



16

CHAOS IN THE CRÈCHE



To the COREz cru, and to Robert Anton Wilson, R.I.P.

ALL HAIL ERIS!

Back when we were whippersnapper wizards, knee high to an incubus, the feared and fabulous Church of Random Ethicz (COREz) convened in desolate spots and dirty squats for ancient rites with a post-modern twist. Our Chaos Crèche was situated on this earthly plane in a Manchester basement. There was an elemental symbol on each wall, a gnarled fetish-staff hung with charms in the corner, and a homemade Baphomet sitting on the altar, with a greedy pot belly and tiny red eyes glaring out from his black face. Lord Mungdungus was the driving force behind our devilry, a voodooist with a passion for astral fiddling, who invited Kali-ma for magical evenings in, feeling up hir knockers.

For our first rite in the new space, to christen it (so to speak), we began with the I.A.O. banishing ritual, a no-frills version of an exercise which traditionally involves the invocation of archangels, the recitation of sutras, or something else to clear the space of unclean spirits, hungry ghosts and other denizens of the astral plane. Flippant magi, too lazy even to take the Lord's name in vain properly, we contracted the sacred names to vowels. We began with "üüüüüüh", sung high, with the hands above the head to energise the third eye, and next we intoned "aaaaaaaah" with arms out to the side to warm up the heart and chest. Finally we dropped our arms and our attention to the guts to sing "oooooh". It sounds like "oooooh, you're in trouble now!", which in fact we were. Someone traced a few pentacles in the air with an antique Nepalese blade, and Beelze-Bob's your uncle, temple cleared!*

* Try these exercises for ten full breaths to feel how they affect the different centres, but remember, it is not a banishing ritual!

At least that was the theory according to Mr. B, who did magick by sheer bloody mindedness, staring at sigils for bliss for hours at a stretch until he was damn well good and blissful. He was all bare bones, figure and philosophy, and he wanted our rites the same way, so we stripped the banishing rite of angels and drama, incense and nonsense, leaving only the vowels.

My ex-girlfriend sang “oooooh” for longer than the rest of us, instinctively aware perhaps that our opening was incomplete. She was the most unbalanced and most powerful of all of us, a witch from Tring (the site of the last English witch-drowning), who rode her ketamine-fuelled broomstick across the astral sky, leaving a trail of sneezes. That day, however, everyone was straight.

The final joker in the pack was the Nealist, a no-holds-barred reality-wrestler, who began The Church as an art project. This featured himself standing alongside genuine street evangelists, distributing instructions on how to buy your way into heaven, and filming the inevitable row. He was the agent selected to interrupt and irritate the Archbishop of Canterbury during a ritual at his public address. The idea was to collect the anger of the earthly mouthpiece of God in a specially adapted bong Lord M was surreptitiously sucking on. I fear this bottle of unholy water is still in his possession.

We announced our intention to consecrate the crèche, and tied a button that had spent the day in my mouth onto the fetish-staff. Linking arms in the shape of a pentagram, talking in tongues, shaking and incanting, building up gradually to a high-paced cacophony of mock-Latin shouting: “*DOMINU, INFANTO PERTERBURANTOR RECTIBUS RECTUM, NUNC SORDAT FRUSTUS OMNIEMNES ET CETERA, GETS BETTERER.*” When we were suitably wired, we exorcised the place in the manner of the priest from *The Exorcist*, flicking holy water stolen from a church around with toothbrushes. When we felt we had the place covered we untraced the pentacles, dashed through the I.A.O., and went our separate ways to bed.

Back in the real world the following morning, I was in excellent spirits, blissing out on my bike up the Oxford Road, floating up the stairs of the Maths Tower, and giggling my way through my first lecture, but during the second lecture, a headache rapidly progressed to nausea and dizziness. By the bell my groans were disturbing the class. A friend from my Buddhist group was sitting next to me. She had attended the ritual humiliation of the Archbishop, and knew what antics I got up to whilst out of lotus, so she walked me down the stairs, helped me locate my bicycle, and because there was no way I could ride it, she took my arm and we stumbled through the streets of Fallowfield to my house, where she left me in the care of my witch. The rest of the day is a complete blur as I drifted in and out of consciousness; I only remember the pain. It was like nothing I had ever

experienced, a migraine localized to a point above one eye, with nausea, loss of balance, and a feeling like millions of microscopic insects were crawling around under my skin. My witch spent the day looking after me, and told me afterwards that I had been babbling in tongues and moaning. I had barely suffered even slight headaches before, but this was absolute agony. By the evening it had began to subside, but I felt occasional electric twinges in that spot for months. (Over ten years later, after a series of curious events beginning at the Stockwell Spiritualist Church and ending with a voice shouting my name as I lay in bed, I enrolled in a mediumship course and learned a lot more about that spot.)

The moral of the story is, of course, don't be a fuckwit. Electricians take precautions to avoid shocks, and sorcerers, black, white, and all shades of grey should do the same when working with energy. Incant, invoke, do what thou wilt, but clear your space and your head, with as much intent as you put into your intention, before and after, and whenever you feel the need, even silently on the night bus. Golden Dawn novices spend their first year practising the banishing on a daily basis for good reason. Untrace the pentacles, thank the archangels, say your Hail Mary's, bang your gong, do what needs to be done, but close your work and lock the door.

If you want magick in your life, it is yours, but start carefully with a tarot reading, a course at a psychic college, or a Daime session. If you feel an overwhelming pull to the left, there are instructions in Appendix Chaos, but master a proper banishing first, and steer clear of Ouija boards and Enochian until you know exactly what you are working with. My granny traced the goblins in her loo and the voices in her head back to a youthful Ouija board. There are all sorts in the astral, from glorious archangels to horribly boring grey shades shuffling along like commuters on station platforms, and there are also plenty of mosquitoes, flies, and worms doing their various jobs. Some entities love flesh, the way some of us love spirit, and they may exploit any opening you offer. They are not evil; neither are hungry tigers, but wise explorers take care in the jungle all the same.

Like psychedelicks, magick opens you up, so dabble with respect, with experienced people. There is no need to be scared or paranoid, but no need to be silly either. Group work is much more unpredictable, because a group, especially a group of nutters, can easily raise enough energy collectively to frazzle someone's circuitry, whereas one person usually raises only a safe amount. We precocious sorcerers had no doubts about the power of magick, but we didn't appreciate the dangers, and we were too punk to care. I don't think I permanently flipped my lid, and I stopped doing group Chaos works after that rite, but reality has never been the same since.

Magick works. It works wonders, but the most surprising thing to come out of the hat is the revelation that there is more to the universe than we

are led to believe. Magick can also teach a young punk to take responsibility for his reality, which he makes up as he goes along, as he likes, and as he deserves. In this blurry plane, you get what you ask for. I spent hours one night catching a mosquito alive for a blood sacrifice to bring me ganja, which I was craving after a few dry weeks in Mexico. The following morning, wandering lost in the streets of Cuernavaca, I saw a man with a tattoo of a Chaos star, the symbol of my magickal line. A magician stays alert for potential pathways, and I recognised an angel of Chaos disguised as a punk. When I stopped him, the first thing he said to me, even before “hello”, was “do you want a smoke?”

It was great to have a confirmation so quickly, and a welcome mash-up, but in retrospect, all it did was reinforce a habit. A magick wand can be a crowbar to bust out of your cage, but pursuing earthly desires reinforces the cage with magickal metal. Living in a magickal mode, you don't need to do magick; it does you. Once the Monkey of Thoth is done peeking up the skirt of the goddess, once he is done trying to penetrate the goddess, he lets magick penetrate him, and he becomes the goddess. Coincidences abound. What you need falls in your lap at the perfect moment, without effort, and without incantation. But first you need to believe. Actually, you just need to try.

Evil eyes, Cupid's arrows, and ghosts, holy and otherwise, were consensus reality for aeons, and everything from a broken arm to a successful hunt was a manifestation of spirit. We are in the midst of a coup. A godless clergy has ousted the sorcerers, rainmakers, and wyrd sisters, but it is a very recent, very local scrap. Reality used to be far more fluid. In Saint Médard in the early eighteenth century, for example, many thousands of previously sceptical eyewitnesses attested that they had seen miraculous healings, and convulsions during which people were impervious to torture and blows with sharp objects.⁵⁴⁶ This kind of thing is rare today. The scientific faction stormed the field with brilliant gadgets and weapons, and new theories to dominate the mindscape. For astrologers, the ‘flu was an influence from the stars (hence ‘*influenza*'). Shamans saw malignant spirits, and for ayurvedic doctors it was imbalance between the chakras, but science shows us a bug, and who can argue with a bug? It is not the root of the problem. Like everything else, it is a shadow of something invisible, but it is a shadow anyone can see under the electron microscope.

With science, we live in a world of highly pervasive shadows. In a pre-scientific world, everyone can keep their local gods, their magicks and beliefs, and the world remains fractured, but science provides a truth that can't be denied, and a language in which we can all communicate. Like Christianity, which highly dispersed and different peoples with a book to discuss and interpret the world with, science elevates us beyond our tribal cosmologies, and brings us together. Also like Christianity, it confuses itself for the one

NEMU'S END

true truth when it is only one of many, neither the most interesting, nor the best for achieving certain ends. This truth is, however, potentially universal. It is capable of embracing even the magicks it ousted, if only the Scientific Inquisition would stop applying the brain-screws, and bishops would obey their own commandments to look without prejudice, to experiment rather than opine, to explain as simply as possible. Science works. But magick plays as well. A mage incants, and within twelve hours he is rewarded with a bag of weed or a horrendous migraine. Sounds like a coincidence? Magick is the art of manipulating coincidence. It is also action at a distance, immediate transfer of information, hidden pathways, the memory of water; goblins pounding on the heavily stained-glass windows of the Church of Scyense.

One big difference between magick today and in times past is that a working group can be much larger. The largest gathering in the history of humanity was a religious event, Kumbha Mela 2001, with seventy million souls havin' it large in India. About 2.5 billion tuned into the necromancy of Princess Diana's memorial service,⁵⁴⁷ and she was already making appearances and healing miraculously within days of her death.⁵⁴⁸ There is no technical obstacle to stop a group e-mail going to the entire wired world to organise a rite. We are limited by neither technology nor reality, only politics and lack of imagination. If we stopped squabbling and synchronised our wills and watches, nothing would be beyond us, not even refreezing our icecaps. The science of magick can dig us out of the hole we have made. Magick is on its way back, new and improved, post-scientific, post-modern, post-punk, and just in the nick of time.

So what are we waiting for?

... the bleedin' Messiah?

