally flows along the group thought channel most appropriate to it, hence all of the Gods of man. Hence also all the demons, spirits, and other representations of forces that have influenced him.

I have spoken of individual mind working upon and moulding plasmic material. Consider the power, then, of this unconscious mass-concentration of human beings, throughout the ages, upon certain idealisations of forms — the God-forms (a generic name for all such forms, including Demons, Faery creatures, ‘angels’ etc.). This unconscious creative thought concentration has built up images in the aether, moulding raw plasmic matter to the form of these images, and providing vehicles for other intelligences to manifest through, relative to humanity. I do not mean that these intelligences are either confined to any or all of these forms, or that they are the product of human thought, conscious or otherwise. The vehicles, or God-forms, yes, or largely so, but not the intelligences themselves. These vehicles,
however, form a useful medium of communication, but naturally their visual form is, to a certain extent, anthropomorphic...’ 107

According to Norton, the fluid nature of the astral realm ensured that metaphysical entities and intelligences from higher planes of existence could manifest themselves, or ‘incarnate’, at lower levels of the astral plane and at this time they would appear in anthropomorphic god-forms culturally appropriate to the consciousness of the beholder. Norton believed that the god-forms themselves provided a mediating link between different levels of reality – the metaphysical and the human – and that human beings could approach the gods by ‘rising’ through the astral planes towards the manifested god-forms while in a state of trance (see also references to ‘rising in the planes’ in Chapter Three). 108 Conversely, the gods could ‘incarnate’ or ‘descend’ into the astral realms by manifesting in an appropriate form:

Taking the abstract state of consciousness known as ‘Humanity’ or Human Consciousness (including all Uni-Planal [sic] variations) as belonging to one Realm of Being – and the next level of consciousness (ie. Deva consciousness, I have used a Sanskrit term, failing any English equivalent) as belonging to another Realm of Being, and as such, completely different from state one, the God-forms comprise a link, or half-way state between the two. Human consciousness, then, can move up into these God-forms during trance, or other exceptional conditions; likewise Deva consciousness can descend into the same form. The inhabiting, or temporary animation of these forms by entities can be likened to an ectoplasmic ‘incarnation’, during which the entity assumes both the form and the mode of intelligence and perception associated with that form. 109

The above extracts from Norton’s interview with L.J. Murphy reveal that within a magical context Norton’s came to regard the astral plane – the inner-directed altered state of consciousness accessed through trance – as a type of ‘mediating domain’ between the gods and goddesses on the one hand, and human consciousness (functioning through the vehicle of the plasmic body) on the other. Norton also formed the view – on the basis of her trance experiences in the plasmic body – that a number of inner-plane ‘intelligences’ pervaded all aspects of the known universe. These intelligences in turn confirmed the nature of their existence through a range of anthropomorphic images – manifesting as gods and goddesses, demons and archangels, as portrayed in the world’s various religions and mythologies. This leads us in turn to explore several related issues: how did Norton respond to the various gods and goddesses within her personal magical pantheon, what was the nature of their relationship, and how was this relationship subsequently expressed in Norton’s ritual practice?
Norton’s relationship with the gods and goddesses

Norton’s exploration of trance states provided access to a dimension of conscious awareness that was unfamiliar territory to most of her contemporaries in 1940s and 1950s Australia. Her ventures into trance states were essentially solitary affairs where her privacy was safeguarded by close family members like her husband, Beresford and her elder sister, Cecily. Norton noted in various interviews that her trance journeys often took place during a period of three to five days. This situation suggests that a substantial part of Norton’s magical practice was private in nature, and that it was based on a series of personal trance encounters with the god-forms of Pan, Hecate, Lilith and Lucifer and other metaphysical entities, whose images then found their way into her paintings – a process that will be described in Chapter Six.

A key discovery made by Norton herself and which distinguishes her from many other occultists operating within the Western esoteric tradition – especially those espousing the philosophy that magic is based, essentially, on directing the will – was that Norton did not believe she was fully in control of the magical energies she was encountering. When I interviewed Norton in 1977 she emphasised that the archetypal gods and cosmic beings she had contacted in trance existed in their own right. In their own particular magical realms they held the upper hand – not she. To this extent Norton differed from thinkers like Carl Jung, who regarded the sacred archetypes as universal forces deep within the collective human psyche, and not as entities with their own separate existence beyond the mind. While Norton admitted to being influenced by Jung and refers to Jungian archetypes in the L.J. Murphy transcript, for Jung, the archetypes – the ancient gods and goddesses of religion and mythology – were ultimately sacred personifications of the self. On the basis of what she experienced during her trance explorations, Norton did not share this view. For her, magical deities such as Pan, Hecate, Lilith, and Lucifer, as well as other magical entities like Eloi, Fohat and the Werplon were not projections or extensions of her own spiritual consciousness but powerful (and occasionally terrifying) entities who would grace her with their presence only if it pleased them, and not as a consequence of her own personal will or intent. Norton believed she could only depict in her paintings and drawings those qualities and attributes that the god or goddess in question chose to reveal, and that those energies would then filter through her ‘like a funnel’. Norton maintained that she did nothing other than transmit the magical current. If the gods and goddesses were alive in her and through her, their presence would manifest in her art and through her ceremonial magical practice.
Summary of main points

a) The principal deities in Norton’s pantheon are Pan, Hecate, Lilith and Lucifer. Norton considered Pan to be the spirit of the Earth and the ruler of the World. In one sense Pan is perceived as infinite and formless – his sacred power radiating in all directions as the very essence of the universe. However as an embodiment of the wild and untamed forces in Nature Norton also associated him on a more local level with ‘natural energies and fleet-footed freedom’. She was similarly attracted to Hecate as a goddess of the night and the hidden aspects of Nature. Norton regarded Hecate as a protector and, when required, as a purveyor of curses. Like Hecate, Lilith had similar appeal as a creature of the night. Norton refers to Lilith as the ‘Queen of Air and Darkness’. A chthonic she-devil depicted by Norton with writhing snakes in her hair, Lilith is also a symbol of sexual potency and is associated with ‘unbridled promiscuity’. The figure of Lucifer completes the pantheon of major deities in Norton’s cosmology. Lucifer’s main appeal, for Norton, is his spirit of rebellion – she refers to him as the Adversary. Lucifer represents the quest for secret knowledge but, according to Norton, he also exposes the limitations of the human ego and man’s pride in his own existence.

b) In addition to the pagan deities referred to above, Norton is also strongly attracted to the Qlipha, the so-called ‘dark’ or ‘negative’ energy centres associated with the reverse face of the Kabbalistic Tree of Life. Amidst these ‘shades of the dead’ Norton encounters such metaphysical entities as the Werplon – a terrifying humanoid insect creature that is both confrontational and chthonic. Norton is awed by his ‘swift vibrant power and precision’ and by ‘an associated sense of awareness below the surface, of some constant danger…’ [my emphasis in italics]

c) Norton’s personal encounters with the pagan deities and Qliphotic entities mentioned above are achieved through self-induced hypnotic trance. Norton’s exploration of trance states begins in 1940. She comes to believe that she can contact these deities experientially on the inner, or ‘astral’, planes of the psyche. Her chthonic astral journeys take her into the ‘Underworld’ of the subconscious where she encounters the various ‘god-forms’ associated with these deities – their perceived ‘god-forms’ are the various outer veneers that these metaphysical entities choose to present to human consciousness.

d) Each of Norton’s trance episodes spans a period of 3-5 days, during which time her privacy is safeguarded by a close family member, like her husband (Beresford Conroy) or her sister (Cecily Boothman).
e) Norton’s trance encounters occur while she is in her ‘plasmic body’ – an ‘etheric’ or ‘astral’ counterpart to her physical body to which consciousness has been transferred through an act of will. The astral plane itself is similarly governed and directed by thought and intentionality. As mentioned above, the god-images Norton perceives there are not the deities themselves but only the dimensions of their being that they choose to reveal. These images are innately inspirational; they subsequently find their way into myths, legends and religious teachings around the world and, in Norton’s case, provide the content for her visionary art.

f) The gods and goddesses exist in their own right; they are not projections of the human psyche. They grace Norton with their presence only when it pleases them and at a time of their choosing, and are not subject to her personal will or intent.

2 Barnes asked her: ‘Would you say you were born a witch or just acquired the attitude of a witch through association or environment?’ Norton replied: ‘I was born a witch.’ See D. Barnes, ‘I am a Witch!’ Australasian Post, Sydney, 20 December 1956: 8.
3 Ibid.
4 During the medieval witchcraft trials witches were searched for the ‘Devil’s mark’, which was allegedly proof of a pact with the Devil. The Devil was said to mark the bodies of his followers with a claw or hot iron, thereby sealing their pledge of allegiance to him. Scars, natural blemishes and insensitive patches of skin that did not bleed were also believed to be ‘Devil’s marks’. See R.E. Guiley, The Encyclopedia of Witches and Witchcraft, Facts on File, New York and Oxford 1989:99.
6 ‘Rowie [sic] replied by wrenching off her sweater. A long sinew stretched from her underarm to below her waist... As if that wasn’t enough, a pair of peculiarly pointed ears were presented for inspection.’ See B. Walker and R. Neville, ‘Deliver us to E-Ville’, Tharunka, University of New South Wales, Sydney, 3 July 1962: 8.
8 Ibid: 38.
14 ‘Art Models Show their own Art’, Pix, Sydney, 3 July 1943.
15 For a commentary on the significance of this particular work see the section ‘Norton’s Concept of the Magical Universe’ later in this chapter.
16 Articles featuring photographs of the more conventional, classical ancient Greek figure of Pan that featured as the backdrop to Norton’s ritual altar are included in D.L. Thompson’s ‘Devil Worship Here!’,
Australasian Post, 6 October 1955, and Norton’s autobiographical ‘I Was Born a Witch’, Australasian Post, 3 January 1957.

Norton rarely dated her paintings and drawings so it is not possible to establish exactly when this painting of Pan was produced.

Art Models Show Their Own Art’, Pix, Sydney, 3 July 1943:26.

Ibid.


Ibid: 42.


Ibid.

Gnostic scholar Hans Jonas defines the Archons as planetary rulers and believes that they were originally Babylonian in origin. Jonas notes that in Gnostic cosmology the Archons ‘collectively rule over the world, and each individually in his sphere is a warder of the cosmic prison…As guardian of his sphere, each Archon bars the passage of souls that seek to ascend after death, in order to prevent their escape from the world and their return to God.’ See H. Jonas, The Gnostic Religion, second edition, Beacon Press, Boston 1963: 43.

R. Norton, ‘Witches Want No Recruits’, Australasian Post, Sydney, 10 January 1957: 35

Ibid.


Hecate’s origins appear to be in Asia Minor, specifically the Carian region of Anatolia in what is now southeastern Turkey. See J. Rabinowitz, The Rotting Goddess: The Origin of the Witch in Classical Antiquity, Autonomedia, New York 1998: 19. While Hecate was incorporated into the Greek pantheon from Anatolia, Rabinowitz notes that her sister goddess, Kybele ‘had rites so frenzied the Greeks never let her into their pantheon’. Ibid: 63.

See R. Von Rudloff, Hekate in Ancient Greek Religion, Horned Owl Publishing, Victoria, Canada 1999: 95 and 123. Patricia A. Marquardt notes that, prior to the 5th century BCE, Hecate was not especially chthonic in nature but that her identification with witchcraft and black magic in literature dates from Euripides’ Medea. Marquardt also notes that Hecate may have become identified around this time with the Thessalian goddess Eidola, who was similarly associated with witchcraft. See P. A. Marquardt, ‘A Portrait of Hecate’, The American Journal of Philology, 102, 3, Autumn 1981: 252.

R. Von Rudloff, loc.cit: 121.

Ibid: 123.


See R. Von Rudloff, Hekate in Ancient Greek Religion, loc cit.: 113 and 122.


Ibid: 222.

Ibid: 223.


Ibid.

Television documentary on the Kings Cross district in Sydney titled The Glittering Mile, Channel 9, Sydney, 1964.


Ibid.

Ibid, line 1.


A painting of The Adversary, comparable in all major details, had also been exhibited at the Rowden White Gallery in Melbourne in 1949

52 Ibid: 132-133.
54 Both of these works are reproduced in N. Drury, The Witch of Kings Cross, Kingsclear, Sydney 2002: plate section between pp.64-65.
56 Despite its resemblance to a Jewish god-name, Eloi is not strictly Kabbalistic. The god-name of Chessed, the fourth sphere upon the Tree of Life associated with Jupiter in Dion Fortune’s Mystical Qabalah [1935: 161], is given as El and not Eloi. It is likely that Norton derived the reference to Eloi from Madame H.P. Blavatsky who refers to the Eloi of Jupiter in The Secret Doctrine [1897] 1962, Theosophical Publishing House, Adyar, Madras, India: ii :301 and iv: 108. Blavatsky ascribes this reference to the planetary spirit of Jupiter to the early Christian theologian Origen, who in turn is said to have ascribed it to the Gnostics.
57 See H.P. Blavatsky, The Secret Doctrine [1897] 1962, Theosophical Publishing House, Adyar, Madras, India: Blavatsky refers specifically to Fohat as the ‘dynamic energy of Cosmic Ideation’ and ‘the guiding power of all manifestation’ (1:81) and later describes him as ‘the personified electric vital power, the transcendental binding unity of all cosmic energies, on the unseen as on the manifested planes, the action of which resembles – on an immense scale – that of a living Force created by Will...Fohat is not only the living Symbol and Container of that Force, but is looked upon by the Occultists as an Entity; the forces he acts upon being cosmic, human and terrestrial, and exercising their influence on all these planes respectively.’ (1:170-171. Capital letters in Blavatsky’s text).
58 In Haiti Erzulie is revered as the Voodoo goddess of love, beauty, flowers and jewellery. She also enjoys dancing and fine clothes. See Maya Deren, Divine Horsemen: the Voodoo Gods of Haiti, Thames and Hudson, London 1953; 62 (second edition 1970). During her lifetime Norton could have had access to this well-known book, a classic study of voodoo, although it was first published a year after The Art of Rosaleen Norton. It is likely that Norton drew at least part of her enthusiasm for voodoo from William B. Seabrook’s Magic Island (New York, 1929) which she lists in the bibliography in The Art of Rosaleen Norton (1952:79) as a reference under the heading ‘witchcraft and demonology’. Norton lists its title incorrectly as The Magic Isle in her bibliography.
59 For all of these metaphysical beings see Norton, 1952:78
60 Ibid.
61 The Art of Rosaleen Norton, 1952: 79
62 Because the Kabbalah is a central element in the magic of the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn it is described in detail in the section of this thesis which deals with the major strands of the Western esoteric tradition. See Chapter Two.
63 Traditionally the Kabbalah is regarded as a mystical commentary on the Pentateuch – the written Torah, or ‘five books of Moses’. The Hebrew word ‘Kabbalah’ itself means ‘that which has been received’ and refers to an oral mystical tradition. Even though the Kabbalah did not exist in written form until the Middle Ages, it is thought that the Sefer Yetzirah, or Book of Creation, was composed in Palestine between the third and sixth centuries CE. Another early Kabbalistic text, Sefer ha-Bahir, emerged in Provence, where there was a Jewish community between 1150 and 1200 CE. Around 1280 a Spanish Jewish mystic named Moses de León (1238-1305) began circulating booklets among his fellow Kabbalists. These texts were written in Aramaic and de León claimed that he had transcribed them from an ancient book of wisdom composed in the circle of Rabbi Shim'on bar Yohai, a famous disciple of Rabbi Akiba, who lived and taught in Israel in the second century CE. These booklets gradually formed the text known as Ha-Zohar ha-Qadosh, usually referred to as the Zohar (The Book of Splendour). Although Moses de León may have drawn on early material received through the secret oral tradition, it is now thought that he himself was probably the author of the Zohar. Norton’s assertion in The Art of Rosaleen Norton (1952:78) that the Kabbalah is an ‘ancient Chaldean secret doctrine which was known in Egypt under the name of the Book of Thoth’ is completely fanciful. For the origins of the Kabbalah see G. Scholem, Origins of the Kabbalah, Princeton University Press, New Jersey 1990, and M. Idel, Kabbalah: New Perspectives, Yale University Press, New Haven 1988.
64 See Plate XV, Qlipha, in The Art of Rosaleen Norton, loc cit: 1952:44 – which is accompanied by an extract from Norton’s personal journal.
65 K. Grant, Outside the Circles of Time, Muller, London 1980: 287.
67 The Art of Rosaleen Norton, 1952: 44
‘Werplon’ appears to be a concocted term combining ‘were –’ as in werewolf, with *plon*, the Scandinavian term for a dragon.

It is more confronting even than the Djinn, a being which it superficially resembles and which is depicted in the painting *The Djinn*, which is reproduced in *Supplement to The Art of Rosaleen Norton*, Sydney 1984:28. Both the Werplon and the Djinn are shown grabbing helpless human beings in their clawed fingers.

The most confronting examples from *The Art of Rosaleen Norton* include Plate V, Panic; Plate XIV, *Rites of Baron Samedi*; Plate XV, Qlipha; Plate XVII, Black Magic; Plate XIX, Fohat; Plate XXIV, *Symphony in 3 Movements*, Plate XXVIII, Dinner Time and Plate XXXI, The Master.

The date is confirmed in the Norton article ‘She hates Figleaf Morality’, *People*, Sydney, 29 March 1950: 30.

It is important to distinguish between magical invocation and evocation. In *Magic : Its Ritual Power and Purpose* [1952: 41] Dion Fortune’s colleague W.E. Butler writes: ‘In invocation we act in such a way as to attract the attention of some Being of a superior nature to our own, or some cosmic force of a higher order. In evocation we impose our will upon beings of a lesser order of existence and compel them to execute our wishes. In both cases the actual contact takes place through our mental channel...’


Automatic writing, like automatic drawing and painting, is performed during a state of trance in which the individual is unaware of what is being produced. The writing is sometimes produced at great speed and always without the conscious awareness of the seer. Handwriting produced in this way is sometimes assumed to be that of a deceased person, especially if the writing itself is in an unfamiliar style.

Prominent researchers currently committed to the study of the spiritual implications of the near-death experience and other related phenomena include Dr Kenneth Ring, Dr Michael Sabom and Dr Bruce Greyson in the United States, and Dr Peter Fenwick, Dr Sam Parnia and Dr Pim van Lommel in Europe. See Bibliography.

Thanatology is literally the study of death, but within a scientific and transpersonal context it also includes the study of altered states of consciousness associated with the death (and near-death) process – including the personal transition through death itself.